

# A SPIRITUAL RESPONSE TO PROBLEMS

## 1st Corinthians

Thoughts come from a wide variety of sources. Some from messages I have heard from individuals, some from assembly Bible studies, some from home life and some from books I have read. The Holy Spirit is the Teacher who makes them real to me.

- "Believer's Bible Commentary," by William MacDonald
- "What the Bible Teaches, Luke," by J. Hunter
- "The Life Application Bible." Tyndale House and Zondervan

### Introduction, 1:1-8.

WRITERS: Paul (the apostle) and Sosthenes (the brother).

READERS:

Defined, v.2.

- Church of God: a body set in authority.
- Sanctified: positional (all are...).
- Saints: by divine calling; God has done the setting apart.
- All that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

SALUTED, v.3.

- Grace: the activity of God in power and fully meeting needs.
- Peace: the ending of conflict and strife that follows acts of divine grace.

DESCRIBED:

- Grace of God, v.4: the source of this blessing; possibilities for success, not failure.
- Utterance, v.5: ability to express the Gospel in words; knowledge – ability to understand truth.
- Confirmed (past), v.6: intelligently proclaimed and demonstrated.
- Waiting (present), v.7: expectation – they had all they needed (gift) to carry out their purpose.
- Coming (future), v.7: the revelation of the Lord.
- Confirm, v.8: secured, preserved; blameless – absence of charge or accusation.

### Affirmation, v.9.

God is faithful; fellowship of His Son (deity); Jesus (humanity); Christ (anointed, exalted); Lord (authority) – connect with 15:58.

## 1st Corinthians 1:1-9

### REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE

Christians don't blend in well with the world, neither socially, politically or religiously. When God works in the life of a person, there are changes that are unmistakable. Paul was dramatically changed from one who opposed the Gospel of Christ to one who was an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. He was designated as an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ after the Lord had ascended into heaven. He was the only one appointed an apostle in this way. Not every believer comes to Christ in the same way. The background of a person born into a Christian home and taught the way of salvation and the truth of God from infancy, would make it seem to be normal for that person to come to know the Lord in early life. One like Paul who persecuted believers in Christ even to death, would certainly have a dramatic change in life when God saves them.

The call to apostleship was not because Paul chose to change occupations from an enforcer of the Jewish tradition to a preacher of the Gospel, but because of God's will for him. God told Ananias He had prepared him to take the Gospel to the Gentiles, kings and the children of Israel. Paul himself knew it was God's will for him to go to the Gentiles that they would be "turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." It would be a great privilege to participate with such a "chosen vessel" in the work of the Lord. Sosthenes was such a person. I have had the privilege to share in Gospel work with some of the finest preachers of a past generation who God has used remarkably in the salvation of many souls. It is to be expected that when called by God to further His work, we are going to be marked out and avoided because such a work goes contrary to the ambition of those who pursue the world's agenda. Our responsibility in the work of God is to be available and ready to do whatever is God's will. Paul was known as an apostle. Sosthenes was known as a brother. Whatever is the role God gives us, we can be content in it and not seek to take the place of our own choosing.

Those believers who are part of a church, have been not only called out of the world, but have been called to a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. This "called out" people, have been called to be a company of believers who form a local church that belongs to God. There is "a life" in such a body that is not found in an

organization but is in an organism. Such ones have been set apart by God and for God. God calls believers to "be ye holy for I am holy." It is not just something one joins, but a living body of believers to which we have been joined. To be part of a church of God is not just a membership but is to be an integral part of something like a finger or an eye is part of a body. To be such a member is an act of God's grace.

This uniqueness is not only in one place, but everywhere God calls His people to be joined together in a local body under the authority of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Each body has unique characteristics, and yet each body has similar characteristics. The body of a bird, fish or animal is easily distinguished from that of a human. Each human body has similar parts but unique features that make it different from other human bodies. The same is true of an assembly. Corinth was different from Ephesus. Thessalonica was not identical to Berea. But every place and person had experienced the grace of God. Peace was to be a characteristic of each group and both grace and peace come from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

That grace was not given to us because God owed it to us. It was given to us because we are accepted in the Beloved - in Christ Jesus. For His sake and because of Him we have received what is needed to be effective in our calling "in Christ Jesus." Gifts, the supernatural abilities that have been dispensed to us by God are not for us to be proud of but are to be used effectively for the reason God gave them. They are to be a blessing to others and a benefit to the proper function of the body of believers who gather together under the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a cause to thank God for when we see the operation of the gifts producing the desired effect among God's people. God has given us what we need to do all He desires of us.

To witness for God in an ungodly place where we do not blend in, we need the divine enablement of the spiritual gift He gives. The strength and will to perform what He has in mind, is there constantly to draw on. His strength is what is needed to not quit when the going gets tough. The description of 'blameless' may not always be seen in God's people. It may be not be seen in the performance of the work we have been called to do, although it is to be expected that one who belongs to the Lord will avoid any compromising of the commission we have been given. In a future day at the Judgment Seat of Christ, only those things that have manifested God's glory will be seen. The lives and service of the saints will be assessed appropriately by the One who has called us into fellowship with Him.

Fellowship with the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, is such a privilege that the challenge to be loyal to Him who loves us and washed us from our sins in His own blood is to be grasped firmly. He is God's Son, He is Jesus our Savior, He is Christ - the Messiah from heaven, He is our Lord and our Master who has supreme authority over us and everything we do. No wonder we are a thankful people in spite of the ungodly world we live in.

To be a part of the brotherhood of saints in this ungodly world is unique  
We already have experienced the grace and peace those of the world do seek  
There is a purpose to our life we already know, we don't have to wait and wonder  
God in His wisdom has gifted His own that in the ecclesia they blend together.

To the world around we're a square peg in a hole made round to fit everyone  
They want us to be as much like them as possible so we won't spoil their fun  
But one who has been called to be holy and call on the name of Jesus the Lord  
Doesn't fit in the system at all where committed Christianity is abhorred.

God has given us what is needed to fulfill His divine will for us  
Anything else we attend to doesn't have much more value than dust.  
The things we speak about and know that have value come by grace alone.  
When used in the ways God intends, He will be glorified in work that is done.

By being part of a local church, there is a place for God-given gifts to be used  
The necessary ability and strength is from Him who originally His servants did chose  
When giving diligence to labor by faith, we use what He has given in trust  
The results of being in fellowship with others, makes it possible others to bless.

Our fellowship with the Lord's people is precious, we need to nurture it each day  
Through using the spiritual gifts God gives we strengthen each other on the way  
We have also been called into a fellowship that is higher than we could conceive  
Our fellowship with God's Son, Jesus Christ, begins when on the Lord we believed.

Now day by day in our walk as those sanctified and called to be holy  
We find ourselves separated from the world when we gather in His name only

All over this world there are those who gather in like manner as we  
What a day of rejoicing and blessing when together our Savior we see.

**“Father, as I begin to focus my attention on the local assembly of saints as taught in this book of 1st Corinthians, may I learn the value of not blending in with the world. May I again commit myself as one who with others calls on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ alone, to never compromise Thy word for the sake of being well accepted by any or all who may challenge what we seek to do for Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

**1 Corinthians 1:9.** *“God is faithful, by whom ye were called into the fellowship of His Son.”*

### **GOD IS FAITHFUL.**

There is no mistake – God is at work among His people. How good it is when the people of God are all doing what they should do, in the way they should do it, and in the place where they should be doing it. But what about when things are not the way they should be among the people of God? Does He leave them until everything is straightened out? Or does God move to enable them to face up to the problems and move ahead for Him again? Yes, He does not abandon His wayward children or a wayward church. Clear directions are given for steps to recovery. Wrongs to be made right are stated. The expectations of the Lord of the church of God are made plain, and then there is time given to right the wrongs. How good of God to give time to repent and do what He instructs us to do. The Lordship of Christ is very evident in times of failure and departure as He steps up in His supreme authority, to make us face our Master.

#### **THE WILL OF GOD, 1:1**

We have not been left to try to figure this out. It is revealed to us in His word. We can know this experimentally as we walk forward one step at a time. It is His will I am what I am. It is His will for me to do the work He has given me and not bother with trying to measure the results. It is enough that I am here at this time doing this work in this place, because I know it is His will.

#### **THE CHURCH OF GOD, 1:2**

The company of sanctified people here that I am ministering to is as much a church of God as the group in Corinth. The language here is different from mine; the culture is different from mine; the traditions and ways of dress is different than mine but they are truly a church of God. These saints are God’s own children. They are calling on the name of the Lord here. They are witnessing to their own generation. There is evidence clear to be seen that they are the Lord’s own called out people.

#### **THE GRACE OF GOD, 1:4**

The faces of the singing saints here show evidence of God’s grace. The strength of character as they listen to the ministry of God’s word being translated, and make it their own, shows evidence of the grace of God. The warmth of the welcome and appreciation of the teaching given show evidence of the grace of God. I thank God, like Paul did for the grace of God seen here in this place.

#### **THE POWER OF GOD, 1:18**

The power of God is evident when souls are saved and cleansed from their sins. The power of God and His love is evident when new believers walk with the Lord and are kept by His constraining power. The power of God is seen in the joy that gladdens the saints and gives them new desires in life. The power of God is evident when the Holy Spirit is working in the Gospel, teaching of the Word and transforming of lives.

#### **THE WISDOM OF GOD, 1:21**

To know how to live *in* the world and not be *of* the world is evidence of the wisdom of God. It is a reality in the lives of God’s people. This wisdom gives understanding as to how to apply the word of God. It enables us to use the knowledge God gives us. It is the Lord’s way of suiting His blessings to my temperament. It is God’s way of displaying the worth of the death of Christ on the cross. The world’s wisdom cannot know this.

#### **THE FOOLISHNESS OF GOD, 1:25**

This is not nor could ever be, a comment made to imply God could be foolish. But to the unregenerate person even preaching the cross is foolishness. What seems foolish to foolish men; turns out to be the greatest and most profound wisdom. Who would ever imagine that a just God would charge His only well-beloved Son, with the price and consequences of human sin and degradation? Who would ever conceive such an idea as to impute the righteousness of God on repentant, believing sinners? But it happened!

#### **THE WEAKNESS OF GOD, 1:25**

There is more strength in God’s little finger, than in all the hands of all men who ever lived, combined. This is

not a measure of weakness in God. This is a statement of comparison of the intellectual strength of God, the physical strength of God, the moral strength of God, the strength of character of God in comparison to any and all men. The reason behind all these statements made to this church of God is – they had forgotten who God is and who they were. God is bringing them back to the place where they will submit to the Lordship of Christ.

**“Father God; You know the arrogance of men, even when they are Yours. You have put up with failing family members for so long and for so many times, I wonder in amazement at Your patience and longsuffering. I know the attitude of those in Corinth is seen in many others. Help me to get a new attitude of submission and keep me from such a mind that I would even want to glory in anything but the Lord alone. Amen.”**

### **1 Corinthians 1:10-25**

#### **REMEMBER HOW YOU WERE CALLED**

When God saved us, He did make us each one a new creation. I am so grateful because that means not only am I given a new beginning but have been placed by the Spirit of God into the Body of Christ. My position in Christ is secure. In an assembly gathered in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ unto Him is composed of those who are "brethren" - family members. The function of a body and a family is coordinated by the head. When one person in a family begins to speak out contrary to what the family agrees is a characteristic of family identity, it creates division. Division when it develops becomes a schism where the mind and judgment of differing opinions leads to a sect. This has been a serious problem among God's people from near the beginning of this Church Age. The assembly at Corinth was at the "division" stage and were quickly moving into schisms that led to sectarianism - following men instead of God.

The "contentions" or quarrels the saints at Corinth were having was because they were focusing their attention on the messengers rather than the message of the Word of God. This unfortunately, is not uncommon today. When people get their eyes on the Lord's servants, their personalities, their abilities or lack of ability or their style of presentation of the message God has given them to pass on, what could have been a great blessing, becomes a cause of division. The variety of God-given gifts is meant to be a benefit to His people. The Corinthians had a history in the city of Corinth of teachers and philosophers promoting their own "wisdom" and arguing over differing opinions. The saints of God were dividing over the same kind of reasoning. Some followed Paul because he had been the one who brought the Gospel along with others and had been the chief spokesman. He preached the message of salvation by grace alone and the resulting blessing that came from the death, burial and resurrection of Christ had been experienced by the believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Apollos was apparently quite articulate and maybe had an imposing way of presenting himself and the message he preached. Peter would have been looked up to and recognized as one of the twelve who had journeyed with the Lord for three and a half years and had opened the Gospel to the Gentiles. Then there were those with a lofty opinion of themselves who made Christ out to be the head of the schism they were a part of instead of the One the Gospel was about. How awful is the divisive spirit when we get our eyes on men instead of on the Lord Himself.

Because of his leadership in bringing the Gospel, Paul could see the danger if he gave the impression by baptizing people that he had a special authority. It is possible to make a man out to be what he is not and thus make an event or an ordinance what it is not. Baptism is the testimony of an individual to live a new life in Christ and for Him. When we have been immersed into the Body of Christ that act has nothing to do with the will of mere mortal man. Public baptism is the outward evidence of a person having trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and owning Him as our Lord.

God's wisdom is seen in the message of the Gospel. The wisdom of men considers silly the fact of Christ not only dying for our sins but being raised from the dead. Many today oppose the preaching that Jesus is the only Way, the Truth and the Life and His death alone paid the price for our sins. People still are trying to make themselves acceptable to God by doing good and being good to their neighbors. Others faithfully carry out church ordinances believing that activity would make them acceptable to God.

The Jews stumbled over the Person and work of Christ because they wanted a great dramatic, miraculous sign like fire from heaven as proof the Lord Jesus Christ was their Messiah. They did not accept the "sign of the prophet Jonah." They wanted to see power and Israel returned to the glory days of David and Solomon. The Greeks laughed at the cross work of Christ thinking that it was foolish that acceptance with God is made because of salvation that included not only the death of Christ for sin, but the resurrection of the Savior from the dead.

Paul called on the experts, the interpreters and the philosophers to reveal how they came to God through their fields of expertise. None of them knew God. Those who heard the preaching of the Gospel, the preaching of the cross and the preaching of Christ crucified and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, experienced the wisdom of God and the salvation of God. Some people are very impressive when they speak but have very little to say. The message is what is important. The message of the cross leaves no room for a half-way position. Crucifixion does not leave any person in doubt as to who a person believes on and what they are going to defend. These are the ones who are "the called." They are not divided as to Jews and Greeks. Jews who believed know the Lord Jesus Christ is the power of God. The Greeks who believed on Him knew He is the wisdom of God. They had been searching for wisdom and found it in a Person. The Jews would know that the only life-changing power was in Christ. Those who appear to others as foolish because they have simply accepted God's offer of salvation and trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, are the wisest of men. Those who considered the death of Christ on the cross as weakness will have to accept the blessing from that redemptive work as far stronger than anything men try to do to earn eternal life.

Those who have believed are in the fellowship of His (God's) Son Jesus Christ our Lord who died for us. We have given our testimony to that in baptism when we identified ourselves with the death, burial and resurrection of our Savior. Now both Jews and Gentile are united into one spiritual unity because of our union with the Lord Jesus Christ.

**1 Corinthians 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."*

**THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS.**

It is not men's fame or accomplishments  
That we are to tell to those around;  
It is the cross of Christ and what Christ went through,  
That makes up the Gospel sound.

For the cross, means death of the very worst kind,  
That the Savior Himself went through.  
We are to speak of it when we speak of Him -  
Who paid sin's price for you.

It is not enough to sing hymns so sweet,  
That tell of that work so great.  
We have to speak out in words so plain,  
That lost souls the Savior will meet.

To me the cross remains the key,  
To the Gospel we tell to men.  
And I must make clear, when of it I speak,  
That the hearers to Christ will bend.

The cross gives joy to those who came  
To the One who there did die.  
Let me be faithful, God, in preaching the cross,  
That to Him lost souls will fly.

**"Father, I have experienced the cross-work and the value of the work of Christ personally. Give me wisdom to pass the truths of salvation on to the people with a sense of what it means to me and the power that it has in my life. Even though it may seem foolish to others, how full of divine wisdom it is to me. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

**1 Corinthians 1:26-31**

**REMEMBER WHY YOU WERE CALLED**

In any gathering of the Lord's people we are impressed with the variety of background, educational differences, financial and intellectual differences and yet we gather for a common purpose. What is behind these phenomena? Our calling is not based on who we are or any or all of our achievements. We are one in purpose and faith because of the One who called us. We are "brethren," "saints," and "believers" because of God's grace. Our calling by the Gospel is a work of God's grace alone that leaves no place for us to boast of our wisdom gained by the educational advantages we might have. There are some well-learned knowledgeable people among the saints who gather to the Person of Christ alone, but not many.

Occasionally there comes some among us, or God in mercy saves someone, from the area of influential people. It is very uncommon to find one who is a political leader, the head of some major public office, CEOs or owners of large businesses, who are willing to gather with the saints of God in a scriptural assembly. This may happen but is usually the exception rather than expected. The social costs are high and the humility needed to submit to the leadership of those considered lower on the scale of importance in the eyes of the world, is not easily accepted. Business, politics and public leadership claims the time, energy and commitment of the whole person in most cases so they have no time or inclination for the things of God.

High society, whether it be people of royalty by birth or high standing because of family ties, is quite exclusive from the rest of the people in a community. In most places they are like a caste. They live to themselves and only associate with the rank and file of people if they are servants or employees. These three classes of people, the wise, the mighty and the noble, usually are not interested or inclined to seek salvation from sin by coming as lost, guilty sinners to the cross and receiving Christ alone as personal Savior. They are usually quite self-sufficient, self-satisfied, self-centered and not willing to acknowledge themselves as lost before God. The word used by the Spirit of God is "not many" wise, mighty or noble are called. But that does not exclude them from the blessings of the calling of God because there are some who are wise, mighty and noble in whose gentle, kind, gracious and humble spirits the work of God's grace in their soul is revealed. These are called in spite of what their position in life was.

There are five groups of people listed who normally respond to the grace of God. They are all needy people who do not reject the benefit of God's offered mercy. They know they are not able to independently meet their own need. They need grace and admit it. There are those who can barely read and never have had the privilege of education, who we have heard worship in "spirit and in truth." Some have been moved by the Spirit of God to learn to read the Bible, who have never read a word before and don't have much interest in reading anything else. But God chose them to show others their need and the blessings of grace. Even the apostles were looked down on as "unlearned and ignorant" men by some people. "Weak things" really doesn't mean physically unable to do normal work, although it does happen that the grace of God is greatly manifested in such people. The blind hymn writer, Fanny Crosby, was weak in one way but used by God to bless many other people. Often those who respond to the Gospel are not influential people who set the course of nations or control society, but God chooses them to manifest the riches of His grace. Slaves were saved in Corinth and other places under the sound of Paul's preaching. The base or those from the streets of our cities are more likely to come and listen to the Gospel than those who are well-off on their own. Some people are actually looked at with contempt and because of who they are and what they have done, are social rejects. God works in prisons as well as pulpits; in streets as well as in buildings set apart for preaching.

God calls us when pride is humbled. When a person has been brought so low the only way to go is up, God steps in and perhaps by a tract or testimony, a preacher or a newly saved acquaintance brings one considered foolish, of no account and actually despised, into the blessings of His grace and seats them with Christ in heavenly places. In the assemblies of God's people there are those who only find glory in the Lord. They don't speak of their own achievements or skills. You won't hear them boasting of their great successes. They are not there as celebrities and heroes but as simple people who have experienced the wisdom of God personally.

That divine wisdom is not something we boast of - it is God's wisdom. From that has come our righteousness - our standing before God as those who have been "justified freely by His grace." We have nothing to boast of in this but we are thankful God called us. Allied to that is our sanctification. The Lord prayed we would be "sanctified through Thy truth. Thy word is truth." God who called us, sanctified us and set us apart from all around us to Himself that we will be a holy people. Those believers in Corinth, and we now, remember that in this called out company of saints, it is God who has brought us to this place. "Redemption" involves the price paid on our behalf by the Lord Jesus Christ. He has freed us from the bondage of sin and its consequences. We will finally go full and complete in Christ, to heaven in a body that will truly glorify the Lord. These "foolish things" have access to God as worshipers and servants and are gathered by Him into a local assembly temporarily to get ready for divine purposes in the future. This truth removes the tendency to boast in ourselves and be divisive for any reason but to join in grateful unity around the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

One had a high position, but from it one day he fell  
He faced up to the reality of sin taking him to hell  
In spite of what people thought, he was humbled before the Lord.  
His pride was scattered like little pieces as he heard of the grace of God.

Another taught him what he had learned, he thought he knew it all

Until he was faced with his sin, and for mercy on God did call  
He doesn't boast of a great intellect, only of Christ by who he was saved  
The message he tells others of now, is the Gospel of salvation by grace.

Looking for something to satisfy he traveled from place to place  
There was no way he could remember where, nor could he even trace  
The course he followed, but this one thing he knew  
God brought him to the place of repentance and there His grace did show.

In a called-out company we come from different walks in life  
The common bond of fellowship goes beyond life into light  
When we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship together  
We look different, act different, are different, and yet are sisters and brothers.

Not high and mighty but just plain with this One Person in common  
Our Lord and Savior is our gathering Center, every one of us knows Him  
We have personally experienced His grace, though each has a different story  
Every thing we have to claim is nothing, when we give God all the glory.

**"Father, the fellowship of contented and grateful saints is a wonderful thing to experience. Give us the grace to nurture it, cherish it and defend what we have been given by Thee lest it be lost or taken from us by those who want their own way. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

## **1 Corinthians 2:1-5**

### **FIRST IMPRESSIONS**

When the Spirit of God led the apostle Paul to Corinth where he stayed for over a year and a half, He didn't only guide him to the place, but was his Guide while he was there. Paul was well learned. He had been educated at one of the best schools of learning at that time. His natural intelligence was very acute and he could think quickly and concisely. In this large city not too far from Athens where education and intelligence were highly regarded, the people would be impressed when one came with a new philosophy or some special insight. First impressions are generally made by how a speaker or teacher can publicly present themselves.

"Look at how well he is dressed! My, what a sense of self-confidence that man has! He must really know what he is talking about! Does he ever have a good command of words! He can say so much in so many different ways! How cool, calm and collected that speaker is!"

Such kinds of comments would have accompanied the philosophers and wise men the Corinthians would have been used to listening to. And then, into their city comes another man of great intellect and ability who had been trained in the school of Gamaliel. Surely he will surpass all they have heard in eloquence and content of thought.

"He is so... so common-place! Why I can speak better than that! His speech is contemptible! He looks so small! He seems frail and weak!"

Corinthians were used to, and expected, a person who had something important to say, to speak with flair - to have some real class about him or some gimmick to make what he had to say important. The practices of the Corinthians are still used today by those who claim to speak for God. They surround themselves with all kinds of attractions to make sure people know if they believe what they say, they are in with a successful bunch of people.

"See our surroundings! Listen to our music! Look at our presentations! Success is obvious to see in this place! Did you ever see such a crowd listening to the Gospel where you go?"

Into such a setting God sent His ambassador Paul, not with wisdom of words and fancy speeches. He knew what was expected by the jaded people and the comparison would be made between the personalities of those who spoke rather than on what they had to say. As Paul began to speak and tell the message of the Gospel to these worldly-minded people, he wisely submitted to the Holy Spirit's guidance to speak in a way that the message was the focus of attention. What Paul had to say was the "testimony of God." It is important to know the scriptures well enough to base everything spoken in a Gospel message on the testimony of God. That is why preparation of one's own soul and spirit is much more important than the suit of clothes one wears or the outward appearance projected. The message that was clearly presented in Corinth was "Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

We need to be sure that the focus of our work and words is on the Lord Jesus Christ whenever and wherever we preach. Some may have heard the Gospel all of their lives but they need to hear again and again of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, Others we speak to may be idolaters of one kind or another but they must hear of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. People from cults or false Christianity have been misled and they too need to hear of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. To those who want to hear something new, remember we are not here in the world to make comparisons like those who teach "Comparative Religion" in a university. The message of the Gospel centers around the Person and death of Christ. Such commitment to the message enables such preaching to be with the "demonstration," the legal proof, the Holy Spirit gives. Behind that is the power that is needed to make faith in Christ blossom and then be fruitful.

The purpose of Gospel preaching is that people might come to know God and to know Jesus Christ that they might accept the gift of eternal life God gives to such people. That does not mean we should be careless or casual about the way the Gospel is presented. It certainly does not mean we are not to give diligence to our preparation and use of material. But in order to be "God's messenger in God's message," we need to understand we are only a tool in the hand of the Spirit of God. Our responsibility is to be sharpened and ready for use. We are to present the truth of God in the Gospel. We are to tell people of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. We need to know, and be able to explain, the importance of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. We are to bring people to Him who saves them - not to save them ourselves or tell them they are saved. Only God can save, and He does save those who come to Him by faith in Jesus Christ. This is not done by the wisdom of men but by the power of God.

it is not up to us to ever tell a person they are saved. The spokesperson for God is to let God speak through them to the anxious soul who wants salvation. Let God speak. Have the seeking persons read the scriptures out loud themselves that relate to their need. Have them hear not only what God says about their need, but about the salvation God has provided for the sin problem. Show them from the scriptures they read aloud themselves, the result that comes when one receives Christ. Let people hear in their own ears what God has to say, and leave the saving and assuring work of salvation to the Word of God and the Spirit of God Himself. Hide behind the message you give so the focus is on the message, not the wisdom, presentation or skill of the messenger. It is probably a good thing when people forget your name or what you look like because they are impressed by the "demonstration of the Spirit and the power of God." Then they are focused on the Savior, Jesus Christ, and what He has done for sinners.

It isn't really easy, Father God, to hide one's self in plain view  
But when the Spirit of God is working, I know that this is true  
Because those who by the Spirit, are convicted of their sin  
Are ready and willing to hear of the One who died for them.

Grant it, Father God, that Thy servant will make the point  
It is the message, not just the messenger, the Spirit does anoint  
A spoken "word in season" only has power when it is given  
By one who understands he speaks for the God of heaven.

Please Father, may I remember, and learn if I haven't yet  
It is only the Word and Spirit new life in a person begets  
The message needs to be plain in order to be understood  
To be able to know the scriptures, Thy Word must be daily food.

O Father, I know well it's only what is in, that is able to come out  
People will remain unmoved if all I can do is shout  
May there be power added to all the feeble words I say  
So that a word or phrase may be in the hearer's heart stay.

And when the time is right Father, according to Thy will  
May Thy servant water the Word well that it may further still  
Produce conviction and then show light so hearers do believe  
Thy name and Thy Son be glorified when the Savior they do receive,

**"Father, those men who were in the meeting seemed to listen well. May they still consider the words spoken and the questions asked with a searching mind and heart. May the present issue be such that it will bring blessing, not hindrance to the Gospel preached. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

**1Corinthians 2:4-5.** *"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."*

### **SPEECH.**

He came, and to all there was really no doubt,  
He knew the God he was preaching about.  
The truth He declared and so plainly proclaimed,  
Was about the God he knew and whose power he named.  
No fancy words they could not understand;  
No hidden meanings to frustrate a man.  
What he did speak was true, right straight from God.  
God's testimony true was power in the blood  
Of Him who was crucified; Jesus Christ alone.  
By no other way could sins be atoned.

He came to their town in fear, weakness and trembling.  
But when he spoke truth, there was never dissembling.  
Results were seen there, by Spirit-demonstration;  
The power was there with heavenly wisdom.  
The faith that resulted when the folks heard the Word;  
Was real to behold, he preached Jesus is Lord.  
No smooth-talking message to tickle the ear.  
But truth straight from God that brought repentance and fear.  
And lives there were changed, when on Christ they believed.  
Sinful people in Corinth, through Paul's preaching were saved.

But he didn't stop there; the commission is greater.  
The message from God takes a person much farther,  
To the place where they see they are part of a work,  
That began at salvation and goes farther to make  
Men and women to all understand they are part of the Church.  
The walls have come down between Jews and Greeks.  
The world's wisdom knows not a thing about this.  
If they had known they never would've crucified Christ.  
But we know who we've believed, and now where we stand.  
Our position in Christ is part of the plan.

The wisdom of God is hidden from men.  
It is known when the Spirit of God opens the mind,  
To receive hidden truths which He does reveal.  
When we accept Christ, by the Spirit we're sealed.  
But further than that, the Holy Ghost teaches;  
And from Him we learn how far salvation reaches.  
We are placed in a Body with Christ as the Head.  
By the Spirit of God and God's Word we are fed.  
And so, in that truth that in His Body we're placed;  
We can find full instruction from the revealed mind of Christ.

**"O God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: I have been reading in this chapter how easily things can be taken for granted that are truly profound. If I could preach like Paul, maybe people would understand better. But I am what You want me to be - I hope. If there are truths to be told to the people this coming week that I haven't made clear yet; help me, by the power of the Spirit, to make hidden things easy to see. Amen."**

### **1Corinthians 2:6-10**

#### **REMEMBER THE GOSPEL**

In some places and in some cases, God's people neglect to stop and remember "the hole of the pit from which we have been dug, and the rock from which we have been hewn." To go back over how God brought us into the blessings of hearing the Gospel in the first place, and how God in His wisdom unfolded the way of salvation to us, is an important exercise for every child of God. "The wisdom of God" in making salvation possible for all mankind is beyond the understanding of the natural man. Yet for those who are saved, we understand the beauty of the simplicity of the Gospel. For those who are mature, or at least maturing in Christ, there is constantly unfolding more of an understanding of the depths of the riches of God's grace. God's wisdom goes beyond that of all men put together. What has been hidden from the powers of darkness that permeates the world system and is totally unable to bring peace to earth, has been revealed in the Gospel.

God has a time-table by which He brings into light that by which He plans to bless the world. At just the right time, in just the right place, God sent just the right Person - His only begotten Son - into the world that we might live through Him. What had been hidden, came to light through the apostles who God sent with His message of salvation by grace, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. So, they moved out preaching "Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Those appointed people had the plan of salvation clear in their minds and hearts because they knew Jesus who had they had seen crucified and had been "eyewitnesses" of the suffering and resurrected Savior, and who now was alive and risen from the dead "that He might be Lord."

This Lordship was not promoted by the edge of the sword or by marching armies, but by the Gospel which is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." The wisdom of God is the message that changes the hearts and lives of those who hear it and believe on Him who is the subject of the Gospel. This is for the glory of God, it is true, but it includes the reflected glory brought to God by the great company of believers who have personally believed on the Lord Jesus. This is not a marching army of hot-headed terrorists seeking to change the world themselves. This is a joyful, grateful multitude of redeemed souls who in appreciation for the lost souls of men, women and children. and a deep love for the Lord Jesus, love others and want to see them saved. What glory this is even today and what glory will be seen when we all share with the Lord Jesus Christ His reign of "peace on earth, good will toward men."

Whether the unknowing princes of the world are people like Pilate and the leaders of Israel, or the devil and his host, I don't know for sure. Perhaps it means both. The ignorance they showed in crucifying Christ does not excuse their actions. Pilate knew the Lord Jesus was an innocent and just man. The Jewish leaders had delivered Jesus to be killed because of envy. Satan is in opposition because he still wants to be as God and claim the souls of men who will follow him. He wants to remain the "god of this world." A successful and permanent remedy for sin will bring peace to every one who believes on the Lord Jesus and to earth when Christ comes again. The great victory Christ accomplished on the cross brought defeat over Satan, sin and death.

The "wisdom of God" in revealing the plan of salvation through the atoning death of Christ on the cross has defeated the power of every potential foe. Every person is able in faith, to trust themselves in life and their soul in death to the One who put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Now in the lives of God's people today, God is unfolding the course of a whole new life for them being revealed day after day when life is controlled by the will of God. Occupations change. Outlook on life changes. Attitudes toward other people change. Ambitions change as each believer begins to experience "the things God has prepared for them that love Him."

An assembly of saints like that one in Corinth is a group of people who love God and there is great potential for such a fellowship of people to worship and serve the One we love. When we realize we are not our own and have been bought with a price, we are able to experience the glory of God now and will be able to forever. The wisdom of God will keep us in the warmth of the glory of God that is displayed in the Gospel and its results. The life of an assembly is affected by the things God has prepared even now for them that love Him.

It is essential that a company of people gathered to the Lord Jesus Christ in His name, remember that what we have can become ineffective unless the ministry of the Holy Spirit is free to work. The Corinthians believers started looking at themselves and at their favorite preachers, and got their eyes off of the Person of Christ and the wisdom of God. We need to learn from them that every day can be a profitable and good one when we focus on Jesus Christ and Him crucified. That is the true wisdom of God.

          Their eyes are straining as they look through the darkness  
  To see if their nemeses has come.

          These are the men who to God's grace would not hearken  
  And set about to kill God's only Son.

          Hidden from their eyes as well as their hearts  
  Was the truth that He came here to bless.  
          If they had known they never would start  
  Down that path of such unrighteousness.

          Pilate and Herod, in places of authority  
  Chose the path of expediency instead  
          Of basing their decisions on the obvious reality  
  That He was exactly who He had said.

          The result of their choices they will endure forever  
  What we choose now is not quickly done.  
          No matter what they thought, there was no earnest endeavor

The opportunity to do right very quickly was gone.

The arch-enemy of God still has unfulfilled ambition  
To take control over the souls of men.  
He manipulates those who see only the human conditions  
Hoping they will all be willing to follow after him.  
But the wisdom of God like a brilliant light  
Shines in its glory all over the world.  
Those who hear and believe are given eternal life  
And the banner of the Gospel is there unfurled.

So the glow of that glory that comes from God's wisdom  
Changes lives by the power the Gospel releases.  
To those who the mystery God revealed through them  
Began a message the impact of which never ceases.  
God has by His Spirit given holy insight  
To those whose hearts are open to the message of grace  
As they mature in the faith there is spiritual eyesight  
That enables them to love and serve the Lord Jesus by faith.

**"Father, I thank Thee for revealing the mystery of the Gospel to whosoever will may come. In Thy great wisdom Thou hast arranged that it be told world-wide. I know Thy servant who has just passed into Thy presence by way of death, has told Thy Gospel daily for over 50 years. I pray the impact of his ministry will continue. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

**1Corinthians 2:9, 10.** *"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. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God."*

#### **THE EFFECT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

What effect does the work of the Holy Spirit have on those who are saved? What effect does He produce that has made us so different from those in whom He does not dwell?

He has **convicted** us of sin and brought us to repentance.  
Remember the prayers, the sighs and the tears; as His truth bore down on my ears?  
Remember concern on the faces around; as the Spirit spoke loud to my fears?

He has **convincing** us by the Word and brought us to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.  
Remember the words on the pages of truth; as to me He turned on the light?  
Remember the moment when deep in my heart; Jesus' death met fully my plight?

He has **claimed** us by the new birth and brought us into God's family.  
Remember relief, the end of the grief; the joy that new life He did bring?  
Remember the tears of joy that did flow, as "Happy Day" then we did sing?

He has **changed** us by the new nature and brought us into a new state (justified).  
Remember the desire, He then did inspire; in me to follow His way?  
Remember new prayers, new hymns and new cares; as His will we chose to obey?

He has **classified** us by sealing us and promised us a new inheritance.  
Remember I'm His, no longer my own; I'm paid for and sealed as His own.  
Remember I'm safe, secured and assured; just as sure as if I'm at Home.

He **clarifies** us by bearing witness with our spirit and enabling us to manifest His fruit.  
Remember this fact that the Spirit will act; in power to do His own will.  
Remember, please do that the evidence too; will doubts in others make still.

He **challenges** us by giving us God's Word that we might know and do what is right.  
So, step out and face, all that opposes, with grace; and the truth of God in your hand.  
For it's by Spirit-power, for each passing hour; that we travel through enemy-land.

**"O gracious and Loving Father: I thank Thee that Thou didst send the Lord Jesus into the world to save sinners like me. And I thank Thee that He sent the Holy Spirit into**

**the world to enlighten me, regenerate me, "born" me, and dwell in me to empower me to do Thy sweet will. And I thank Thee that He has seen fit to send me to my world that the people who live here might hear the Gospel. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

### **1 Corinthians 2:10-16**

#### **REMEMBER THE WORK OF GOD**

God has graciously given to those who believe on Him and know Him, the wonderful truth of the Gospel. The Father elects those who will believe on Christ by choosing us before the foundation of the world. He included us in the divine plan of the ages. We know the Son of God has come and by the sacrifice of Himself has demonstrated God's love to us when He died for our sins according to the scriptures, and was buried, and rose again the third day according to the scriptures. The work of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel is to convict us of "sin, righteousness and judgment to come." By the Spirit of God using the truth of the Word of God, we are born again by the Spirit.

The "deep things" have been revealed to us by the Spirit. They would include who God is, the nature of God and the plan of God to give salvation based on the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. This legally and justly makes it possible for God to "look on Him, and pardon me" because the wages of sin have been paid for by death - the death of the Perfect Substitute. Now the Lord Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead for our justification. Legal satisfaction has been made. By nature, men don't know this and more that that, it seems foolish to them. "But God has revealed it to us by His Spirit."

The personality of every person is unique and we don't really know what goes inside another person. We may perceive certain things by outward expressions, but really, the spirit of each person is hidden from other people. In the same way it is only divine Persons who know the things of God. However, something totally remarkable and beyond our greatest expectations has happened! The Holy Spirit "who searcheth all things" and knows all the "deep things," reveals to us the "things which God hath prepared for them that love Him!" God wants us to know now the blessings that, in grace, He has prepared ahead for us. God unfolds those plans to us by His Spirit. He has made this possible by the Spirit of God becoming the Divine Resident who dwells in us since we have been saved by God's grace. This is so different from the spirit of this age or world. The spirit of the world focuses only on self and self-interests. It places man as the independent ruler of his own life and destiny. How often we hear, "You can do it if you put your mind to it." "You can be whatever you want to be." But it is the Spirit of God who dwells in us who teaches us. He makes plain the blessings of God's grace that meets our need, not our independent choices and the consequences that follow.

The Holy Spirit gave the apostles the authority to communicate the word of God to us. What the apostles were taught by the Spirit, they communicated to the Corinthians and to "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." From the Holy Spirit through the apostles we have received the spiritual truths God intends us to have. These are given in written words, not just inspired thoughts. The inspiration of the scriptures has come to us now in the Bible to communicate its truth to others. When we speak the word of God, we are passing on what was verbally inspired by the Holy Spirit to "holy men of old" including the apostles. We are now able to communicate spiritual truths with spiritual words. These are not vague ideas we make up to suit the people.

There is the desire of many people now to only hear things that make them feel good about themselves and about God. They only want to hear about the love of God, not the righteousness, justice or the wrath of God. They want the to hear about the goodness of men and women, not the fact and consequences of sin. We cannot fashion our communication of truth to others on what appeals to the "spirit of the world (age)." It is our responsibility, the same as it was to the apostles, to communicate spiritual things using spiritual words. Stick to what the Bible says!

The Corinthian believers had gotten taken up with the gifts of the Spirit and had overlooked the counsel of God. By misusing what was good, they fell into the trap of overemphasizing what they liked and made them feel spiritual. Satan took advantage of them and they were not communicating "spiritual things with spiritual words" and it was creating chaos and division in the assembly. We must read the Bible carefully and meditate on it so we understand both the interpretation and how to apply it to the present situation. A clear understanding of Bible doctrine is a safeguard for us personally and can bless others when it is passed on. We can learn from how the Lord Jesus taught when we read through the Gospels and follow His practices.

Even the most intelligent but unsaved man cannot receive what the Holy Spirit teaches the new believer. Professors, doctors and theologians are in darkness when it comes to spiritual truth if they have not the Holy

Spirit who is received at the time one is born again. On the other hand, new believers begin to grow in grace and knowledge when they begin their life of faith. We are able to see under the facade of this age and know what is really important - what is really true. The growing Christian is able to discern what others cannot. The Holy Spirit matures us as we grow and when we maintain our commitment to communicate spiritual things with spiritual words, we ourselves are ministered to by the very words we pass on.

In this way we are able to enjoy the things Christ enjoys; understand what God's plans are and the reasons behind things that happen. We are not perfect and will make mistakes so we do not take the place of God in the lives of others. But by thinking like God thinks, and valuing what God values we are able to communicate God's truth to others in ways and words they can grasp. It enables us to be relevant to those who hear the message of the Gospel. It is a danger to us if we start emphasizing one work of the Godhead above another. By keeping a balance in spiritual things, we are able to communicate the work of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit as they unfold the wisdom of God and the deep things of God.

With graceful words and compassion, we pass on what we learn from God  
Thoughts that from the Spirit are fashioned, are understood when we preach the Word  
The darkness of unbelievers can't be helped, they are who they are by nature  
Things we have experienced not just felt, go way beyond this worldly culture.

The Holy Spirit first revealed, what previously was hidden to us  
Those things our nature concealed, are now real when the Savior we trust  
The Father in heaven had a plan, that was carried out when Christ was here  
When found in fashion as a man, Christ brought God's purposes near.

Then the Spirit came here to indwell, those who in Christ put their faith  
His enlightenment enables us to tell, others of God's redeeming grace  
By His indwelling power, we are able to communicate in words  
The urgency of the present hour, that sinners will from sin be willing to turn.

The Spirit searches all things that happen, from Him there is nothing hid  
From Him conviction of sin brings, a burden from which we want to be rid  
Each heart by the searching Spirit, is opened to spiritual truth  
By facing sin, we bare it, and the Word expresses its worth.

Maturing in the truth takes some time, we have to make a choice  
What do I want from this life of mine? Am I willing to obey God's voice?  
When I do, God in mercy unveils, my mind to receive what He teaches  
Knowing the mind of Christ entails, the power of the Word my heart reaches.

**"Father, I do not want to be casual about the things of God. May the truths I read and write about be truly felt truth, not just the results of my study. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

**1 Corinthians 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."*

#### **THE SPIRIT WHICH IS OF GOD.**

The spirit of the world claims the mind of a man;  
It will manipulate, control and dictate when it can.  
It seeks to demand my allegiance and to force my hand -  
But not the Spirit of the Lord.

The world-spirit wants to mold me in its way;  
It will seek to influence all I do and say;  
Its ways are not compatible to the children of the day -  
I must walk by the Spirit of the Lord.

The Spirit of God reveals truth from His Word.  
The Spirit of God gives understanding from the Lord.  
The Spirit of God gives to me the light of God -  
I'm indwelt by the Spirit of the Lord.

When I worship then, I do this in the Spirit of God.  
When I speak, I should do it by the Spirit of God.  
When I sing it should be directed by the Spirit of God -  
I've been sealed by the Spirit of God.

I receive understanding of the Bible when I read.  
I learn when by the Spirit, its truths I heed.  
It is the Spirit of the Lord that leads me when I need -  
Guidance by the Spirit of the Lord.

**“The contrast is easily seen, O God, between the spirit of the world and its empty ways and the Spirit which is of God. I experience His operation in my own life daily and it makes such a difference in the life of a believer and one who is not. Thank you for giving me this Spirit which is of God. Amen.”**

### **1Corinthians 2:14 -3:4.**

#### **THE THREE DIVISIONS OF MANKIND.**

The Bible divides all of mankind into three groups. God’s divisions of mankind are based upon the spiritual condition of the human heart.

**THE NATURAL MAN:** 1Cor.2:14. Alienated from God.

1. Born only once. Alive physically; dead spiritually.
2. Motivated by his own physical desires.
3. Unbelieving, unconverted, unsaved.
4. Self is supreme (“flesh”, Jn.3:6). Jesus Christ is not in the flesh. He is excluded.
5. Ego centered. Functions and seeks fulfillment in the five senses.
6. Outwardly gracious, courteous, and kind. Inwardly seeks to gratify fleshly desires.
7. His spirit has never been touched by the Holy Spirit; he is separated from God.
8. Despite natural gifts and physical accomplishments, he has a major void in his life. Pascal – “There is a God-shaped vacuum in every heart.” Henry Thoreau – “The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.”
9. Things of God are foolishness, distasteful, moronic; he cannot know them because they are spiritually discerned.

**THE CARNAL MAN:** 1Cor.3:1. A Christian under fleshly control.

1. He has experienced God’s salvation, but not God’s sovereignty.
2. Born physically and spiritually.
3. Christ is in the life but self is supreme.
4. Ego is in the driver’s seat.
5. Remains a baby Christian.
6. Without growth; no development; growth arrested.
7. Unfulfilled and wretched because of resisting God’s plan.
8. Easily offended and hurt at the slightest provocation.
9. Unusual activity disturbs him.
10. Shortsighted; lacks judgment; immature.
11. Envy, strife and division. [1Cor.3:3] Children quarrel and fight; impatient; lack self-control; unable to get along with one another.

**THE SPIRITUAL MAN:** 1Cor.2:15-16. Life controlled by the Holy Spirit.

1. Judges all things.
2. Jesus Christ is in control of his life; He rules and reigns.
3. Totally committed himself to Christ.
4. Grows and brings forth fruit.
5. Has experienced the love of God and wants to share that love with others.
6. Has discernment; is able to make right decisions.
7. Understands the scriptures and is able to live in God’s perfect will.
8. Displays the mind of Christ [Phil.2:5]. A mind of service and submission.
9. Seeks each day to conform to the image of Christ.

### **1Corinthians 3:1-9**

#### **REMEMBER WHAT YOU ARE A PART OF**

When a new assembly of believers gathers in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in a local area and begins to carry out scriptural practices, there are some things we have in common. Everyone who is a part of that fellowship has received the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior and they love Him deeply. Each one is indwelt by the Holy Spirit and has a Spirit-begotten desire to please God and obey His Word. There is a concern for others that unites us around the truth of the Gospel and the death, burial and resurrection of our

Lord Jesus. We all appreciate the work the Lord Jesus did when He was here and we would like to be like Him and truly follow in His steps. To live a Christ-like life among family and friends is important to us. There is a certain unique spirituality about us when we are first saved, and as an assembly begins its public testimony in a community. There is a clear distinction between what is natural and what is spiritual at that time in our Christian experience. Unfortunately, that enthusiasm for the things of God doesn't always continue.

As believers grow older in Christ, and as an assembly of saints continue in their public representation of our risen Lord, there should be evidence of maturity and spiritual growth in the company of saints as a whole, and in the individual believers who represent that company in all their walks in life. Growth in Christ will be evident in the way the spirits of God people rise above the normal fleshly way of life that is common to the natural man. Envy implies a discontent is in the children of God. A family of God's people should be recognized by the similarities we have because of the new nature God has implanted in us. Envy leads to division when one person is determined to have their way and insists that others submit to what they want, or they are visibly and verbally unhappy.

For a group of God's people who gather in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and has been called out of the natural world to Him, and then divide over favorite preachers or preachers, is abhorrent to those who look on - and to God. How childish it is to line up behind different people and allow division to get a hold in the family or an assembly. That is like one child only willing to listen to the mother in a family, and another only responding to the father. A normal family functions well when the distinctions of the roles of both parents is understood, respected and obeyed. The same respect for each other is expected in the believers in a local assembly like was at Corinth. Unfortunately, those believers were still like immature children - and not only them.

As growth takes place in the lives of God's people, we realize that we are gathered to the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ who is in heaven interceding for us. Our consciousness of a living Savior continually mediating on our behalf, takes us beyond ourselves and all the blessings we have received, to Him and how we can bless Him. This goes beyond the nourishment milk provides for us, to meat that strengthens us to be able to serve Him. Jealousy and divisions, quarreling and envy are self-centered expressions of selfishness and carnality. We each have our role to fill in service for God. Let us each be thankful for what God has allowed us to do for His glory and as we help others, to realize we serve God when we serve people. The gifts God has given us are to enable all of us as members in a body to meet the needs of the assembly. Also, the use of the gifts helps us to "do good unto all men" as it pleases God.

The preparation of ground for seeding and the sowing of seed requires one who is able and willing to labor extensively to bring about conditions for the harvest we expect, by faith, to bring blessing. One who waters needs to be a patient person willing to the same thing day after day, and be content with watching a little change in growth. The life of the seed that is planted, flourishes because of water that comes from God Himself through His servants. He alone is the Source of life. He is the One who can make the life-principle work and bring forth "much fruit."

Each different person working in God's field is an important part of the whole work. The diversity of gifts suits the diversity of need to complete that work. Everyone who is a laborer in the field is of God, from God and for God. That's why we all have been elected, saved and suited for the ministry that reaches out to the world from the local churches of God. As we mature individually in the family, we are growing in ability to more skillfully work in the harvest field. That diversity of ability and strength unites the people of God with a common purpose. As we look ahead with anticipation to the time when the Lord Jesus Christ reigns in glory, we should be unified in our spirits that we might glorify Him now in our assembly life and personal lives in our "bodies and spirits which are His."

At the same time as we focus on our ministry with all its aspects, that needs every saint unified. Even though each one is different, we are reminded that we have no reason to be proud. "Puffed up" is a description that is used that was dividing the Corinthian believers. Humility is needed alongside of enthusiasm to place all the credit for a good harvest where it belongs. "It is God that giveth the increase." One may labor so necessary finances are there to support another one who preaches the Gospel and leads souls to Christ. At the same time there are those unseen people who are earnestly praying that the condition of the unbelievers, the spiritual condition of the preacher, the commitment of the one witnessing, might be such that God can work through those chosen vessels.

God wants to see fruit produced in an assembly that will in turn produce more fruit in God's great field. We are all going to be recompensed for the labor we expend to further the Gospel and bring in the fruitful

harvest. Holiness, righteousness, faithfulness, praise, worship and precious souls are all fruit that can come from a fruitful assembly, a "tilled field." Cultivation requires effort and care of "God's husbandry." The same is needed in His building.

It is not by chance God chooses to place a variety of gifts together  
The need is varied so the resources are different, every sister and brother  
Has a role to fill, a work to do, an opportunity that is unique.  
When placed where God intends each to be, a voice is heard by those who seek.  
That person has been gifted by God and placed in a strategic location  
Previously spiritually prepared to meet the need of the situation  
The result of which, when that person's work is finally done  
Another is called upon by the Holy Spirit and the lost person is won.

It may be another person cannot seem to make good connections  
And their gift is to provide what is needed to bring blessing in distant locations  
The far-reaching impact of faithful labor is needed in God's harvest field  
Sowers, those who water and reapers are essential when seed does yield  
What the Lord of the harvest intended when each different one He sent  
Because He alone knows the gift He gave and what is each person's bent  
When the harvest is over and the labor is done, and the profit finally is counted  
Each one who had a part in the work rejoices because the Lord Himself is exalted.

Like in a family we want the babies to grow, into maturity in faith  
Each bears a characteristic of the One who saved them by His amazing grace  
When we labor in God's field, to be a participant in the great harvest is our reward  
When the fruit is all reaped and counted, all the glory belongs to the Lord  
The diversity of the work we do, does not change our united goal  
In unity our purpose is to bless the Lord and bring salvation to precious souls  
When serving in a spirit of humility then there is a place God can bless  
Praise, worship, and honor are given Him when the fruitful season is assessed.

**"Gracious Father, this day has before me a commitment to some active, physical labor. May Thy servant not allow this responsibility to in any way hinder the spiritual benefits of fellowship with Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

**1 Corinthians 3:7.** *"So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."*

#### **INCREASE.**

The "planter" is the laborer who knows the type of soil he is preparing for the harvest. By experience, he knows the needs of the ground before the seed is put in. The thorns and thistles have to be dealt with before the seed goes in. The weeds have to be pulled and killed before the seeds go in. Then the ground has to be turned over so any remaining problems are turned under the ground. The soil itself then needs to be prepared with stones and rocks removed. The soil can be smoothed so hard ground can be broken up and ready to receive good seed. When with his experienced eye, he sees the ground is ready, he takes the precious seed in his hand and places it where it will find all it needs to grow into healthy plants producing fruit.

Much of Gospel work is done before bringing the sinner to where he can receive the word in the good ground of his heart. Clear explanations of the need of the soul need to be given. To present the PROBLEM is our first work. After we discern the degree of understanding about one's need, we can move on to the SOLUTION. That is where the truths of salvation, the work of Christ, the response of faith is given. To FOCUS undivided attention on the PROBLEM and SOLUTION will give a sense of URGENCY to the message. The planting season is about over so keep working until this phase of the work is done. To urge the sinner to ACTION is as far as the planter can go in his tasks. He realizes... "BUT GOD GAVE THE INCREASE."

The "waterer" watches the following seasons. His eye is turned to the color of the sky and the dampness of the ground. When it is observed there is need for the water to be personally carried and applied, he is there. Again, and again he will go to the Water Source and dip of the life-giving water himself and transport it through his own heart and mind to the growing plants under his care that are drying up. His task is tedious. He doesn't know which bucket of water turned the danger of dying into the assurance of life. He doesn't know which day the water was most effective. All he has to know is that he did what he was supposed to do. When the green growth was seen and the fruit began to form, he knew he had done the work of the "waterer..." "BUT GOD GAVE THE INCREASE."

God gives the increase because He is the Life-Source in the seed. God gives the increase because He placed in the dark ground, all that is needed to make fruit. God gives the increase because He knows the right amount of heat, light and water to make plants grow. God gives the increase because He arranged the process by which it all works together to produce fruit.

The "planter" and the "waterer" know they can only give what God gives them to do; "BUT GOD GAVE THE INCREASE." The wonderful thing is that God lets both participate with Him in the process. Whether it be in preaching the Gospel, or the teaching and nurturing of the believers; all rejoice together and are rewarded by the fruit – "BUT GOD GAVE THE INCREASE!"

**"My hands are full Father, with the work Thou hast given me to do. I think I like the planting best, but there seems to be more planters in some places that there are waterers. At the moment though, in this place, the need I can best fill is that of a waterer. So tonight, as I speak, after going to the well again and again today, may the water I bring and pour out be what Thou can use the best for the need of the plants - that they might be fruitful. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

### **1 Corinthians 3:10-23**

#### **REMEMBER WHAT YOU ARE DOING**

An assembly of God's people who gather in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is looked at in these verses as a building. A temple is not just a dwelling place but a sanctified dwelling place. As a fruitful field, the value of the work of an assembly can be seen as the bountiful harvest of Christian character and service, and is brought in to bless the saints and bring glory to God. As a building the local assembly is seen as a planned structure raised to provide a place of safety, security, fellowship, worship and identification for the Lord's people in a given locality. This is not the building we meet in to conduct our meetings but is the building we are. The assembly is not ours; it is God's. "Ye are God's husbandry (field), ye are God's building." So, where does God dwell in a public way with His people? Is it in the church of my choice? Is it where I feel comfortable? Is it the place they do things in a way that pleases me? We don't have to pass judgment on every gathering center in a community, nor should we. Some things we leave to God. But we can and should pass judgment on where I am and my responsibility to the assembly of which I am a part.

The first and most important part of a building is the foundation. When it comes to determining the quality of a building it is only right to start at the foundation and work our way up when we are inspecting it. The foundation is what separates us from the ground (the world) and the foundation of a scripturally gathered assembly is the Lord Jesus Christ. In His life on earth people said of Him, "Never man spake like this Man." Others said, "We never saw it on this wise." His teaching, His life, His death and His resurrection separated Him from the world. These same things are to separate a church from the world. The solid foundation of a church is our Lord Jesus Christ. A biblical assembly does not blend in with the world but has clearly a separate identity from the world. It is our responsibility to make sure the doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ, is in no way compromised. His deity, His humanity, His eternal Sonship, His perfection of character, His absolute holiness, the fact that He did not sin, knew no sin and could not sin - all these and much more is the doctrine of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. A person teaching a proper understanding of the foundational doctrine of an assembly will show evidence in his teaching he believes these things. A poem we occasionally quote in Gospel preaching fits here.

"What think ye of Christ" is the test  
That tries both the state and the scheme  
You cannot be right in the rest  
Until you think rightly of Him.

On this solid foundation, the on-going teaching of God's truth is built to establish the Lord's people and maintain a scriptural public testimony. The imagery here is not of believers being gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay or stubble. The saints of God are "living stones" whose life and character are built on Christ, the Chief Corner Stone. In the assembly at Corinth there were skillful, gifted teachers who were teaching the wisdom of this world. It sounds very reasonable for us to join together with every other church in a community in the interests of "Christian unity." "Just think," they say, "What an impact we would have in the city if all of us who are Christians rallied together as one. Why we could change the city government, the educational system, the laws. We would have controlling power."

Paul, Apollos, Cephas and other faithful teachers had established the work in Corinth on truths that cannot be manufactured by men, and cannot be destroyed by men. Each of those materials were made by God Himself in His creation power and has stood the test of time. Gold, silver and precious stones are not seen in large quantities and are hidden from the eyes of those who will not dig for a long time to find them. There

is a descending order of value it is true, but they all come from God and are each extremely valuable to men. The teachers at Corinth were passing on to the assembly things that were temporary, ordinary, cheap, easy to get in one's backyard and can be manufactured into something that looked good but had no lasting value. Wood hay and stubble are all products of nature that grow quickly and can die quickly or be destroyed and gone in a very short time. What we build into our own lives is what we pass on to others. Lightweight inferior teachers normally use worldly wisdom, a worldly approach and worldly words to make what they teach interesting and more palatable to those who come to hear them. It is part of their method to make their message "seeker friendly."

Everyone who teaches God's people needs to remember there is One Listener we cannot see. When we come into His presence at the Judgment Seat of Christ, the teaching we have given to those who belong to Him will be tested by the fire of the discernment of His holiness. The quality of teaching will be examined by the Lord Jesus Christ who is absolutely holy, uncompromising in discernment, absolute in His purity. Our Lord Jesus Christ expects our teaching to be like that because it represents Him. It is His building we are working on now. Those things that survive the testing of righteous judgment will be rewarded by Him who is more concerned by the quality of our teaching rather than the quantity. This view of the future challenges us now to be loyal to the Lord and faithful to His Word no matter what others say and do, and no matter how many or how few we teach.

The dwelling of God whether it be in heaven on His throne or on earth His footstool, in the dispensational Body of the Church, or the local body of believers in an assembly - it must be holy. This is "God's temple." We dare not demean it nor count it as our own place where we can do as we want. The controlling Person of God's temple is God Himself. When we are allowed to speak for God, we should never stoop to push or teach the wisdom of the world. The crafty ways and words of the world are of no value and are not worthy of us paying any attention to them. They are what they are - self-centered people trying to fit infinite truths into a slick, smooth capsulated form to make them palatable to the listeners. Man's wisdom leads to futile attempts to lower the dignity and glory of our Lord to the extremely limited capacity of men.

Any teaching that brings glory to God will be about God. The motive will be to glorify God. It will be a spiritual blessing to the people of God. The variety of teachers in a New Testament church is to bring blessing to everyone and to meet every need. Everything we need comes from God for working, for living - even for dying. God has provided for His people now, and for us in the future. We are Christ's. That is our responsibility. We are not our own. We are not of Paul, Apollos or Cephas. We have Christian liberty it is true, but our freedom is in Christ, and our Lord when He was here "did always those things that pleased the Father."

“What should I speak? Where should I go to meet the needs that are here?”  
These are not uncommon words from the voice of a spiritual teacher in prayer  
Before his God and Father, he makes appeal in the name of the Lord  
And then trusting the Holy Spirit to guide him, he goes deeper into God's Word.

God alone knows the need of each one whether to comfort, encourage or exhort  
The only way a wise teacher knows is to remember, “Who hath believed our report?”  
It is not just the flip of a switch, or a personal pet subject of mine  
This is needed to pass on to the saints, so they needed understanding will find.

The Word of God has to speak to me first, and my own spirit with truth be filled  
Then from clay lips can be spoken words, so controversy then can be stilled.  
Natural wisdom of man is basically useless, it is the wisdom of God we need  
The first may at first seem to be sweet, God's wisdom changes each one who pays heed.

The foundation on which we are built is solid, there is no weakness that comes from it  
Concern is not where we are thinking, when teaching truth on the foundation does fit  
The precious things that come from God are not easily seen, but the results certainly are  
Impact from such teaching is effective, it is controlled by the Spirit's power.

Lightweight, frivolous teaching is seen but the lasting value is not there  
Worldly wisdom sounds good at the moment, but of its dangers we aren't aware  
The value of some things won't be known, until the day it is tested  
Then revealed by the One who discerns, is the worth and result we desire.

I think I will be glad to see the smoke rising from the things of the flesh  
In may be a surprise to learn what was taught when the saints were blest  
With a view to the need of the hearers, I will bend my knees and study the Word  
From the Source of Living Water there will flow, truth to bless the people of God.

**"Father, these morning times seem to be increasingly important. I pray that this is not just an exercise of intellectual interest but a true desire to think Thy thoughts, in Thy way, from Thy Word for Thy people. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

### **1 Corinthians 4:1-13**

#### **REMEMBER WHO YOU SERVE**

There were a lot of things the believers in Corinth had been taught but had either chosen to ignore because of their carnality, or thought was unimportant because it didn't come from the wisdom of men. We need to remember who we serve and why, otherwise we can quickly become attracted to what is going on around us; to favorite preachers or teachers or even to our own work as if it is the most important thing going on in my life. The apostles were given a special ministry of unfolding spiritual truths that had been hidden. God was bringing those things to light through those men who were in the beginning of the church - "the foundation of the apostles and prophets." These men were "stewards of the mysteries of God." There are fourteen of those mysteries given in the New Testament beginning in Matthew 13 and the last one in Revelation 17:5.

A steward does not own anything. Because of his integrity and willingness to accept responsibility given to him, he is entrusted with more than he would have himself. His service is to manage his Master's goods and affairs. In himself he is no more than any other person. The only thing that distinguishes a steward from other servants is he has been found to be trustworthy, loyal and able to be counted on to do the Master's will. Paul, Apollos and Cephas were stewards, whose work was to teach spiritual truths previously hidden to the people of God. Each one had his work to do. Each one's work was different. The steward's effectiveness was not his popularity to those who listened to them, but to the Lord who had given him the responsibility to teach the truths given him. There will always be criticism of one kind or another when one speaks for God. There is no reason to be upset because of the judgment of other people. They have their opinions of what they believe is the way to do the work of God. Let everyone do the work given them from the Lord, as to the Lord and not unto men.

The wise steward will judge himself. What I am in my personal life, in my home life including how I attend to my marriage and to my children, in the way I prepare and present the message God wants me to pass on, all affect my stewardship. It is a requirement that I personally "be found faithful." So whatever people prefer is not the point. My responsibility to God is to faithfully present to the people of God what has been given to me. The truth of God needs to be accurately interpreted and wisely applied so those who hear can easily understand what is to be passed on.

These truths being taught through the ministry of God's faithful stewards will be analyzed critically and righteously by the Lord Himself in His own time and in His own way. We cannot see the motivation behind the work of a servant of God - a steward if you will. The inward "counsels of the heart" are really only known by God who looks on the heart. It is possible, in fact quite easy, to misjudge a message and the messenger who gave it. Leave the judgment of a man and his message, to God to deal with by His standard in His time. The quiet teaching of a man who has been through the suffering and disappointments, as well as the victories associated with outreaching into a far corner of the harvest field, will probably be quite different from one who has been called to minister to large crowds. The latter's charismatic personality and commanding voice can be well used to bring benefit to many. God knows the motive behind each person's labor and ministry.

The saints in the assembly at Corinth had to be challenged with the reality of being a true steward of Jesus Christ. They were being "puffed up" in their self-importance. Contrast how they saw themselves with the actual fact of what the apostle Paul was. The grace of God had changed the Corinthians it is true. But it was God who made this happen, not their own skill or wisdom. They apparently became successful in the community and were rich, while Paul labored with his hands so he would not "be chargeable" to any of them. They were not supporting him; he was there blessing them. They looked at themselves as kings, Paul was a prisoner, a spectacle in a tragic arena - like a theater clown to them. They were exalting themselves because of their spiritual strengths. They considered their achievements as a sign of strength, contrasted with Paul's weakness that allowed God to do the real work and accomplish the lasting goals. Angels and men saw the life and labors of Paul like he was an actor in a play to be mocked. Those apostles were reproached because they were committed to telling the world about Christ. The Corinthians seemed to be thought of as smart, skilled people compared to the apostles who were thought to be fools.

Their physical cost of faithful service for the Lord was very high for those apostles who were following in the steps of the Lord Jesus. What He experienced; they also went through. Paul labored and knew all the while

he was being treated as filth and scum. The Corinthians were wanting everyone to look up to them. It is not going to be easy for anyone who wants to take the Gospel to the unbelievers in the world. There have been in the past, are in the present, and will be in the future costs to pay to serve God as He intends His stewards to do His will.

The motivation that keeps those who serve the Lord at the work, is the love of Christ that constrains us, the fact that we are going to give account of what we have done here in the body at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and an awareness that those who do not know Christ as their personal Savior will be eternally lost. That enables us to rise above the rejections and reproaches of fulfilling the commission we have received from the Lord.

There is a faithfulness about some that provides the incentive  
To keep pressing ahead as a steward of the Master who sent him  
A work has been given that others might understand  
What had been hidden before, but now is revealed to man  
So, all might know who the Person is in whom we believe  
And that they also might in true faith willingly receive  
Him as Savior and Lord, trusting in Jesus Christ for salvation  
And willing then to yield to Him in practical sanctification.

Not now only Savior, but as our Master and our Lord  
As High Priest and Mediator, soon will give rewards  
At the Judgment Seat of Christ where He will dispense  
What has been consistent, and fulfilled the reason we were sent  
Out in the first place with this spiritual task to complete  
As stewards, we are obliged the Master's expectations to meet  
There will be opposition and persecutions we will have to face  
But in spite of those pressures, stewards move forward in faith.

There will be times when as a human spectacle we are seen  
To be completely out of touch with the world system, and seem  
To many, to be outdated, outmoded and intellectually dim  
By those who claim to be Christians but in truth do not know Him  
Who is the Master and has entrusted us to continually serve;  
Even though there will be reproaches we think we did not deserve  
Still our motivation is love for Him, and our hope remains the same  
That there will be stewards raised up and go forward in Jesus' name.

**"Father, I am thinking of the work to which I have been called, and am asking Thee to give Thy servant the needed discernment to know what to speak in each place, and the power to speak with true spiritual understanding. Then I will be assured the things spoken will be relevant and useful to those who hear, and will honor Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

**1Corinthians 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."*

#### **MAN'S JUDGMENT.**

Men cannot see it seems, beyond what they know.  
Men cannot realize the need, unless they go  
To places before unknown, to fields where they did sow  
True and good seed; that fruit might fully grow  
From God's great power and plan; thus, to show,  
That whatever men might judge and scheme to own:  
"HE THAT JUDGETH IS THE LORD!"

Far too often, because it doesn't fit with what we think,  
And our plans and ideas, are not with others, in full synch  
We make our condemnations; sometimes fast as eyes can blink.  
And then we wonder why the work we do begins to sink  
Under the eyes and ears and mouths of folks who speak  
In rapid voices; tones of condemnation, till light will break -  
"HE THAT JUDGETH IS THE LORD!"

To spend long times in worthless self-justification;  
Can bring me down in work and mind in hopeless frustration.  
And it doesn't accomplish a thing, if I engage in condemnation  
Of myself or others - the call is higher; to holy adoration

Of Him who sees and knows beyond the words of vindication;  
To where results and reasons all are revealed - His glorification.  
"HE THAT JUDGETH IS THE LORD."

With eyes up-looked and hands full of worthy endeavor;  
The steward and the minister work always close together,  
To bring to Him who owns it all - God blessed forever -  
All that is His and He entrusted to us, to gather  
The increase, the substance, the lives that sin did scatter:  
Into one holy group; the saints from Corinth or here - all that matters  
Is... "HE THAT JUDGETH IS THE LORD."

**"Omniscient God: Thy word clearly lets me know my limitations and boundaries. I do not want to step out of bounds. The Rule-Book is clear. I have no questions there. A problem is here though, Father: my mouth sometimes seems to open automatically when it should stay shut. I need Thy help to keep a door on my lips; for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, Amen."**

### **1Corinthians 4:14-21**

#### **REMEMBER THE CHILDREN**

It is a father's responsibility to speak openly and honestly to his children. The way he speaks will often reveal the concern he has and the importance of what needs to be said. As a steward, Paul the apostle had to do whatever needed to be done to fulfill his Master's will and to make the work in his hand prosper. He paid the price of following Christ and expected to receive the consequences of his commitment by way of opposition and persecution from the unbelievers who had their own interests at heart. What was unacceptable was the attitude of believers who had been saved by God's grace in Corinth. They had to be reminded of who they were and their responsibility to Christ and the Gospel. It is very easy to be taken up with our new life and the blessing of it, rather than the One who gave the new life and provides the blessings. When we are so taken up with the activities of the church and all the programs that it provides for singles, newly married, young, old, poor, missions and local social concerns that we forget the Blessor and the messenger who first taught us - then we are in danger of being overcome with carnality. Worldly flesh and religious flesh are both still flesh. When Samuel asked Saul, who returned from defeating the Amalakites, "What meaneth the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the cattle" that was supposed to have been destroyed, Saul replied that he had kept the best to offer to the Lord. He kept the best of what God hated the most. He said he kept it to offer to the Lord. He was more interested in what he was going to do than what God wanted. Religious flesh - carnality, is as bad or worse than worldly fleshly desire.

Those people in the past had to be reminded as to who they were now, and in whose family they now belonged. Paul initiated the work, and as a father, had its best interests at heart. He was only an instructor who teaches truth, but He was their father who had love for his children. His relationship to them was that of a responsible parent. He had been there when they were born again into God's family. So now he had the right to correct them as a father corrects his children. It is possible for a teacher to have all the right answers without knowing the problem. We can learn all kinds of things from books and other people, but unless we have been through the hard times of the beginning of a work, we really have only a theoretical knowledge of what is involved in that work. To have gone through the high spots and the low, the causes of joy and sorrow, the gains and losses, enables us to have a practical knowledge and a "feel" for that assembly that is peculiar to fathers and not to instructors.

Paul intended them to follow his example and imitate him to be able to carry out the spiritual practices of an assembly. He was following Christ by walking in the light with God, learning from God, communicating with God. He qualified what he meant by saying in chapter 11, "Even as I also am of Christ." We don't have to mimic everything a spiritual father does, but should do what he does as he follows Christ. Spiritual doctrines and practices need to be learned from spiritual people. Principles that apply to given situations need to be passed on by those who are fathers. Many churches have gotten away from the truth of God and substituted their own practices to please people, and base them on the wisdom of men. To talk about living by faith is one thing. To live by faith is another. To teach truth in an assembly is one thing. To live truth in an assembly is another. It is not enough to know what is right. We must practice what is right in our assembly.

Timothy was an example of a faithful man of God who had learned from his spiritual father and was able to pass on what he had been taught and knew what was right. He trusted Paul. He respected him. He learned from him. He obeyed him because he knew he followed the Lord. The contrast between Timothy and the "puffed up" Corinthians was very obvious. Timothy knew Paul's teaching was consistent in every assembly he had established and he knew what was expected of the believers in Corinth. For some reason the

Corinthians were proud of even their own disobedience. Their words were boastful and they talked about their power - but it wasn't theirs. In essence they were like children who boast about themselves without ever having accomplished anything of value.

What is a spiritual father to do to correct those who are like disobedient children? There are various forms of spiritual discipline a father, and an assembly are able to use to correct the wrong behavior of God's children. Paul was a spiritual father with a tender spirit. He initiated the subject of discipline by telling them of his right to do so. Spiritual children can cause us a lot of heartache and grief, but there must be discipline to bring them back to what God intends. We need to show and give true respect, obedience, support and love for those we know truly care for us as a father cares for his children.

How does paternal love express itself to children?  
Is there some tone of voice, some way to tell them;  
Of your affection, yet stir their sense of duty to Him?  
With common sense and Bible truth to back it  
A tender voice at times and senatorial tones to fit  
The urgency and seriousness hopefully will hit -  
A place in their conscience to act.

When other voices are raised with hermeneutical expertise  
What is a caring concerned father able to say compared to these?  
How are we able to bring them to where reality they will seize?  
A father has the welfare and well-being of his children at heart  
He may have to be firm and make corrections at the start  
Then follow that up with what only fatherly wisdom can impart -  
A place in their heart he will reach.

If the voices of teachers seem so learned and insistent  
A father's example that has been real and consistent  
Can overpower the instructor who to truth has been resistant  
A father who truly cares cannot, by any other, be duplicated  
Even when a strange teacher some new thing initiated  
And tries to make a learner think some wrong is implicated -  
A place in their mind he will give light.

When the child of God will honestly to a father give ear  
From an opened heart and mind to the advice he will hear  
Then from the wrong teaching he will cease and forbear  
A father "founds" the family, so he has certain rights  
A father as an example to his children imparts his light  
A father disciplines his children who thought his "bark worse than his bite" -  
A place in their lives he will claim.

**"Father in heaven, there is a certain sense in which I am a father to many who live in this place. We brought the Gospel to many of them, saw them saved and established in Thy word and ways. May Thy servant receive from Thee a father-like care for their spiritual well-being while at the same time being faithful in correcting and guiding them. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

**1 Corinthians 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."*

### **INSTRUCTORS OR FATHERS.**

Instructors have a role to fill. They often are able to give reasons, types and illustrations of truths that God intends to be real to us. To carry out what God wants and then teach me how to do it right, is what an instructor is for. He can make plain to an inquiring mind, things that are hard to understand.

When a father teaches, he takes personally all he is teaching to his son or daughter. He would face them; look them in the eye; let them know what he is going to say is important, and then precisely say what needs to be said. His emotional involvement would be evident to the child. His real care for their understanding would be in the tone of voice, the pressure of the hand and the expression on the face. There would be no question that he wanted the child to understand and get it right. The form of a thing would have no value.

**"Father, You have shown me in many ways that what I say and do is important to Thee. Help me to be a father- instructor, not just an instructor. Amen."**

## **1 Corinthians 5**

### **REMEMBER THE EFFECTS OF SIN**

Society as a whole has become used to immorality and various kinds of sexual sins, accepting them as normal behavior in people. What we are experiencing today in our post-Christian world was quite common and, in some places like Corinth, accepted as socially okay. When a society has no inner moral compass, or no written standard of conduct such as the Bible to control behavior, almost any social or physical interaction is tolerated. However, when one believes on the Lord Jesus Christ and accepts the sacrifice He made on the cross as payment for our sin, this places us in the place of much higher moral responsibility. The consequences of sin can not be overlooked. A "new creation" in Christ is one who has the Holy Spirit within. But the Spirit can be grieved or quenched by our actions or inactions. A professing Christian when made aware of sin by the truth of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit, will have a sense of guilt when sin occurs. Guilt is the response of the conscience acting on our behalf to make a change our behavior. When the conscience is not heeded, and when guilt does not change our behavior, then outside influences have to be used.

Any person in a church fellowship has an effect on the local assembly for good or bad. The testimony of a church is affected by the daily lives of those in that fellowship as well as in their participation in the church's activities. We are members of Christ it is true, and we are also members one of another. Christian fellowship when it is God-honoring and consistently follows the teaching of the scriptures, is a wonderful thing. Spiritual strength and joy are able to be shared and increases when the conduct of the lives of God's people is consistent with what we teach. When public and flagrant sin takes place among those who gather in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is not corrected and dealt with in a scriptural manner, the whole church is paralyzed.

There are clearly defined ways to deal with sin by changing the behavior of the sinning one through discipline. The whole point of discipline is to correct and, if necessary, punish one whose conduct in life has to be changed. In this chapter the behavior that had to be changed was the immoral sin of incest. Standards of morality are unchangeable in the scriptures. The legislative practices of a government do not change the fundamental standards of morality taught by the Spirit of God. When such sin takes place in a local assembly of God's people, we are not to overlook it, but rather mourn as we would one who has died. Strangely the Corinthian believers did not look at the sin of a man having his father's wife as a serious problem. Even unbelievers look at that act with distain and abhorrence. Those in the fellowship of the Corinthian assembly may have thought the open-minded approach and the grace of God would make this acceptable. That is an example of "the wisdom of the world" in contrast to "the wisdom of God." The woman involved is not mentioned in this incident indicating she was probably not a child of God and was not connected to the assembly.

We are not called upon to deal with those who are non-Christians or are not a part of the assembly gathered to the Lord's name. While we do mourn over one who has fallen into sin, we cannot leave it at that. Sin has to be judged in order that wrong behavior will be corrected and others will be warned. We do not have the right to pass judgment on another person's work for the Lord and his motives. We do have the responsibility to correct bad conduct. Paul plainly told the Corinthian believers what to do about this man to bring about the change of life and understanding he needed. Paul had already judged the matter as it was open and needed no investigation into the affair. The assembly of those who were in that fellowship was to have a special meeting. Under the authority of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that sinning person was to be "taken away," "delivered unto Satan," "purged out," and "put away." The man himself had to take responsibility for, and the consequences of, his actions. The welfare of that man and all in the local church was to be preserved by this action. This is not something to be taken carelessly or lightly, but is to change undisciplined behavior condemned by the standard of righteousness, to honorable and righteous living once again.

The influence of the discipline of one person in a family affects everyone in that family. The same is true in an assembly. This is not an act of vengeance but of the correction of behavior. The expected result is repentance and restoration. The practice of church discipline is a motivating factor to the proper conduct of Christian living on the part of every one in the assembly. We are still to pray for and encourage an erring person to repent and change so they may again come into the moral safety of church fellowship. By distancing ourselves from the sinning person there is a purging process that goes on in the isolation from the church that stops the "leaven of malice and wickedness" from working among all of God's people.

When one has been "delivered unto Satan," that person is not outside the faith, but outside the security and safety of the Holy Spirit working through the gifts in the church. Separation does not mean abandonment but avoiding the contamination that public, immoral activity brings. To avoid facing sin or rationalizing sin, we

can harm other people and misrepresent Christ to the world around us. The objective of proper, biblical discipline is to convict, and correct a sinning believer and restore that person to the Lord and His people. It also serves as a warning to others not to engage in similar activity that leads to sin. Discipline in one's life is not necessarily easy nor do people like it. Self-discipline can keep one from discipline imposed on us by others or the church. Varying kinds of church discipline increase in consequence in keeping with the serious effects of that behavior.

**1Corinthians 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.”*

**“OH NO!”**

The whispers - began but evidence was there.  
The report - the unthinkable has happened!  
Common knowledge - it is true - “So what?”  
Pride lifts its ugly head - what's wrong with that?  
No tears - everybody does it, so don't sweat it!  
He's one of us - don't condemn, you might do it too.  
Glorying - in urbanity; in being suave and modern - “it's sin!”  
Stop! No further! - it's wrong to God; I know!  
Act fast and clear - Call a meeting in the name of the Lord.  
The power of the Lord Jesus Christ - this is not a small thing.  
The name of the Lord Jesus Christ - the greatest authority of all is behind you!  
Deliver him to Satan - that's where he seems to want to be.  
The flesh must die - leave him there until he sees himself.  
A little leaven - sin may seem small but it gets big.  
Whole lump - it has spread all over; too far.  
Purge out - dig as deep as necessary till the lump is clean.  
Christ our Passover - the house must be clean for the Passover.  
Keep the feast - don't wait till later - Sunday's coming!  
Unleavened bread - you can't fake sincerity; truth has tones to it.  
Don't judge the world - there's no place there to quit.  
They are them; we are His - deal with your brother, love him.  
Don't eat with him - brothers love brothers and love can hurt bad.  
Judge right - face facts; deal with sin; put away; pray hard.  
Wicked person - this is serious to God; it is serious to you.

**“I fear the enemies Father: they are strong, insidious and evil. They do not want to stay outside. For some reason they want in. And they try again and again. Help us to be watchful and courageous when sin has to be dealt with in the family of God. In the authority and name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

**1Corinthians 6:1-8**

**SETTLING PROBLEMS**

It is not the usual thing, but there are times when those who are Christians seem to think they are either not being treated fairly or are wanting what they think they deserve that which another believer has. Unfortunately, the testimony of Christian love is not always there to be seen. “By this shall all men know ye are My disciples indeed, if ye have love one to another.” Disagreements among Christians should be handled privately, “If thy brother trespass against thee, go tell him his fault between thee and him alone,” or those of the Lord's people can pass appropriate decisions by hearing and judging a matter. Believers have an advantage that the court system of the land does not have. We have the Word of God, the Holy Spirit of God, and the mind of Christ to guide us in a spiritual as well as a moral way.

There has been given God-delegated authority by which the headship of Christ can govern our actions. Because of the God-given authority we have, we will judge the world and angels. How much more then, should we be able to make wise judgments among ourselves. The system society has set up to make judgments, is a court of law where there are rules established by man's wisdom. Those who take the place as judges are supposed to be those, who by experience, are able to properly define what the laws of the land say about an issue between opposing parties. There are a number of reasons why this is not really applicable in the Christian context.

In a secular court or in the variety of courts in the legal system of a country, those who adjudicate a matter and ultimately make a decision, have no commitment to, and maybe no understanding of, Christian values. The decisions made are usually based on what one has learned from other people who live by a secular set of values. Often the basis for court work that finds its way into the public domain is the desire for some kind of revenge on the part of the litigant. This is not consistent with the life of a Christian. Our motive for settling

a problem is to maintain or recover peace and fellowship between saints. In order for this to actually be attained we will have to "esteem each better than ourselves." A third reason is that lawsuits between Christians makes unbelievers focus on what is wrong in the Christian life and testimony rather than on what is right. A disagreement between two believers in an assembly of God's people makes the whole assembly to be disapproved of and be legitimately criticized by the public that looks on.

A unified happy Christian fellowship between saints is a powerful testimony for God and for good in any locality. The assembly at Corinth with all their gifts, and a good number saved and gathered to the name and Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, could have been, and should have been a place of great power and blessing. But with the sexual immorality that is addressed in chapter 5, and their unwillingness to deal with small matters in chapter 6, division and disorder in the assembly was a serious threat to their public testimony. The testimony was being undermined by immorality and spiritual immaturity. Some of the saints were failing the test of living by faith.

A form of church discipline to deal with issues between believers is to have problems settled by wise, discerning elders who know the people involved and know how to judge matters in the fear of God and based on scriptural intentions. The God-given right of those wise counselors who make their decisions based on "the whole counsel of God" has authority we are to bow to. We need to reject the tendency to blend in with the world and accept its values and life styles. When we are committed to living Christ-centered, blameless lives that demonstrate the love of God to our fellow believers and the people around us, we do make a difference as to how people view Christianity. We need to make sure the values we live by and the practices of our lives are consistent with what the Bible teaches and what is expected of those who are followers and learners of the Lord Jesus Christ. If we take a brother to court, we are already defeated whatever the outcome or the verdict may be. Disobedience to God and His Word, the loss of testimony among unbelievers, bitterness against each other and an uneasy sense of guilt defeats any advantage we might think we have gained. Take the loss! Lose what you think is yours! You will win a sense of peace that comes when one knows he has done what is right before God.

We may not understand that the things we do in life  
Have a measure of impact on those who only walk by sight  
But if we compromise our values, those who are looking on  
Will think that Christians are just like them with no sense of right or wrong.

The way I treat my Christian family is very easy to observe.  
What a disappointment to testimony when a court-work summons is served.  
People expect much better from me than to demand my questionable rights.  
Even those who don't know much spiritually, expect me to walk by faith not sight.

When problems come between me and another, grace is expected of me.  
Not every issue between people can be solved only by we hear and see.  
There is a sense of spiritual love that enables one to bear the blame,  
By taking the low path and suffering loss, in order to bring honor to Jesus' name.

The manifold grace of God is seen when one believer yields to another.  
Rather than claim what is rightfully his, he gives it to his brother.  
The reality is that what we think we have gained is very easy to lose.  
What one may think is a victory, comes at high cost by the action we choose.

God in His grace has forgiven me and the cost of that was very great.  
I lived daily in the blessings that come because my sins the Savior did take.  
So why should it be considered a strange response if my rights I do not win.  
Any little loss I might have to sustain is nothing compared to what I cost Him.

**"Father in heaven, as I make this crossing and go to seek to give some kind of blessing to isolated brothers and sisters, may I go in the spirit of love, with grace to flavor any words of encouragement and fellowship I might give. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

### **1 Corinthians 6:9-20**

#### **MY BODY**

Christians come from a wide variety of backgrounds and as a result of sinful practices in the past, they struggle with sins that attract the body today. The list of sexual sins points out areas of excitement people engaged in before God saved them. To engage in such things is not the purpose of the human body. Our bodies link us to the world around but were never intended to be instruments of sin. God condemns sexual sins but He is also able and willing to cleanse the believer from sexual sins. By the sacrifice Christ made

when He gave Himself for us, He purchased us with His own blood. When a person comes to Christ "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son cleanseth us from all sin." We become a "new creature" in Christ, and are "washed... sanctified... justified." "All things are lawful to me" may have been a common phrase to the Corinthians but that does not give license to engage in immoral practices. Christian freedom does not free us to practice that which has consequences that are sinful. Whether they are the sins of the body listed in verse 9 or the sins of the spirit in verse 10, these are not consistent with one who has received the divine nature.

Our permissive society has changed what was once unlawful to being lawful because of the attraction of sin to the majority of people. A Christian who before salvation had been involved in a promiscuous lifestyle and had practiced immoral sins of mankind, now has the responsibility to remain celibate for the kingdom of God's sake, or choose the biblical lifestyle in spite of what they think is normal for them. When a person is sanctified by the name (the authority) of the Lord Jesus, we need to ask ourselves, "Is this profitable for me?" - not is this excitable or does this make me feel good? Excitement does not strengthen us nor does it benefit us in the course of our whole life. The creation of our bodies suited us to certain sexual practices that are held in constraint to the benefit of the whole person - not just to create short-term excitement. We do not have the right to fulfill every desire we have.

When a believer accepts Christ as Savior and Lord, that person is bought with a price and joined to Christ. Our body belongs to Him. Our spirit belongs to Him. Our soul belongs to Him. We are enabled to glorify God in our bodies and spirits which are His because of the price of blood He paid. In the normal way of life, God made us to have sexual experiences that are not limited just to the physical joining of the bodies of a man and woman. In fact, our enjoyment of sexual intimacy is linked to the joining of the entire personalities of two people who become one physically and emotionally. Our emotional attachment and physical attachment when put together form a commitment whether people like to admit to it or not.

In our surrender to Christ we yield our body, soul and spirit to Him. The act of entrusting ourselves to Him as a daily choice of commitment, preserves us from damaging our souls and our spiritual life. Christianity includes the body as a serious part of our new life in Christ which is different from most religions that only want to admit to a "spiritual experience." Our body links us to the world. The spirit when it is made alive in Christ, links us to God. Our soul links those two together. The Lord Jesus took on a body as a man so He could deal with our spiritual need. We cannot commit sin without affecting our soul. The guilt that comes through sin affects our spiritual well-being. The senses that join these together as part of the work of the soul have a tendency to affect our physical wellness as well as our fellowship with God.

God is involved in every part of our personhood including body, soul and spirit. He has created us in the first place, so the Father is involved in the body of the believer. He has redeemed us by the precious blood of Christ so the Son of God is involved in the body of the believer. The Holy Spirit indwells our body using it for His intended purposes so He too is involved in the body of the believer. Our body is to be maintained in holiness. There is a real blessing when the unity of body, soul and spirit is used for God and by God for His intended purposes. There are serious negative consequences when any of this unity is infected by sin. We are affected physically and some of those results can be very serious. We are certainly affected emotionally because of the bondage of sin that claims us and people try to excuse themselves by saying, "I know it's wrong but that's just the way I am."

Our new life in Christ can be very satisfying even when those sins of the flesh we engaged in before God saved us still tempts us. There is the joy of victory when one who was engaged in homosexual activity in the past, and is still tempted to such behavior now, chooses to be celibate for the sake of Christ. In heartfelt appreciation they yield themselves to the Spirit of God. One who may have lived promiscuously can find peace and contentment in a monogamous relationship, when they realize this is the will of God, and submit to that divine authority. Then we are able to glorify God in our bodies and spirits which are His. Then holiness is not something beyond our reach.

Our body is not worth very much, if only figured in dollars and cents  
But for some reason when it comes to the body, we seldom spare any expense  
Its real purpose is that through it I communicate by means of the operation of my soul  
The truths are received from God by my spirit that others around may know.

In the interests of making connections, my soul the body does use  
Soul tells body what needs to be done, and what to claim or refuse  
In itself it visibly expresses what the real "me" is like that lives continually inside  
Both what spirit and soul are like at the moment, my body is unable to hide.

Soul looks at things around, some are distasteful and others attract  
Manipulated by the soul's desire, the body to its wishes reacts  
If soul is not connected to spirit, great and serious mistakes are made  
When done outside of God's leading the body has a price to be paid.

When the spirit is made alive in Christ, a heavenly link is formed  
Soul then is changed, saved to make spiritual things the norm  
Through soul, spirit is able to use body for purposes that last forever  
And the three unified in the Lord, fulfill designated, spiritual endeavor.

The spirit receives from God, understanding of things formerly unknown  
The soul transmits that to the body, and in that way the Gospel is shown  
Faith from the spirit then guides, and soul and body together  
Sound out through attitudes, actions and words, the truth to whosoever.

God forbid that soul takes over, and without spirit controls the deeds of my body  
What was bad when hidden from sight, out in the open becomes very shoddy  
The unity of the three parts of me all need to work in holy harmony  
Then through outward consistent living, proof of new life others will see.

**"Father, may this body of mine today be kept by Thy power under control so the deeds of the spirit will be able to be visibly seen. May the words spoken from my soul be to the edifying of other people as well as myself. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

**1 Corinthians 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?"*

#### **"WHAT...?"**

Glorify God - is such a thing possible?  
Glorify God - where can I start?  
Glorify God - is this within my grasp or power?  
Glorify God - now, tomorrow, always?

He paid the price - He thought we were worth it.  
He paid the price - He set the value.  
He paid the price - only He knows really how much it cost.  
He paid the price - His life for mine.

My body - it seems of so little worth.  
My body - by itself it has no use.  
My body - the place where I live.  
My body - another Holy One lives here too.

My spirit - it has come alive by God's grace.  
My spirit - it thinks thoughts once foreign to me.  
My spirit - it can understand God's things.  
My spirit - makes fellowship with God real.

It is all God's - He owns it all, so I can glorify God.  
It is all God's - He can use it as He will choose.  
It is all God's - body, soul and spirit.  
It is all God's - so God can be glorified in all that is His.

**"I am humbled this morning by the fact Father God, that in Thy own way and for Thy own reasons, I am here for Thee alone. This life I live, this work I do, these body parts I use are all Thine. Help me to be a good steward of what Thou hast given me to use. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

**1 Corinthians 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?"*

#### **MORE PROBLEMS.**

KNOW YE NOT? – shocked surprise that Christians looking for justice are not characterized by righteousness themselves; that they were incapable of dealing with trivial matters. Going into "small claims court" for justice in spiritual things? Come on! You've got to be kidding!

KNOW YE NOT? – we will judge angels because of our union with Christ. This is an astounding truth to consider. Use someone with spiritual discernment to settle these internal disputes.

KNOW YE NOT? – the unrighteous, who you want to judge your matters will never be in God's kingdom. Why would you expect them to be able to judge spiritual people in spiritual matters? You used to be like that yourselves, but because of God's work in you, you are completely changed. Now act like it!

KNOW YE NOT? – your bodies are not for your own use but for God. You are members of the body of Christ. Do not degrade such a holy thing as the body of Christ.

KNOW YE NOT? – surely you know that sexual sin defiles what God has made for Himself. Your body is to function in purity. To join it with impurity endangers it physically and you spiritually.

KNOW YE NOT? – the Holy Spirit is in you. He moved in when you were saved. You have been paid for by Christ's blood. You are God's by redemption. Now act like you should – glorify God in every way and in every part of your life because you belong to Him.

**“O Righteous God: the darkness of the world around seems to get in and among Thy people so easily. Give us help to remember whose we are and why we are in this world. Keep us from looking out for ourselves and our interests only. Amen.”**

### **1Corinthians 7:1-17**

#### **MARRIAGE QUESTIONS**

Circumstances and society in general in the city of Corinth made it very easy for sexual immorality to flourish - even among Christians. It is quite common for those who belong in the family of God to be wrongly influenced by the things society around accepts as normal. Virginity among young people today is uncommon. The pressures to be like everyone else is on-going day after day in schools and the work place. Paul addresses those questions the Corinthian believers had because there were extreme views about the marital practices of the saints. It seemed like some were promoting celibacy as necessary for one who is spiritual. Others were probably saying that now they were saved all things were lawful. The pendulum of self-imposed ideas often swings from one extreme to another. In one so-called "Christian" denomination celibacy is considered necessary for spiritual service. In other groups some practice open, uncommitted sexual intercourse as evidence of "Christian love." Celibacy is certainly permitted in the context of Christian and assembly life but it is not commanded, nor is it recommended to those who have the need for sexual intimacy. It is an honorable state and entirely proper if one lives in strict celibacy. But that is what it is. It does not leave room for occasional sex. If one is called by God and given this gift, then one can be thankful for the freedom to serve the Lord in a committed and contented state. It is neither more "right," or more spiritual. It simply leaves one at more liberty to attend to the things of God.

Christian marriage provides the way to avoid sexual temptations and fulfill the natural and normal desires God gives us. To "be fruitful and multiply" were instructions from God that can be fulfilled by means of sexual love. The privilege of sexual love with one person in a union to which both are legally committed by marriage vows, enables us to "avoid fornication." The way it is properly maintained is by each recognizing our body belongs to the one to whom we are married - the husband's body to his wife, and her body to him. This deliberately makes each one available to the other to meet his or her need physically and emotionally. Because sex around us is promiscuous does not mean that such practice is right. To marry and stay married to one person for life is what we are to do. I belong to my wife and she belongs to me. That is a fundamental condition of Christian marriage.

Single persons and widows are to marry rather than live under the burning of unfulfilled passions. It is important for all saints to remember our bodies are God's dwelling place. The spiritual aspect of who we are must not be governed by the physical needs and desires we might have. Celibacy is the real way to deal with the tendency some seem to have towards members of the same sex. We can "remain eunuchs" for the kingdom of God's sake. Intimate access to another person's body is strictly and only, under the bonds of marriage between one man and one woman. Contentment and godliness go together and is "great gain." Fill life with meaningful activity if you are single. Live one day at a time in the way God opens up the path before you.

We are three-part beings - body, soul and spirit. When God saved us by His grace each part of us has a spiritual aspect. The Holy Spirit uses my body. The Son of God uses my soul as a tool to transmit His Gospel to the world through the members of my body. The Lord Jesus Christ left us the example as to how to use our soul to His glory. The spirit of me that received life when I was born again into the family of God, links me with my heavenly Father. Now when two believers become one in Christian marriage, it goes way beyond the physical union to where we become one in the Lord. Not only are we released from the

temptation to find physical fulfillment elsewhere, but we can learn and grow together in our spiritual life by our on-going communion. Marriage then, includes communion as well as physical union. There is no need for a husband to seek to lord it over his wife, and there is no reason for the wife to seek a life of autonomy on her own. Marriage is intended to fill the needs of both when they are yielded to the Lord and to each other. Whether one is married or single does not make one more important than the other. We are to thankfully accept our present situation and go on to please the Lord in the role in which we are found. Paul could devote himself completely to his ministry by being single, but he did not criticize those who were married, because marriage is of God.

Marriage is the God appointed way to avoid "burning with passion." This does not mean we should marry just anyone who comes along or strikes our fancy. Apparently, some in Corinth who were going to marry, decided not to get married, but their normal desires were being frustrated. When this happens, a person can become obsessed with what they want but cannot have. The passions of human need are to be dealt with in marriage with one partner, but the principle of marriage "in the Lord" should apply to all, not just to widows. To handle the pressures of passion is easier and better than to deal with the frustrations of unhappiness in a marriage to the wrong person.

The teaching about the permanence of marriage comes right from God at the beginning of human experience with Adam and Eve. The Lord Jesus supported that teaching when He was here and taught this subject of marriage. However, when an unbeliever leaves one who God has saved and does not want the sanctifying effect of a child of God in his or her life, and leaves and is joined to another person, the bond of marriage is broken. The physical bond of marriage is broken at the death of one partner or at the physical joining of one partner to another person. The believer is not to leave a marriage because God has saved them. Their new life creates a whole new dimension to a family in which the unbelieving spouse and unbelieving children are set aside by God to hear the Gospel and be saved as well. The marriage commitment does not change but the new life in Christ has a positive influence in view so blessings will extend to the family members.

If a person who is a believer in Christ is given an ultimatum to deny Christ and reject the testimony of faith in Him, they need to know that to deny the faith and the Lord Jesus Christ who died for them, is far worse than dissolving a marriage. If the unsaved spouse is determined to leave after attempts at reconciliation and living the positive blessings of a Christian life before the other has not produced or maintained unity - then the believer can let the unbeliever go. Married couples should pursue unity, not separation, but when one is rejected because of faith in Christ, that decision has been made by the unbeliever. If the unbeliever goes with another person and is physically joined to that person the believer is freed from the bonds of the marriage. We are not told to deny the faith to preserve a marriage. Marriage is intended to be for life. But our new life in the family of God is forever.

#### **1Corinthians 7:18-40**

**1Corinthians 7: 15b.** "...God has *called* us to peace."

**1Corinthians 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.*"

**1Corinthians 7:24.** "*Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, there abide with God.*"

#### **WELL-BEING.**

Behind all the choices and consequences of marriage, is the call of God. He is the third party in a Christian marriage. His is the "third cord" that makes the bond not easily broken. His desire for the welfare of His people is clearly presented.

#### **CHRISTIANS MARRIED TO CHRISTIANS**

In the service of God, the husband-wife relationship can hinder us from certain types of labor. In other types of labor, it is a definite asset. One needs to be assured as to where and to what God has called me. Human beings have been made by God to reproduce, but only within the context of one man and one woman for life. Each is to have their "own wife" or "own husband." Each is to be sensitive to the other with respect. Each person in a marriage passes over the power or right to our own body to the other that it might remain sanctified to the spouse. Satan will tempt in any way possible, particularly sexually, to turn one away from what God intends. Abstinence in marriage is not a command, it is a choice we make for a short time. We are to do what is suitable in the way God has gifted us. To sacrifice one's self to the Lord in singleness is not essential to the Christian life. However, it does enable one to serve God without distraction. Self-control sexually, dictates as to whether marriage is to be considered. When you make vows to each other in marriage – keep those vows! If separation occurs, reconciliation is the necessary step to bring normality

back to the marriage.

#### CHRISTIANS MARRIED TO UNBELIEVERS

Stay with your unsaved spouse. The power of influence of the believer, sets aside the unsaved spouse and the children for God's blessing. God's intention is not that a family live in a state of continual conflict. If the unsaved one desires to leave, let him/her leave. Hopefully the unsaved one will come to Christ. I am to remain in the role and situation I was in when the Lord called me. I am not required to forsake the relationships of my life before salvation. Nor am I required to leave the position or routine I was in when saved. Christian liberty sets me free from sin's bondage to be free in Christ from the place and situation I was in before God saved me. I am to be a responsible person to myself, others and to God.

#### CHRISTIANS AND UNMARRIED CHILDREN

I have a responsibility to carefully teach the choices and consequences of marriage to my children. I should explain the blessing of serving God in singleness and the commitment one makes when you marry. I must recognize the sexual needs of my child and not force my aspirations upon him/her. Marriage is for life and I must make that clear. If one or the other dies, I can explain that the other is free to marry again. When the criteria for marriage "in the Lord" is met; there is every reason to expect God's blessing upon that union. God ordained Christian marriage, and He is committed to the institution He established at the beginning.

**"O God of all grace and compassion: I thank You for making things clear in Your word when it comes to the essentials of life. The problems arise when we look beyond Your intention to what men try to say is the way of marriage. It seems to me that You made it clear by saying, "God has called us to peace." In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

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

#### **THE CALLING.**

I can't go back and start over again;  
What is past is past for me.  
But I can resolve that from here on in,  
I will seek to be the best I can be.

If the mistakes I've made rise to claim my time,  
I should lay them to rest once for all.  
Then in the place I am what I do will seem,  
To have a value when my Lord does call.

I have been set free as a servant to God,  
And my hands He has seen fit to fill.  
So, in body and spirit I yield to the Lord,  
And trust Him to use me as He will.

The price has been paid; I am not my own;  
Every part of me belongs to Him.  
Therefore, I must take care that here or at home,  
The Lord will be honored in them.

Life alone is not all that I have,  
God had given a charge to fulfill.  
May I never misuse all God to me gave,  
That by His grace, I will be doing His will.

**"Father in heaven, I am in this role that I have been called to and am seeking to make each day count. Please help me in this work to glorify Thee in every way. Amen."**

#### **1 Corinthians 8:1-13**

#### **CHRISTIAN FREEDOM**

There is a tendency on the part of new believers in Christ who are so grateful for God's salvation, that they want to please God in every way possible. Looking for a list of rules that contain "do's and don'ts" similar to the 10 commandments, they seek a legal lifestyle to give themselves a sense of holiness. Their study of books written by men and the opinions of others can lead them to feel superior, more knowledgeable and more spiritual than others. The idols of the people of Corinth represented false gods to those who worshipped before those statues. The animals that were sacrificed to idols were symbols of that which was important to them and they were giving it to the false gods which was really demon worship. After the ritual

was fulfilled, they would either eat the flesh of the animal or sell it to the public in the market place. Some of those new Christians had developed a superior, know-it-all opinion of themselves because they knew all that ritual was worthless - and they were right as far as worthlessness was concerned. The correction Paul was writing about was that their attitude was wrong and that made the actions they took valueless.

Surely, we are thankful for the liberty in Christ we have been brought into. We know idol worship is nothing. We also know those who worship idols are wasting their time, efforts and goods when they sacrifice to idols. We know what the Bible says and we know much that is done today in religious groups is only form or bondage. We know what is right and wrong in relation to the worship of God doctrinally. But we need to remember it is possible to have knowledge without grace; doctrine without godliness; truth without love. What we know doctrinally needs love to keep it balanced. It is possible to have knowledge without love and that power of knowledge can be abusive. Love, on the other hand, without knowledge is deceptive and hypocritical. Something to keep in mind is not all idols are religious symbols. Whatever takes the preeminent place in my life is what I worship.

Christian freedom does not mean anything goes and we can do whatever we want. Our salvation is not based on rules and regulations, but on the freedom the grace of God through the sacrifice of Christ brought us into. A sensitivity to what is right and wrong is good but needs to be kept in the bounds of love and knowledge together. Those who are stronger in faith need to help those who are weak in faith to see beyond the forms, rituals and their own opinions of right and wrong, to what is the revealed will of God.

Weak Christians are prone to making critical judgments and even on occasion become offended by what they think is compromising to the Christian faith. Meat is only meat and doesn't change spiritually in any way. The meat is not contaminated by the sins of the people because it has been offered to an idol that is nothing. But the reality is that imposed laws comfort some who are new in the faith because they do not want to have to make a personal decision as to what is right or wrong. They would rather have rules placed on them so they can blame others for anything that doesn't work out right. They have not learned to trust God or be guided by the Spirit of God and the Word of God. It is not easy for one who has been longer in Christ and has learned to live by faith, to help weaker brothers at first. It is incumbent on the one stronger in faith to show love along with knowledge as they guide the new believer into the truths that enable one to enjoy their freedom in Christ. This takes time. Don't push too hard or too fast. Be patient with those who are coming from a legal frame of reference.

A person's conscience is the inner ability to pass judgment on a matter before an action takes place. It also leads to a sense of guilt after something wrong has already taken place. Our conscience depends on our knowledge. The more knowledge we have of God and His Word and ways, the better we are able to act on what we know. Our conscience ("with knowledge") is strengthened and becomes consistent with God's will the more we know God. The weak conscience is real to one who hasn't recognized our freedom in Christ. My conscience that has been strengthened by the knowledge of God, does not allow me to override or ignore those with a weak conscience. It takes time for us to guide the young in Christ into growth and a mature understanding of the scope of God's grace.

At the same time, it would be wrong for me to knowingly do anything that would lead the weak brother into some path that might result in sin on his part. What may have no negative effect on me because of experience and maturity, could be a stumbling block to one who is weaker. I may be free in Christ to do a certain thing, but because of love for my brother, I will not do it - even if it comes to what I eat and drink. Christian freedom and Christian responsibility go together.

**1 Corinthians 8:13.** *"Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will not eat not flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend."*

**MY BROTHER.**

My brother is important to God and to me;  
It would be wrong to offend him by what I do or say.  
Lord, make me assured that in each act of this day -  
I will not my brother offend.

The things that I eat hardly seem right or wrong;  
But it may create problems to one not so strong.  
So, Lord, keep me sensitive as I travel along -  
That I will not my brother offend.

There are things I might laugh at that are important to him;  
For me to ignore his conscience might cause him to sin.

And so, Father, make me aware of these things so that when -  
I don't make my brother offend.

His conscience is tender, he is starting new life;  
I've been on this road enough to never cause strife.  
If I allow God to guide me and I follow Thy light -  
I will not my brother offend.

**“O God, give me spiritual insight to avoid the problems that might arise when a brother is weak or new in the faith. Guide my steps; help me guard my mouth; and give me grace to control my thoughts, so my brother is not offended. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

### **1 Corinthians 9:1-15**

#### **RIGHTS**

There are those who arbitrarily choose to be a preacher, pastor, priest or some sort of a religious worker as a vocation; a way to make a living; an appealing lifestyle. This is not a calling from God to fulfill the commission the Lord Jesus Christ made just as He was leaving. Others spend a lifetime in secular employment until they are sure they have enough money to maintain a comfortable old age and then they want to respond to the commission on their own terms. Paul made it plain to the Corinthians that his credentials for preaching the Gospel, teaching them and correcting them, came from the highest possible Source - the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. His apostleship came from the Lord speaking to him personally and plainly on the road to Damascus. It did not come as a feeling of interest, a personal desire to be able to move about among God's people or wanting a career change. The Lord Jesus called Paul when He saved him and told him he would take the Gospel to the Gentiles. The Lord also made it known to Ananias three days after Paul was saved and before he baptized Paul, that he was to take the Gospel to the Gentiles, to kings and to the children of Israel. His apostleship was without question. As such, he had the right to be supported by those who were blessed by his efforts and the saints of God who had fellowship with him in his work. Those people were actually his commendation and credentials.

When a person labors in daily work wherever you are in the world there is some kind of compensation. The farmer lives off of the food he harvests. The fisherman's needs are supplied by the fish he labored to catch. There are principles to guide us in the efforts we expend. "If any will not work, neither shall he eat." An ox treading over the sheaves of wheat to separate the grain from the stalks is to be free to bow its head and get a mouthful as it keeps walking. To have the need to be financially secure before being willing to give all of one's time laboring in the work of the Lord is not a walk of faith. It is not wrong for one to feel the need of security by having money from diligent labor in one's occupation. One who is to go out in faith "taking nothing of the Gentiles," to spend his/her strength and life preaching the Gospel, is to live "of the Gospel." Each is to labor for God where He places them. One trusts God for strength to do his daily work on the job. The other trusts God to meet all of his needs. The spiritual principle we apply when spiritual blessings are received is that material blessings are to be given freely without asking or begging for them. To expect to receive material blessings when we are already financially secure is not what is in view when laboring for the Lord in the Gospel. "The laborer is worthy of his hire." He does have a right to feed his wife and family from the fruits of his work for the Lord. He is responsible to care for them and clothe them from what he receives through the material blessings passed on by others. To give God one's fulltime efforts for a short time at the end of life after being assured of plenty of money to live on, isn't what was intended when the Lord called His disciples to follow Him. The strength of youth and the vigor of a healthy body is to be used for the furtherance of the kingdom of God. One who does that has the right to be compensated for their labors.

The enthusiasm of the apostle Paul and those who assisted him in reaching untouched area with the truth of God is an example for us to follow. Those people followed Christ's example as He spent His public life ministering to people from place to place with His teaching and preaching, and at the same time being ministered unto by women from Galilee. Paul labored at tent making on at least one occasion to supply the needs he and those with him had so he would not be "chargeable " to the Corinthian believers. He made sure those Corinthians didn't think of him as their hireling even though he had the right to be supported by them. Those he saw saved and gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ were his credentials for being supported by them.

An assembly has the responsibility to care for those who minister to them. The other side of the matter is that those who do minister to them do not have the right to contract with them or demand a certain amount of money or a salary from the assembly. To trust God to "supply all our needs" is to live by faith in Him and His ability and willingness to meet those needs. Preaching the Gospel was Paul's calling. He had to preach God's Word. It wasn't up to him to say he would or wouldn't. He was not able to say he would preach only if

he was paid. There is a certain drive and constraining power that motivates one to use the best of their life and strength for the work of God. The left-over time of our life to spend for God as we choose, isn't taught. Yet there was opportunity for some laborer to go into the harvest at the end of the day in a parable taught by the Lord Jesus.

The driving power of the Holy Spirit that sent the Lord Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, is the same driving power behind those who go to "regions beyond" and to places where no foundation has already been laid. The motivation behind such people is an all-encompassing commitment based on "the love of Christ" and the need of lost souls - and the coming Judgment Seat of Christ. Such people understand what "woe is me if I preach not the Gospel," really means. When a person's gift and Holy Spirit-given motivation come together, a person has no choice in the matter. The burden of heart, the urgency they have and the vision of the work before them, moves them. They expend their strength, their finances, their time and their lives to fulfill the work to which God has called them.

Our loyalty and allegiance to the Lord gives us no other option to live with a good conscience unless we do what God wants. Those who go out to the battle are not superior in any way to those who "stay by the stuff." But they do have different roles and responsibilities. Together those who supply the laborer and those who labor, share in the blessing at the end of the harvest.

We each have a work to do  
We each have a role to fill  
Until the labor of life is through  
God forbid my voice to be still  
Because we are sent under commission  
To take the Gospel and disciples to make  
It is God's choice, not our own decision  
When the Word to far places we take.

There are those who have a hankering to preach  
But do not have the ability or desire  
To go places others have not reached  
It is only near home they aspire  
One is not more important than the other  
As long as the will of God is done  
God uses one to support his brother  
And the other laborer must leave his home.

Our rights are not just demands;  
Although through one the other's needs are met  
Both the front-line worker and supporter are under command  
From the Lord of the harvest their orders they get  
Through the one sinners and saints are called  
Through the other practical supplies are given  
When the labor and commission are fulfilled  
Both rejoice and share the blessings of heaven.

**"Thank You Father, for this day's blessings. Prayers have been answered; fellowship with saints have been encouraged; some seed has been sown; and a lot of joy in the Lord experienced. I praise Thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

### **1Corinthians 9:16-27**

#### **PRIORITIES**

We have rights as citizens, we have rights as members of a family and those who preach the Gospel like Paul have rights to the support of material things because of spiritual blessings given. But our freedom in Christ does not make us obligated to claim the right of material benefits when it would place us in a position to be controlled by the will of other people like an employee is responsible to an employer. Our personal priorities can hinder our work for God if we are not careful to keep our commitment as a servant of God. There are principles that guided Paul in his labors for the Lord. The compelling necessity to preach the Gospel prevented him from stopping his work in spite of opposition, persecution and even physical abuse. One of the things that motivated him so much was the Gospel itself. He had experienced the value of the Gospel himself. He was a living example of its power. It was not in his mind to preach the Gospel for money. He refused to use his speaking skills to impress those to whom he preached. The message itself was the compelling power, not his debating ability nor the way he could skillfully answer the arguments laid against him. God laid the necessity to preach the Gospel on the messenger, Paul himself.

When one is entrusted with the Gospel message, he needs to remember who made him a steward of such a trust. Never should a steward look casually or carelessly upon the work his Master gives him. The responsibility of such a charge is all we need to be concerned about. Any remuneration to meet his needs, we leave to God who is the Lord of the harvest. He can take care of what we need better than we can. There was to Paul a blessing, a reward, it seems like even a joy when he preached the Gospel without a charge of any kind to those who heard him. Those to whom he presented the Gospel didn't own his services. He made himself a servant to them. The compelling need of lost souls was another reason why Paul did not claim a right to their support. The importance of the Gospel and the value of lost souls were the great motivating factors in Paul's labor in the Gospel.

Whether there are financial or other kinds of support given to us in our labors in the Gospel, there is more than that to urge us on in the work. All around us in this world are people who are perishing in their sins. In order to meet the demands of the work of the Gospel, we must impose on ourselves a discipline to keep us from being sidetracked. We have liberty in Christ but the effective Christian life involves both discipline and freedom. The goal before us must be well enough defined that the arguments and unscriptural positions of others will not deter us from our objective of presenting the Gospel. We dare not change our message ever; nor do we need to change our methods to make people feel more comfortable and receptive. Paul looked for, and used, common ground with those with whom he made contact. He was a Jew who cared for other Jews with genuine sincerity. He did not come across as an arrogant know-it-all preacher to the Gentiles. He knew how to reason with, and be persuasive with kings, as well as to warn and entreat them all to believe the Gospel. We are not being inconsistent when we seek to make people know we care for them and accept them as they are. It is important for us to be sensitive to them and what is important to them. In that way they may be inclined to listen to what we have to say.

The Lord Jesus Christ was very adaptable to those He came in contact with when He was here. He could sense and respond to the needs of a blind man, and knew they were different from those of a leper. Zacchaeus and Nicodemus were both very different but the Lord Jesus knew how to connect with each of them and used the opportunity to reach them by focusing attention on what each one needed most. Tact in preaching the Gospel publicly or presenting the Gospel privately is greatly needed. Contacts are made "with tact." Those are often the most fruitful connections we make. The principles the Lord Jesus demonstrated and Paul used are the same ones we should use today. When one is religious, kindly keep their attention on what the scriptures say and press the point that this is the word of God. The traditions and forms of religious activity must conform to what the scriptures say. When a person we are talking with or there are people listening to a Gospel message who are professed atheists or agnostics without convictions, religious affiliation or concern about spiritual things, remember that whether they admit it or not, they are wondering about what happens after death. Some people are weak and worry all the times about life, death, health and money, and long for some kind of assurance and hope for the future. We need to be like Paul and be adaptable to people for the Gospel's sake.

In the work of the Lord there is the necessity of the servant of God to know what he is doing and to discipline one's self to attain that goal - that purpose. Paul used the illustration of a runner in a public race who has trained long and hard. He is not out for a morning jog or a lap or two around the track. He is not an observer sitting in the stands getting vicarious pleasure out of watching others run. Paul did not want to be disqualified in the work of the Gospel. Neither should we. We need study, we need prayer, we need worship, we need to learn truth before we speak so no one is misled by our lack of preparation. Self-discipline is a priority in the work of the Gospel. We need to know our own strengths and weaknesses. We need to know when to say "No" and when to say "Yes." We need to commit ourselves to diligence and reject laziness. We need to learn to place our confidence in God. It is our responsibility to be ready to herald the Gospel when opportunities arise. To run the race requires effort, discipline and commitment.

An area of daily life that prepares me for any contingency that might arise is the commitment to a meaningful devotional life that has an effect on me. In order to glorify God in our bodies and spirits, we need to know God and be able to discern what is His will in view of the tasks He has given us. If that task is the furtherance of the Gospel, we must know what to give up and what to take up; what to claim and what to pay. It is not wasted effort when one takes times to identify the priorities in our life. In order to tell others the Gospel, and what they are to do about that, we need to be careful we do ourselves what we expect of others. Paul was willing to give up his rights and privileges for the rewards of doing God's will in the furtherance of the work of the Lord. Our priorities need to be right in order that we will not be disqualified in our service.

**1 Corinthians 9:19.** *"For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more."*

## THE GOSPEL.

Ten times in this chapter the "Gospel" is mentioned. There were those who were challenging Paul's right to speak for God and the authority he had as an apostle. He answers clearly so the critical believers of Corinth could have no doubt as to his right as a spokesman for God. He was their servant as well as the servant of God.

Hinder the Gospel? God forbid that in any way,  
I might do something in the course of a day;  
That would ever turn a sinner or saint away  
From the good news that brings life to a house of clay.  
In the Gospel it is ours to continually say,  
As we speak of the Life and the Truth and the Way,  
"Repent and believe the Gospel."

Preach the Gospel? Every true herald will lift a clear voice.  
And above all the clamor, the chaos and noise  
Of the counterfeit claims whenever one goes  
To places where "other gospels" their false faces show;  
The one who presents to the people the choice  
Between heaven and hell, speaks clearly the truth, he knows-  
"There is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Live of the Gospel? It is ordained of God that those who preach;  
Should live their lives fully from the truths that they teach.  
It is not their right to claim with a hand out to reach  
For your money; and then further the truth they do stretch,  
When they say the work stops; no more souls to catch,  
Because you did not pay enough, souls from hell to snatch.  
"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy, He saved us."

The Gospel of Christ? It is not about man.  
The Gospel declares that it is God who has planned  
For the redemption of those who without it are damned.  
The message is about Jesus, who here from heaven came.  
He was the Sent One from God that all through His name,  
Might be fully and freely cleansed by the blood of the Lamb.  
"The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

Power in the Gospel? How then can this be,  
Such a force to change lives, and prisoners free  
From the chains that surround every soul; that he  
Can be a new creature in Christ. The evidence see  
For yourself. All around there are people near me;  
That show by changed lives: in Him is reality!  
"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation."

For the Gospel's sake? I can now be a partaker,  
Of the work of the Gospel, whether stronger or weaker.  
It is my privilege now to be linked with my Maker;  
In a work that will last for ever and ever.  
And the people that keep at the Gospel as workers;  
Will not fail in life, and in the future are victors.  
"God be thanked, who always causes us to triumph in Christ."

**"The Gospel is certainly the power of God, O Source of the Gospel. It has changed, and is changing, lives. I am thankful that Juan was willing to come all the way into the city to speak to those could guide him to the Savior. He will need to experience the reality of it in the days to come, as the pressures arise. But God is faithful to His own. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

### 1Corinthians 10:1-15

#### IMMATURITY

The apostle Paul was an example of a disciplined believer who was aware of all that was going on around him, and yet kept the goal of the Gospel work before him. He was not going to allow the pressures of life and society to hinder him in his work for the Lord. But he was fully conscious of the need of self discipline in order to not disqualify himself from the results he was seeking in fulfilling the commission he was given. In

contrast, Israel was used in chapter 10 as an example of those who are not disciplined people. The Corinthian believers were like the Israelites: self-confident and over-confident; immature and thinking they had arrived. The great blessings we have received do not assure us of success in the Christian life. Overconfidence is a sign of weakness and can leave us without needed strength in the journey through a spiritually dangerous world. We may have enjoyed spiritual victories in the past, spiritual provisions through the Word of God, and fellowship with God's people, answers to prayers - and still fall under the most unsuspecting test.

Israel started out from Egypt experiencing miracles from God as they crossed the Red Sea and moved through the wilderness. But when it came to testing times, they looked back to Egypt and leveled their complaints against Moses and God. In their spiritual weakness they started good but ended bad and all died in the wilderness except Joshua and Caleb. Immaturity becomes evident when we want to copy the religious practices of those who want to appeal to the world. Some religious practitioners even ignore the biblical warnings against immoral practices and accept as normal the sensual sins of society. The Corinthian believers were doing that very thing. Complaints and grumbling, shifts our focus of attention on what we don't have, rather than what we do have - the multiplied blessings of God. That attitude is a sign of spiritual immaturity and lack of discipline in one's life.

Israel was placing their attention on Egyptian food rather than on the fact they were no longer slaves but free people and an actual nation God recognized. They were now a nation of free people going to their own land where God had promised He would lead them and protect them, if they would love and serve Him in fellowship with Him. It is possible for us to yield to the pressures of society and let memories of the past turn us aside from the spiritual privileges of the present we can claim by disciplining ourselves and learning what God wants from us and how He wants us to live. Unfulfilled desires can stumble us and keep us from what God intended for us. Our whole lifetime can be wasted seeking things that give only temporary satisfaction and leaves us with nothing in the end. We will be wise to learn from the example of Israel.

Temptations in an immoral culture are always going to be around us. They are before every Christian in one form or another. Others have been tempted, resisted and overcome the temptation by disciplining themselves - and so can we. God enables us to resist the temptations that attract us. He knows and lets us know by His Spirit in us, what people, what situations and potential troubles to avoid. We have the power to choose what is right and refuse what is wrong. Prayer is our link to the throne of grace to find mercy and grace when we need divine help. Our ability to make spiritual choices in godly friends, gives us their aid and fellowship when we are tempted. When a situation arises where we know temptations are there, our best course of action is to run from it like Joseph fled from Potiphar's wife. Paul wrote Timothy to flee the evil desires of youth and chase after righteousness, faith, love and peace along with other believers who know and love the Lord. It takes courage to physically leave that which causes temptation. To remove one's self from anything that produces evil thoughts that lead to evil desires and then to evil actions, is the only course to take when temptation rises.

We may wonder why God allows temptation in the first place. The ability to make choices separates human beings from the rest of creation and the ability to choose between right and wrong gives us personhood. Eve would not have taken the forbidden fruit and given it to Adam when the devil tempted her if she had no freedom of choice. Freedom to love and serve God in spite of the pressure to serve self and sin is essential to our fellowship with God - and with other people who love the Lord. God provides a way to escape temptation. It is there for us to take. If we think we can stay in the place of temptation and enjoy it, we will fall. The wise person will understand the need to flee and that person will not only escape the temptation, but the sin that follows it.

"It's only a little thing, and it brings such pleasure,  
The memories later will be something to treasure.  
Surely there's nothing in that innocent-seeming act  
That would cause me to fall, I can handle that."

Such conversations with others or even inward thoughts,  
Are quite common before, by temptation, one is firmly caught  
And led into some action and sin that chases the soul,  
But the consequences are desires that are soon out of control.

Lessons from the past about what others went through  
Are given to us so we won't fall under temptation too.  
We dare not think we are immune to the power of sin.  
They thought they were, but look what happened to them.

As we mature in Christ, we better learn the danger  
And the power of temptation from a friend or a stranger  
That we must turn from as soon as we are able to see  
The consequences that will follow if we don't quickly flee.

Immaturity thinks that against temptation it can stand.  
That whatever comes to attract, it is easily dismissed out of hand.  
Such an attitude opens the way to a dangerous fall  
When the voice of temptation to the flesh gives its siren call.

The only way to deal with the advances of temptation  
Is to, as fast as possible, flee to the God of our salvation,  
Who knows how much we can take and provides a way,  
For us to escape temptation, no matter what others do or say.

**"Father, I know there are different temptations as I get older than there were in younger years. Please give Thy servant wisdom to flee the temptation of possessions, sloth and laziness, self-satisfaction and complaints. May I realize when I see others who are younger being tempted, that I am not immune from myriad temptations either. In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

**1Corinthians 10:11.** *"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."*

#### **EXAMPLES.**

The events of the past are not without reason. God wanted us to have examples to teach us who are at the end of the ages, how important it is to learn from the blessings and mistakes of others. History is not just a rehash of old events, but the way to use to advantage, all we know about the experiences of previous generations. In the same way, what happens to us is probably going to a learning benefit to those who follow us.

**Passed through the sea:** The baptism of the nation with a cloud of water overhead, and water all around them, they died (were separated from) to Egypt. We too are dead to the world and alive to a whole new life.

**Spiritual meat:** The manna from heaven provided life to all who gathered it and ate. Our Bread from heaven is the Lord Jesus Himself and our spiritual life is sustained by feeding on Him from the Word of God.

**Spiritual drink:** The life-giving water miraculously came from the rock and followed them through the desert, sustaining them for forty years. Eternal life is ours that comes from the Lord Jesus and is ours for the taking and enjoying. By this water we will not perish.

**Spiritual Rock:** To awake morning by morning and see that rock moved from its' place and following them, and the water still gushing from it must've been a constant reminder that God was with them. We may rest assured that we are not left alone without provision in this wilderness of the world. Christ is with us all the way.

**Overthrown (died):** It is not a small matter to disobey God. It is not a small matter to complain against His blessings. If I ever turn away from God's revealed will and choose a path of my own, it will be a righteous act of God to apply whatever chastening is needed.

**Idolaters:** They played and danced before a calf symbolizing the world and its ways. It is a warning to me that if I allow anything to take God's place in my life, or disobey Him because of stubbornness, I am an idolater.

**Fornication:** Israel mixed in with what was around them. It may not seem to me to be such a serious matter when we are asked to join up with the attractions of religious or social activities around me, but the mixture will dilute the real, and though it might look alright, the reality is, that it is no longer what God made it to be.

**Destroyed of serpents:** Complaining about God's provision for them and the sameness of the food, brought death to many of the people. Some may think that the sameness of the scripture, the provision is not varied, is boring. These folks haven't tasted of the hidden depths of truth and are only preparing their food in exactly the same way. We have a great variety in God's Word if only we look for it.

**He standeth:** It is the wise person who realizes self-strength is only as great as my weakest point. My arms may be strong but my feet weak, and I will still fall. Our strength is in the Lord alone.

**Temptation:** It will happen; it is everywhere; it cannot be avoided. But it never has dominion over me and I am not powerless to resist. Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.

**Wise men:** Sound judgment is evidence of wisdom in any person. When I hear something said, I am right to evaluate its meaning and reason for being said.

**Cup of blessing:** We have fellowship of life because of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our life is hid with Christ in God. He is the Source of our eternal life.

**Bread which we break:** As members together of Christ's body, God's people are united together with Him.

Each is an integral part of the whole and is sustained by all other parts.

**Israel:** When one offered to God a sacrifice at the altar, he took part of it for his portion. When we participate in a spiritual sacrifice, we are making some of that sacrifice our own.

**Sacrifice to idols:** To make any offering to that which is not of God, means I have been made a partaker of the evil associated with it. That fellowship is diabolical, not spiritual.

**Cup of the Lord:** I am made a partaker of the life that is uniquely Christ's when I take of the cup. It is evidence that I have eternal life. I am the Lord's.

**Cup of devils:** Evil of whatever nature it is, is still evil. If it is moral evil, it is the cup of devils. If it is social evil, it is the cup of devils. If it is religious evil, it is the cup of devils.

**Table of the Lord:** This is where I live. I am at His table as a child or family member sits at his master's table. I am in a state of continually living with Him.

**Table of devils:** Sinful powers and attractions are continually wanting my participation. It would be impossible for me to mix these two tables together. I am going to be living in one place or the other.

**Another's wealth:** My responsibility to my brothers and sisters is to see that they are benefited by all that I do. I cannot be satisfied if I alone am able to do what I want. I need to be aware of how they can be blessed through me.

**Sold in the shambles:** The open market is full of options. I am not going to be picky as to who bought what from whom. It is enough that God is the Source of everything and I will be content with what He provides.

**Eat:** It is never my right to do what I want without regard for the other person's conscience. If there is something that I do not want or will not eat because of my opinion, I am to submit my preferences to what he has provided.

**Go to a feast:** It is my responsibility to respond to another person's hospitality, especially if that person is not a believer. I am not at liberty to refuse what he offers.

**This is offered to idols:** When a person points out certain things that would be offensive to him, I am being tested by another person's conscience. It is not a matter which needs to bother my conscience.

**Partaker by grace:** All of God's blessings are given to me and I can receive them all with thanksgiving.

**Whatever ye do:** God's glory is the ultimate objective of every choice and every act that I might make or do.

**Not my profit:** My will is to be submissive to whatever God has in mind for the well being of other people.

**Profit of many:** The greatest profit I can produce is that of the salvation of many souls, and lives for the glory of God.

**"Father, I am truly thankful for all the examples found in the scriptures that instruct me and show me the actions to take in the questionable things of life. Even as I learn from those of old, I am impressed with the fact that there may be those that will learn from me. In the hard lessons of life and service, give me the grace to recognize this may profit others. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

**1 Corinthians 10:11.** *"Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."*

#### **FOR OUR ADMONITION.**

So many things happened - why did they not learn?  
Great deliverance took place, yet in fear they did spurn  
The God who delivered them - they began to complain -  
Can it be possible I'd do the same?

Miracles abounded and they enjoyed to the full,  
All God provided as His blessings did fall.  
They seemed to get used to them, and expected it all -  
Can it be possible I'd do the same?

Forty years traveling and their shoes didn't wear;  
Forty years food was always right near;  
Forty years of learning, but not seeming to hear -  
Can it be possible I'd do the same?

Why is it I have to learn over again;  
Much I have learned but have never retained;  
Not lived in full light of all that I've gained -  
Can it be possible I'd do the same?

God help me to learn from those who've gone on before;  
Help me to claim things I've often ignored;  
Help me to learn lessons from those long ago -

Then it's possible I'd not do the same.

**"I written about this before Father, but it seems that there are many lessons for me to learn from those who were called by Thee before my time. Please correct me when I complain; please rebuke me when I step out of line; please convict me when I left something undone that I should done. I may not say to Thee at the time I appreciate what You do, but inside my heart I really do. Thank You, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

**1 Corinthians 10:31.** *"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye all to the glory of God."*

#### **FOR GOD'S GLORY.**

What difference does it make to God, if it's chicken or a steak?  
The difference comes when to my brother's life, a challenge it does make.  
So, for his conscience, joy and peace, and God's glory too,  
I will take different kind; another will I choose.

It matters not to me if from the shambles or market we do choose,  
A roast of pork, or beef or lamb, or even duck or goose.  
But to him and to my God above, whose glory I do seek;  
My choices are important, for his conscience may be weak.

God's glory is the point; His honor, worth and praise  
Are to be my point of reference and the reason for my days;  
For here on earth, the tensions and the challenges of life,  
Can be of value to my soul, and to my brother, light.

O God of grace and glory, O God of truth and might;  
Please grant to me the wisdom, to always walk in light.  
Give me the care and kindness within this soul of mine,  
To bless those all around me, all glory will be Thine.

**"Father of all compassion and grace, I need to always consider how others may be affected by my words and actions. Keep me from ever having an "I don't care what they think" attitude. Give me the grace of sensitivity that I may know how to keep from offending another person's conscience and thus take away glory from Thee that should come from both of us. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

**1 Corinthians 11:1-16**

#### **GODLY ORDER**

There are always going to be things in the life of an assembly - and an individual for that matter - that needs instruction and correction. Paul gave us a good example as to how we can go about introducing those issues that need correcting by giving honest commendation and praise for what is right to begin with. The Corinthian assembly knew Paul well for he had been with them nearly two years and they appreciated his interest and remembered him and his teaching. They had also kept the ordinances (traditions), the spiritual teaching he had given and were passing them on from one to the another. The traditions of men are not things to be passed on, but what was then, and today, traditions from the scriptures of truth, they are to be kept. Paul was the example they could follow. Without the written words of the New Testament they had to rely on the oral testimony of those who spoke for God. False teachers often expose their false teaching by the lifestyle they have that is inconsistent with the teaching of the scriptures. A person's gift in teaching or public testimony of faith in Christ alone must be reinforced by the kind of person he is, the life he lives and the grace he shows.

There was disorder in the meetings of the assembly at Corinth and in this part of the epistle Paul seeks to correct these disorders by going over carefully what these issues were and giving calmly and clearly, the spiritual principles that applied to those issues. Irreverence apparently was a problem when they came together then as it is in some places now. The believers were coming to worship God in the same manner as they would when going to have a visit at someone's house. The assemblies that began all over the world beginning at Jerusalem, welcomed those who were saved, as equals: males and females, rich and poor, slave and free regardless of nationality to the fellowship of believers. Today, as it was then perhaps to a lesser degree, that irreverent freedom is carried to excess. An irreverent attitude leads to casual prayers. Inappropriate music opens the opportunity for the fleshly attraction to worldly music to assert itself. Divisions and disorder are usually not very far apart. Respect, integrity and reverence are also not very far apart. A New Testament church needs to have these characteristics to be appropriate for the worship of God and service for God.

The careful explanation regarding the visible evidence of spiritual worship in the assembly indicates the importance the Spirit of God through His servant Paul, thinks this matter to be. Some have the opinion today that it doesn't make any difference what a person wears and how they act when they come to worship God. They think the important thing is that they are there at all. The Lord Jesus clarified the principles of worship when He said, "They that worship the Father, must worship Him in spirit and in truth." The right attitude (spirit) and the right words (truth) are expected of those who come into the presence of God as a gathered-out company of saints.

Some will say the uncovered heads of the men and the covered heads of the women is only a cultural practice of ancient times and is neither relevant nor expected of us today. Even if it was cultural then, which it was, the principles behind the specific instructions the apostle Paul gave regarding headship are timeless. Respect for our spouse, reverence for God and what is acceptable in worship are to focus our attention on God who we worship, not on ourselves. The women were to wear head coverings so attention was not directed to them, and men were to be uncovered so attention is directed to the Head which is Christ. There are a number of reasons why the visible distinction among those who come to worship and serve God together as an assembly are important. Submission of those who represent Christ and His bride, the Church, is a fundamental part of Christian unity in the local assembly.

There is also a spiritual reason for this order. The Father is head over Christ, yet they are equal in value and importance. Their roles are different in the kingdom of God. The different roles men and women fill does not have to do with worth. In the assembly the women are subject to male leadership even though they are equals. This has to do with order being maintained under the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ. The men honor the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head, by not being covered. The women honor the leadership of men and authority of God by covering their heads so attention is not specifically directed to them. In this way submission is shown by both sexes to the authority of the Sovereign Lord. There is also the fact that the long hair of women reflects on personal submission to the leadership of her husband, and her respect for herself. The men show this by the short hair that nature teaches. The sisters are able to glorify God with head covering and honor male leadership by her long hair - and not to be a disgrace to herself by appearing manly. In the opposite way men glorify God with uncovered heads, short hair identifies their role in the assembly and keeps them from disgracing themselves by appearing feminine.

Another reason for this public representation of saints submitting to this divine order is in the order of creation. The man was created first. He is the responsible one in the public domain. Women are not inferior to men because there is unity in the equality of both persons. However, men are considered (at least until recently) by the government of the country to be the head of the household. As such men have a delegated authority in the home to rule with compassion, humility, responsibility and unbiased recognition of each member of that household. This is true in an assembly of saints. Angels look on and observe divine order of headship restored in the assembly that they lost in rebellion and the first couple lost in disobedience. That has now become visibly evident to angels and men in local assemblies who follow the scriptural pattern of gathering. There the headship of Christ is honored and hopefully maintained.

The interdependence of men and women as taught in verses 11 and 12 reveal the partnership aspect of both in the assembly. We need each other to carry out the Word of God. An assembly is not made up of women only or of men only. Both are essential to declare the testimony of Christ and His love for the church. To worship God in the way He intends is serious and not in any way to be taken carelessly or lightly. Angels look on, those in the observers' seats are learning, the participants, both audible and inaudible, are made conscious of God's presence when worshipping in "the beauty of holiness." Dignity and propriety are reasons imposed on us by nature so we can testify to divine order by the distinction of the sexes. Believers should behave in honorable ways and look modest and respectful in ways that suit the culture in which they live. We are not to adopt all the practices of a local culture just to make ourselves appealing. But we are to conduct ourselves wherever we are in ways that demonstrates our faith in Christ, and that honors Him consistently in behavior and appearance. Modesty and respect are found in every culture and should be seen in those who gather in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to worship, honor and serve God.

They are different, it is very easy to observe  
They are following those who clearly taught the ways of the Lord  
It is not just what they say, but the dignity they preserve  
That impresses angels and men who don't read the Word  
When they come together there is a dignity and obvious respect  
For God and His Word, they know whom they are called to represent  
From within there comes evidence outwardly that they do not forget  
Through their testimony of the headship of Christ, to Him they consent.

There is an obvious difference between the sexes when they meet  
Each is equal as a worshipper but their roles are not alike  
The honor they each deserve should be obvious as they treat  
One another with dignity and respect - and with delight  
Come as one body to worship the Father and honor the Son  
In psalms and hymns, spiritual songs all led by the Spirit  
Each as different as the members in a body, but joined as one  
Knowing that whether audible or silent, God Himself hears it.

It is not right for men to take the place of women, or the women the man  
The order God has established has been designated by Him  
Each one in the assembly should fill their role as best they can  
Knowing God expects each to do what He intends of them  
It is no light matter to be called by Christ's name  
And gathered to Him in faith and personal consecration  
He never intended for us to be all exactly the same  
To the role He has given us He has the right of our dedication.

Men and women are distinctly different but we are one in unity  
The gifts given are to fill the need we have of each other  
Men speak out publicly, the women in silence show holy piety  
In the local body of saints there is a role for each sister and brother  
In faith we each one needs to understand and fulfill our role  
So, the unity of the saints in worship and service our testimony completes  
The men are like the mouthpiece, the women are like the soul  
Each one content in who we are without any desire to compete.

**“Father, Thy people who meet together here seem quite united. May our time with them encourage and instruct in such a way as to help them respect each other and continue in faithful testimony to Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

**1Corinthians 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:”*

### **RECEIVED OF THE LORD.**

#### RECEIVED OF THE LORD

A ministry to fulfill [Acts 20:24]: The Gospel to preach.

A word with joy [1Thes.1:6]: affliction to endure.

An instruction to carry out [1Thes.4:1]: walk and please God.

A tradition to follow [2Thes.3:6]: correct the disorderly.

A practice to make [1Cor.11:23]: a supper to eat.

- Disorders to be corrected – this supper is holy.
- Authority to be affirmed – this is from the Lord.
- Equality to be observed – no one is higher than another.
- Ordinance to be carried out – instruction came from the Lord.
- Conduct to maintain – the plan and the way to do it was received from the Lord.
- Revelation to pass on – Paul had received this instruction by revelation.

#### DELIVERED UNTO YOU

Two tables of stone [De.9:10]: laws to obey.

The nation of Israel [1Sam.10:18]: a holy nation.

The Gospel to proclaim [1Co.15:3]: a message to pass on.

The faith (body of truth) [Jude3]: truth to uphold.

The Lord's Supper [1Co.11:23]: a Person to remember.

- Paul was faithful to the churches – he told what he received.
- Paul gave the counsel of God to them – it wasn't his own ideas.
- Paul told them how to do this – the way to do it was not to be changed.
- Paul's message was from God – it is on the divine record.
- Paul made the order clear – this is the rule of our faith and practice.

**“I know from experience Father; how important this Supper is. From the first time I took the bread and the cup until now, I knew there was nothing else like it in the world. Its simplicity was profound. Its order was significant. Its symbolism was unmatched by anything else. Its impact is immense on true worshippers. Its**

spirituality moves the soul and spirit. Its proclamation is unmistakable. Whatever language the hymns and prayers and scripture reading are in, the force of divine authority and life moves saints to worship. "Amazing pity grace unknown; and love beyond degree." In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

**1Corinthians 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:"

#### **RECEIVED OF THE LORD #2.**

It came from the Lord, this choicest of feasts;  
This is not from man's ideas how we are to eat  
That which depicts the sacred event  
That fell on Christ till righteous wrath was spent.

Entrusted to Paul was the meaning for us;  
To remember our Savior, and His death on the cross.  
He received it from God to deliver, that we  
Will remember the cross so redeemed we can be.

And further than that; to show forth His death -  
This was not a small thing that we can have new life -  
Through what Jesus did when our place He there took;  
And paid with His blood, and my judgment endured.

When my Lord says, "Remember Me," it is important to Him.  
How much more should I do this for He cleansed me from sin.  
He wants us to show with sincerity and truth,  
His death on the cross, and how much it was worth.

We will remember together all He was to God.  
We will remember it was He who in our place stood.  
We will show His death weekly, so that people can see -  
All Jesus accomplished when He died on the tree.

"The weekly remembrance, Father is such an important part of my week, that I can hardly understand how any would want to not be there. It is with humility and gratitude we review the Person and work of the Savior in this unique way. We have tried to initiate it here as closely as possible to what seems Thy divine order and plan. We worship in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

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

##### **THE LORD'S SUPPER**

In the past, Israel was to worship only where the Lord had placed His name and it was to be regulated by the Word of God. Truth couldn't share with error, nor the notions of men with the authority of God. To preserve the holiness of public worship in the Old Testament, God appointed....

A Divine Center. Deut. 12:5.

12: 6-7. God's people were to bring their gifts and offerings there.

17:8-13. Discipline was carried out there.

18:6-8. God appointed ministry was given there.

26:1-11. Appreciation of the nation was expressed in what they brought there.

In the New Testament, just before the Lord was crucified, He appointed...

A Divine Institution. Mat.26:26-30.

"He took bread." The Son of God became human.

"He blessed it." He was thankful to do it.

"He broke it." Voluntary sufferings of the Lord Jesus.

"He gave it..." He paid the ransom price; He made the atonement.

The Lord's Supper is one of the three things our Lord told us to do "Till He Come." The first of these is...

1. "Occupy till I come." [Lu.19:13]. This involves our responsibility to WORK.
2. "Hold fast till I come." [Rev.2:25]. This involves our reliability to WAIT and WITNESS.
3. "Shew the Lord's death till He come. [1Cor.11:26]. This involves our appreciation in WORSHIP.

The Lord's Supper is...

1. The Expression of a Fellowship [1Cor.10:16-18].

2. The Remembrance of a Person [1Cor.11:23,26].
3. The Proclamation of a Fact [1Cor.11:26].
4. The Cherishing of a Hope [1Cor.11:26].

The Lord's Supper is referred to...

1. In verse 23 – the first time.
2. In verse 26 – many times.
3. In verse 26 – the last time.

The Lord's Supper in its Institution [Mat.26:26-30].

The setting forth of the doctrinal truths of Christ's incarnation; His deity; His humanity; His substitution; His atonement.

The Lord's Supper in its Position.

Between the two comings of Christ: a look backward and a look forward; the memorial of a departed Friend (in remembrance of Me); the parable of a present Friend (where two or three are... there am I); the prophecy of a returning Friend (till He come). Every symbol in the church reminds us of the fact that it is night: "Stars"; "lamp-stand"; "supper". It is night but morning is coming.

The Lord's Supper in its Nature.

It is a moral center. Purity is in view. It is a test of every conscience. It is preceded by self-judgment [1Cor.11:29]. If self-judgment is neglected, then Assembly judgment is invoked [1Cor.5]. If the assembly refuses to fulfill its responsibility, then God's judgment takes place [1Cor.11:30]. 1st Corinthians 5 deals with the impure sins of the body. 1st Corinthians 11:17-22 deals with the uncontrolled passions of the soul. 1st Corinthians 10:17-22 deals with the sins of the spirit in compromising with the religious world at the expense of God's truth. The Lordship of Christ in all its functions is exemplified in the Lord's Supper.

1. Meet on the Lord's Day [Rev.1:10; Acts 20:7].
2. Around the Lord's Table [1Cor.10:16-21].
3. To Partake of the Lord's Supper [1Cor.11:20].
4. To Proclaim the Lord's Death [1Cor.11:26].
5. To Discern the Lord's Body [1Cor.11:29].
6. Until the Lord's Return [1Cor.11:26].

The Lord's Supper in its Appeal.

Unity is expressed [1Cor.10:17] in all partaking of one loaf. The symbolic circle with the table in the center is a testimony to the fellowship of the participants. The bread is the symbol of the mystical body of Christ [1Cor.10]. The bread is the symbol of the literal body of Christ [1Cor.11]. The Lord's Supper testifies that the Church is one. That oneness is preserved by the Lord in His prayer in John 17. The local church (assembly) is the miniature of the one body [1Cor.12:27].

The Lord's Supper in its Fruits.

- The preservation of sound doctrine.
- To learn again the meaning of Calvary.
- Assuring of our fellowship as we join together to remember Him.
- The public practice of the priesthood of believers seen in action.
- A testimony to divine order in the things of God.
- A visible testimony of the Gospel.
- A reminder of our accountability to God and our fellow believers.
- A testimony to observers of our submission to the authority of God.

The Lord's Supper compared with believer's baptism.

1. Baptism doesn't make but marks a Christian. The Lord's Supper doesn't keep a Christian but is kept by Christians.
2. Baptism is an individual act. The Lord's Supper is a collective act.
3. Baptism is for identification. The Lord's Supper is kept out of appreciation.
4. Baptism testifies to my death with Christ. The Lord's Supper testifies to Christ's death for me.
5. Baptism shows Christ's death as my death. The Lord's Supper shows Christ's life as my life.

The Lord's Supper as regard to time.

Acts 20:6-7 indicates that it was a specific objective of the believers gathering. It indicates that it took place on the first day of the week. It suggests that Paul waited until the first day of the week in order to be with the believers at the "breaking of bread" meeting. No other time frame is made reference to in the

scripture as to how often this should be done. Therefore, using the time reference given and the fact that certain other things are unique to the first day of the week, it is done each first day of the week rather than the first day of the month or the first day of the year. Believers were to lay aside God's portion to be given on the first day of the week: Responsibility. John the apostle received the truths of our Lord's Person in Revelation on the first day of the week: Revelation. Our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the death on the first day of the week beginning the day of the Gospel of the grace of God: Resurrection. The Lord's Supper took place on the first day of the week: Remembrance.

The Lord's Supper as regards to participants.

In Acts 2 we read that they that "gladly received his word" (salvation: disciples are made by Gospel preaching); "were baptized" (obedience: disciples are marked by baptism by immersion); and they "continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine, the fellowship, breaking of bread and in prayers" (reality: disciples are molded by the teaching and practice of the Word of God). We learn then that only baptized believers who were living consistent lives as followers of Christ, were participants at the Lord's Supper. The difference between the Lord's Table in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 10 and the Lord's Supper in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11, is that a person can be saved (have access to the Lord's table) and still be not separated unto the Person of Christ. When we take the Lord's Supper, we indicate we are in fellowship with the Lord and each other and are there for the right reasons. The Lord's Supper is not for forgiveness of sins, getting the Holy Spirit, to gain a good conscience, to re-crucify Christ or any other reason then those mentioned before.

If we were at the first one when the Lord Jesus Christ instituted the feast of remembrance, we would have been gathered around a table after having finished eating the last of all the Passover feasts. The Lord Jesus Himself then took the emblems symbolizing His Body and Blood and gave thanks for each of them in turn and then gave it to each one there to partake of. You can imagine each one eating the bread from the one loaf and drinking from the same cup and forever after they would realize this is more important than a birthday. This is a reminder of a death day and an accomplished work of redemption through the body and blood of the Lord.

#### **IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME**

The night the Lord Jesus Christ introduced the Lord's Supper, He and His disciples had eaten the last of the Passovers previous to eating the new feast of remembrance. The Passover was now finished and the testimony of the new covenant was seen in the bread and the cup. Apparently, the Corinthian assembly, and maybe other assemblies, had a regular meal together before they took the Lord's Supper. In Corinth this meal that was supposed to express fellowship and love between them as a "love feast," was actually driving them into cliques dividing the rich from the poor and the needy from those who had plenty to eat. This can easily happen. Some who are well to do will sit at a table by themselves discussing finances, business and how their latest investments are doing. Those who are in real need and want something to eat are isolated and kind of watched out of the corner of some eyes to see how much they actually eat. This kind of separation is a serious danger to any assembly because it reveals a problem much deeper than just eating at separate tables. It is possible to misuse something that could promote fellowship so that the results make things among believers much worse than they were before. The divisions even at these meals showed the deep-seated problems of the believers in Corinth. Unbelievers were able to be exposed in some way during those times that should have promoted fellowship. The answer to this problem should be dealt with at home so it would not bring further dishonor on the Lord's people as a whole.

Another consideration though, is that some of the poor needed what was provided at those meals. But to treat them as people of less worth than the rich revealed those who believed they were gifted and advanced in the Christian life farther than others, to be like little spoiled children when it came to showing Christian love and grace. The potential for good that is in having a meal together can be easily lost and become a time of reproach and division when not truly a "love feast." This type of thing should not proceed the Lord's Supper.

We are to "Occupy till I come," the Lord Jesus taught, as we take responsibility for the work He has given us. Assembly believers Thyatira were to "Hold fast till I come," in a reliably way, as they waited and witnessed for the Lord. It is important to the Lord Jesus Christ that we worship in appreciation of Him when we come together to "Show the Lord's death till He come." The institution of the Lord's Supper displays great doctrinal truths of the incarnation of Christ, the deity and humanity of Christ, the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, the substitution and atonement that has been accomplished for us. This was important to the Lord then, and is now - and it should be to us as well.

The position of the Lord's Supper is uniquely important as it is between the two comings of Christ. We look back to when He came to put away sin by the "sacrifice of Himself." We know His sinless ness and perfection in every way made that sacrifice acceptable to God. Now we look forward at the Lord's Supper to

His promised return when the symbols of His body and blood are no longer needed. The Lord's Supper is a memorial of a departed Friend. "This do in remembrance of Me." It is also a testimony of a present Friend. "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there and I in the midst of them." The Supper is a response to a promised of a coming Friend - "Till I come." The Lord's Supper is not just a historical review or a history lesson. It is a vital remembrance of the past, present and future activities of our Lord and it has a purifying effect on us today.

The nature of the Lord's Supper is that it is a moral center where the purity of life and purpose tests our conscience. It is important for us to prepare in advance of coming to partake of that feast of holy things. We are not worthy of being there or of any of the blessings our Lord has given us, but we can, and must partake of the Lord's Supper in a worthy manner. Personal examination, self-judgment and confession of sin is needed in view of the holiness and purity testified to our Lord in that Supper. We come together owning the Lordship of Christ. We come on the Lord's day to sit at the Lord's table and partake of the Lord's Supper. While there we proclaim the Lord's death and discern the Lord's body until the Lord's return. To some people unfortunately they can come or stay away depending on how it interferes with other things going on in their lives, rather than the other way around.

At the Lord's Supper then, we look back to remember what happened on our behalf that we might be brought to God. We also look up to where our Great High Priest adds His "sweet perfume" to all of our prayers and hymns of praise. At the same time, we remember His presence with us and look ahead to when His promise to return will take place and we "shall see His face." It is also important that we examine ourselves as we look inward to make sure there is nothing in us that would dishonor Him, adversely affect others and hinder us in our worship. There is another consideration in relation to the Lord's Supper. There are observers. Angels look on and see the order of those who submit to our Lord's headship. There are those in the observers' seats who watch to see whether what we profess is consistent with what we actually practice.

There is a unique appeal to the Lord's Supper and that is its testimony to the unity of those who are gathered to the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ in His name alone. Sitting around the table with one loaf on it, testifies to the fact that in the unity of family fellowship with the saints and Jesus in our midst, we are one in Christ as members of His body. We are united together with Him and in Him. He preserves us and holds us together as He mentioned in His intercessory prayer for us. The local assembly of believers is a testimony that the Body of Christ is one, not divided as denominations separate Christians into unscriptural groups. The cup is the testimony of the blood of Christ that was in no way tainted with sin. His "precious blood" carries with it the proof of eternal life from Him we received when His "Blood cleanseth us from all sin." The unity expressed when drinking from the one cup symbolizes the eternal life Christ gave us when He gave His life as a ransom for us, to form the new covenant He made with us.

The results that come from the Lord's Supper include the preservation of sound doctrine, blessings that come from worshipping in spirit and truth, the visible testimony of the Gospel. Others are that we learn again the meaning and value of the work of Christ on Calvary. We are assured of who we are and why we are here as we join together to remember Him. The coming of the Lord is brought to our minds and its purifying effect goes with us through the week ahead. By being at the Lord's Supper we are able in a special way to act as priests should in bringing our variety of sacrifices with us to present to Him. In an unusual way our prayers and praises create the paradox of joy and sweet sorrow blended together as we remember our Savior. It is important for us and for the Lord that we be where He intends us to be and do what He intends us to do. To carelessly look upon such an important act commanded of the Lord, places one under the judging hand of God. We need to obey Him and do what he wants in His way. A wise person will not just come when it is convenient to them but will commit themselves to obedience and faith as we remember our Lord Jesus Christ and make a public proclamation of His death. These two things are able to be responded to at the Lord's Supper in a way that is not possible elsewhere or in any other way.

The night before as the work day closes  
A sense of quietness draws one aside.  
Words of a hymn, some scripture passage he chooses  
That from his mind weekday work he can hide.  
His mind and heart are raised higher and above  
The things of which he has been occupied.  
Now he is drawn in spirit to the Savior he loves  
Considering just how and why His Savior died.

In the early morning he dresses himself with care  
He is going with the saints of God to meet

Together around the table and there to share  
Thoughts of the Lord and His work complete.  
So, a sense of dignity, honor and respect  
Dictates to him how he should dress.  
This feast of remembrance he would not neglect  
From the attitude of thanks, his God he will bless.

With cautious joy and reverential mind  
He sits down with others to think and remember.  
In the bread and cup there he is able to find  
Proof of the body of which he is a member.  
And the eternal life he has as a gift received,  
He can see in the blood-red fruit of the vine.  
There in thoughts he remembers on Who he's believed  
He's not very conscious of the passing of time.

Sitting at that table, partaking of the Supper  
He is aware he's seated in heavenly places.  
All who are there sense the unseen "Other"  
Who grace is reflected in all of their faces.  
It never grows old, this remembrance of Him,  
Who loved us with a love that is everlasting.  
At this table of blessing we bring thank-offerings in  
And leave with a heart full of overflowing blessing.

**"Loving Father, thanks so much for reminding me again of the value of what we do and how we do it. During this day may our conversations with others, the things we do and the teaching we give have Thy blessing on it in a way that can glorify Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

### **1Corinthians 12 - 15:58**

#### **UNSEEN SPIRITUAL THINGS**

THE HOLY SPIRIT: lays down the truth of the Lordship of Christ as interpreted by Him seen in Unity. How Unity is administered...

- Diversities of gifts; capacities for service.
- Ministrations; opportunities for service.
- Workings; equipment for service.
- Unification: same Spirit; same Lord; same God.

GIFTS ARE TO USED PROPERLY: in view of Lordship.

- A variety of gifts are given, v.1-11.
- Unity of gifts – source and purposes.
- Diversity of gifts.
- Love is more important than gifts, 13.
- Prophecy is more important than gifts, 14:1-25.
- Public meetings are regulated by the proper use of the gifts, 14:26-40.

DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION: in view of Lordship, 15:1.

- The certainty of the resurrection, 1-34.
- The act of resurrection, 35-58.

CONCLUSION: two matters.

- Practical: The collection.
- Personal: proven people.

These matters manifest the Lordship of Christ in the church. What we give to the Lord indicates where our true interests lie. A lot of people start off in a real race looking like winners but those who are there after years are the ones to trust and follow.

### **1Corinthians 12:1-13**

#### **UNDERSTANDING THE UNITY**

Those saints in Corinth were gifted people. "You come behind in no gift." Each of us has been given ability from God the Holy Spirit as well as the Father and the Son, to do a work for God that is above our natural talents. Talent comes to us through the gene-pool usually and can be developed by training and practice. Spiritual gifts are given by God to us in order to meet the needs of others, and on occasion, needs to be

"stirred up." In this portion of scripture, we are given insight into how this works in the Body of Christ and how it works in the fellowship of believers in a local assembly. Eyesight doesn't happen by my developing it; it is inherent and complete by nature as God has made it, and now the eye in my body benefits my body and it is there without my effort. The same is true of every individual part of a body. That principle is in the Body of Christ and manifests itself through the believers in whatever locality they are found. In Corinth the saints didn't seem to understand these gifts were valuable to the extent they benefited others. These gifts were not like childhood toys to play with and be proud of having. They had missed the whole point of God giving the variety of gifts.

In each place where we read of the giving of spiritual gifts: Romans 12, where God gives the gifts; 1 Corinthians 12, where the holy Spirit gives the gifts and Ephesians 4 where the Lord Jesus give the gifts, there is clearly shown the value of the gifts in promoting unity. Properly used gifts unify the work of the assembly and each one fills the role in which the gift is used, for the benefit of all. In each place the diversity of gifts is given so we can see the benefit and far-reaching effects of the combination of gifts. Also, the value personally is obvious when maturity is exercised in using one's gift in the way and place God intends.

When we understand and acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, that is a work of the Holy Spirit that unifies the people of God. The Spirit of God maintains self-control in each believer that blesses the whole body. Loss of control by even one believer negatively affects the purpose and function of the body in the same way it affects a physical body when one part goes out of control. It is the same Spirit, the same Lord and the same God, the unity of divine Persons, that produces unity in the body of the saints who gather as a local testimony to God. The gifts that can bring great blessing can also cause great difficulties if they are used without being sensitive to others. The rival use of gifts can cause division - and it happened in Corinth. Anyone can claim to speak for God. A test of "spirituals" is what a person has to say about the Lord Jesus Christ. Does that person acknowledge Jesus as Lord? What do they teach about the value and use of the gifts of others beside themselves? Do they depend on the same God to produce from them what He desires? Is there a true desire to minister to the benefit of the body? Do they exalt their own gift and the importance of what they do?

It is God who is involved in giving the gifts, the use of the gifts and the power of the gifts. The variety of gifts is needed, and most effective, when used in concert with other gifts to build up the Body of Christ and the people in the local assembly. The Head (Christ) of the Body knows how and where the contribution of each believer's gift can be used. Each of the three lists given have some of the same gifts identified. Apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor-teachers are mentioned specifically as gifts to the whole Body in Ephesians 4, and are used all over the world to further the work of God. Other gifts such as helps, governments, ministry and administration are able to be used for the benefit of the local assembly. Still others are used to benefit individual believers.

These gifts are not evidence of the baptism of the Spirit. That work of God does not come from human effort or human choice. The Holy Spirit did that once-for-all baptism when the Church was formed and when we are saved by God's grace, we are immersed into that Body - we are a part of the great body of saints from Pentecost until the rapture of the Church. The way we know we have been baptized by the Spirit of God is there is a response within us that is life-changing. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away. Behold all things are become new." The person who used to curse and swear now sings praises to God and speaks with honor. The person who used to lie without the pricks of conscience now speaks the truth. The one who lived with unclean and impure habits is immediately conscious of what is right and wrong. In other words, the witness of the baptism of the Spirit is in us having been placed there by God apart from any decision on our part.

The filling of the Spirit has to do with our willingness to be controlled by the Spirit of God to serve God and do His will. We have a command regarding this filling. "Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit." When we recognize Jesus Christ as Lord, and yield our bodies to Him, we are in a condition and position to fulfill the work for Him that He gives us. That is where the use of the gifts comes in. This is in contrast to the baptism of the Spirit when we are made members of His Body because He has bought us with the price of His own blood - His life given for us. The gift of the Spirit and the baptism of the Spirit makes every Christian regardless of social status, gender, race, age or degree of wealth, a member of Christ's Body. When Christ uses our bodies, He wants us to be filled with the Spirit and be ready to use the gifts God has given for faithful service for Him.

**1 Corinthians 12:1.** *"Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant."*

## **SPIRITUAL THINGS.**

Spiritual things are hard to explain,  
Because they are not what is seen to the eye.  
But spiritual things are more important than sight,  
For it is in the spiritual things our strength lies.

We have read of the mind of believers before;  
It has to do with how my mind thinks.  
We read of the Spiritual Rock that followed,  
And the people of God from it drank.

Spiritual meat we discussed at great length,  
Because what we eat is what make us fit.  
Whether manna or water or the way that we think,  
The spirituals of our life must be met.

When God by His choice, gave spiritual gifts,  
It was not that I might in them glory.  
The gifts given to me makes my life-work fit,  
That through me, others will understand God's story.

I may not know all God wants me to do,  
But of this much I am really sure;  
When God gives us gifts, there's a work I know,  
I can do for God's glory to show.

Not for self or praise does God gift His own;  
It is for the saints and the body they're given.  
For me not to use my gift and stay at home;  
I'll lose out when giving an account up in heaven.

**“Gracious God, my Father: in Thy wisdom gifts have been dispensed among Thy people. By Thy wisdom may those gifts glorify Thee when they are used in fellowship with Thee. May the gift given to me not be left unstirred, but may it properly function at every possible opportunity. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.”**

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

#### **UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY**

The Church is not an organization, nor a promotional agency. It was never designed to be a business. It was never designed to be run by paid professionals. It is a living system; an organism. The assembly at Corinth was not functioning as a body. They were chaotic, out of control, immature, immoral, selfish, proud, heretical and divisive. They liked human philosophy, tolerated sin, sued each other, were gluttonous, drunkards. They were sexually evil, allowed pagan worship, desecrated the Lord's Table, perverted and not trusted in the area of spiritual ministries. The area causing the most discord and disunity was spiritual gifts. They had counterfeited the true gifts. So instead of harmony, there was chaos.

Paul is correcting this by pointing out things the way God planned. Accept the divine dignity God has placed in every member. Minister in the area in which God has gifted you. He never intended us to have all the same gifts. That is the beauty of the body. The body operates in Unity, Diversity, Sovereignty and Harmony.

- Spiritual unity: Eph.4:3; 2:15-16; 4:4-6; Gal.3:28; Jn.17:20-23.
- Spiritual necessity: every person is important: no loner, drifters, spectators, outsiders.
- Spiritual diversity: a body is one because it has all the necessary parts. You know your gifts when you allow the Spirit of God to use you in an area of service. When some carnality jams up the works, we often compensate rather than deal with the carnality. Diversity is no accident. If you teach – then teach. If you minister - then minister. If you speak - speak as the oracles of God.
- Spiritual sovereignty: God planned the Church. Be content with what God has given you and keep the sense of dignity God has given to every part of the body. God made you to be what He wants. God organizes the entire body. Every believer should sense the dignity of having a capacity with which to minister for the benefit of others. We are not commanded to seek a gift. “Covet no prophesy” means to have that gift used when you come together. There is no place for discontent, selfishness and conceit: God “tempered” – mixed the gifts together.

Because of the working of the Holy Spirit in the use of the diversity of gifts, there is order and blessing that comes when all the saints use their gifts willingly to serve others. Controlled diversity maintains strong unity. Maturity in spiritual things maintains that balance between diversity and unity that makes a body work properly and productively. The illustration the apostle Paul uses is the human body composed of many

different parts, each with a unique work to do in the functioning of the whole body. To compare the work of an eye to the work of a foot or even a toe, is foolish. Each one is different yet each one is important in the usefulness of the body. If a gift is open and public like the use of a mouth or an arm, that does not make it more important than other parts of a body, nor does it indicate other unseen members of a body are of less value. The unseen heart or lungs have an essential use in the body that cannot be filled by any other part. One who has the wisdom of God and another who has unquestioning faith has a vital role to fill in the local assembly. These are as needed as a gifted speaker or one who has leadership ability. All of these gifts are from God and the diversity is for the united purpose of glorifying God.

When we recognize our need of each other and do not discount the contribution of any other person, no matter how seemingly insignificant their gift may appear to be, the unified strength of the body is experienced. There is never a need to feel dissatisfied with the work God has given us to do and the gift He has given to do it. To be "ready for every good work" is what our response should be. When a brother or sister has cause to rejoice, rejoice for them and with them. Don't be jealous of them. If one is weeping over a loss, don't ignore their suffering but comfort them and, if possible, share their grief. We should not isolate ourselves from other members of the assembly but keep involved with them even though each one is different from other people. Every one is part of the whole and the unity and diversity of the whole leads to maturity.

Each assembly of God's people has been given by God what is needed for that group to fulfill the work God intends. A small company of saints may not be as gifted as a large group but that does not mean there is failure. Each believer's gift enables them to fill the need where they live. No gift is superior to the others, but some are more beneficial to the whole body. Prophecy, for instance, benefits all who hear but the one who prophesies needs the benefits others gifts give to him. The Holy Spirit gives the gifts to the local assembly as He sees the need, and we need the grace God gives to use them as God intends.

**1 Corinthians 12:14.** *"For the body is not one member, but many."*

#### **BODY PARTS.**

The man's visible eye said to the ear one day, "Too bad you're not out front like me.  
This job I do, is the important one, you. I steer this body because I see."  
As the ear thought clear, over the words he did hear, it came to him that he should be boss;  
"Without my tone that can hear a horn, this whole body would be a great loss."  
And the hand to the foot said with tone of disdain, "You can't even scratch an itch."  
So, the foot replied, "But for me and my work, all of you would be down in the ditch."

And so, for awhile the visible parts of the body began to praise each one himself.  
It sounded to the listeners unseen, while the others did preen, that the rest could be put on  
the shelf.  
Then with deep voice from the dark, came the voice of the heart, the blood-pumping life to  
the man.

"Just hold it a moment, you parts out there, stop praising yourselves if you can.  
You who sleep at night when life's not too bright, who live in the light of the day;  
Some of us in here, that live in the dark, we all have something to say.

Just think for a moment, if you possibly can; what it would be like if we all quit.  
The light would go out of the eye in a flash, and your sight wouldn't matter a bit.  
And the ear would be there, like a leaf or a pear, sitting stuck on the side of his head.  
But no one would care about the music that's there, 'cause every one out there would be  
dead.

And the hand that's so dexterous, and the foot so ambitious, it wouldn't matter who is  
what;  
Because if we all quit, and got tired of it, this whole factory door would be shut.

So, who really counts, when we try to count worth; which one is the One we all need?  
I can be transplanted; you can be amputated, but everyone here needs the Head."  
As all stopped to think, even the eye didn't blink, as they considered the words of the wise.  
And they all felt ashamed at the things they had named, before heart pared them all down  
to size.

Without the Head, what would it be like; the eye would be floating in air.  
The hands and the feet, with no purpose to meet, would be both a useless pair.

And the ear would be odd, when there's no Head to nod; he'd really have no place to stick.  
The whole body would lie, and each part would die, if there was nothing up there but the  
neck.

Though we're all many, in the Body there's not any that can really function alone.  
It's the Head that's important, He the only Director, of the Body to make it as one.  
The Head has the power, it's the Control Tower, that gives each member a work.  
When each knows its place, gives the others their space, and from its own job never shirks;  
Then the Body works well; even when injured will heal; and move on to accomplish its goal.  
That the whole world will know, and the Body will show, that the Head's the most important  
of all.

Whatever my role in the Body to fill, I will always need to be sure;  
That what the Head wants, from the member that's me, I will always be quick to be there.  
The work of the Body, will have no reason to falter, and will follow the course to the end.  
And then when each one, knows the work to be done, when the Head His message does  
send;

We'll all work together, the harvest to gather, and bring to the Father's glad home.  
We will all join to sing, our praises we'll bring to the Head who made us all one.

**"It will be something to see O God, when all the Body is together without schisms,  
bruises, complaints and pain. I am already anticipating the first time I will hear all  
together as one, the voice of the saints singing 'Unto Him that loved us and washed  
us from our sins in His own Blood!' Amen."**

### **1 Corinthians 13**

#### **LOVE**

There was a misunderstanding of love in the morally corrupt Corinthian society that was in the believers in that assembly. Faith is the basis on which the message of God's redeeming grace is built. Hope is the attitude that focuses our attention of the point of the message of salvation and the reason why we preach the Gospel. Love is how the basis of the message and the point of the message finds the way into the hearts and minds of those who hear. It is the action that produces the result God desires. The saints at Corinth had the needed gifts but they weren't working because something essential was missing - love. This chapter is not a sentimental hymn or song of love to be only thought about and read at weddings. This is the life-blood of the Body of Christ. Love is what makes the gifts work. It gives value and real meaning to what a person does with the gift he or she has been given. In the use of every gift, it will not be effective without love in its true "agape" form being evident. Faith, dedication, sacrifice, power produce very little that is lasting unless there is love as its motivation. Without it irritation, anger and even division may result from the use of one's gift in the energy of the flesh.

The love of God flowing through the gifted person who is in fellowship with God can reach into every area of assembly life and fill in all those empty spaces where there is needed grace. The enriching power of the love of God can strengthen and bind up the saints who are weak and bring into control those vigorous ones who are prone to push ahead in by the power of their own personalities and act without divine guidance. That same love builds up the Lord's people in their faith when by its proper use it leads us to the Lord Jesus Christ and makes our labor a work of love rather than a duty. It will keep us from finding satisfaction in another person's discomfort but rather helps us to empathize with others in an appropriate manner. When every other effort fails or finally runs its course, love will remain and by means of the unity of God's people and the understanding of the value of diversity of gifts, maturity will come and be maintained by means of divine love working through the divine nature God gives to His people.

Love for others (Rom.5.7,8; 1Jn.4.9,10; 4.12), is expressed in a variety of words. Four words are used in the New Testament for *love*....

Storge: Natural affection as between mother and child.

Philia: Affection between friends.

Eros: Strong attraction; especially sexual love.

Agape: Extreme love that gives unselfishly for the benefit of another person.

The best possible love we can get is God's kind of love. Most love is based on personal desirability: looks, approval, money, happiness we receive. The only kind of love that loves us "as is" is agape love. God is the only source of this kind of love. He demonstrates His love---- *"...in that Christ died for us."* For whom would you die? God has loved us in spite of everything. The main point is not how God feels but what God does. He treats us right even if we treat Him wrong.

The best possible love we can give is to love God supremely; love others the way God loves us and love them whether they want to be loved or not. People can't see God but they can see the love of God in us when we behave like God. It confirms our Christian faith in a tangible way. Loving one another is the greatest single evidence that a person is a Christian. (Jn.13.34-35) To get it: read about it in the Bible,

meditate about it with God, quit trying to impress God, pray and thank God for His love, allow God to love you, value the love of God in your life. "NOW ABIDE FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE; AND THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE."

The supremacy of love referred to as a better "Way" in 12:31, is in the sense of a road rather than a manner of life. 14:1 indicates a path of life superior to one spent in seeking and displaying spiritual gifts. 1Corinthians13:1, The power of expression is determined by the heart, not diction. The tongues of angels are understood speech. v.2. The ascending order from tongues to faith without benefit to others given in love, is nothing – zero. v.3. Display of virtues: "goods to feed the poor", "body to be burned" is valueless without love. v.4. The Corinthians were impatient, discontented, envious, selfish, inflated, suspicious, resentful; and so the contrasts are listed: "suffers long" – patient under provocation; "kind" – active goodness; "not envious" – pleased that others are honored and exalted; "vaunteth not" – nothing in a man to be proud of. v.5. "not behave rudely" – courteous and considerate; "seeketh not" – interested in what will assist others; "not provoked" – willing to endure slights and insults; "thinks no evil" – not attribute bad motives to others. v.6. "not rejoice in wrong but in truth" – there is a mean streak in people, but love rejoices when truth triumphs. v.7. Love hides or conceals faults of others; tries to put the best construction on actions and events; desires that things work out for the best; endures persecution and bad judgment. v.8. Gifts are temporary, love goes on forever.

The permanence of love is contrasted by three gifts that are temporary – tongues, prophecy, knowledge. v.9. Two gifts: revelatory knowledge; prophecies by direct revelation are partial. v.10. Complete revelation (perfect) is a reference to the written Word of God. Otherwise the Bible is still being written. v.11. Illustration compares partial to complete – the process of bringing scriptures to completion. v.12. Illustration: again in James 1:23. Puzzling things needed clarification. Not referring to heaven but at the conclusion of the canon – clarity. v.13. The graces of the Spirit are superior to the gifts of the Spirit. Love is the essence of Christianity because it is of God, and is God. The practice of love will save us from the misuse of gifts.

The preeminence and value of love is clearly stated. v. 1. Love should be Supreme in the Human Heart (controlling our emotional powers). The power of expression is not determined by the length of vocabulary, but by the depth of the human heart. Language without love is noise without music; the clang of a gong without an organ. v.2. Love should be Sovereign in the Human Mind (controlling our intellectual powers). Prophecy: the power to interpret and declare life in terms of eternity. Baalam had inspirational power but no love. Mysteries: understanding divine secrets; discernment of spiritual things. Caiaphas had spiritual discernment but no love. Knowledge: intelligence in the truth. Truths of God are able to be understood. Judas had knowledge of divine things but no love. Faith: firmness of belief brings mastery over life's difficulties. Gifts without love can be selfish. v.3. Love should be Sovereign in the Human Will (controlling our volitional powers). The extreme exercise of the human will is the sacrifices of property and personal life. Even those sacrifices may be made without love.

The Prerogatives and virtue of love are evident when we love our brethren. One of the greatest things a man can do for his heavenly Father is to be kind to the Father's children. v.4. Love is not hasty but patient: victory over resentment. Love is not inconsiderate but benevolent: victory over selfishness. Love is not envious but content: victory over envy. Love is not boastful but unostentatious (unassuming): victory over being a "show off." Love is not arrogant but humble: "You first; I follow." Love can be wronged and yet maintain a kindly spirit. Love does not advertise itself because humility is its character. v.5. Love does not behave itself foolishly because it wants the best for others. Love is always slow to anger because it always thinks the best. Love is not rude but courteous. Politeness is a Christian virtue. Love is not selfish but self-forgetful wanting the good of others. Love is not irritable but is good-tempered. Generally self-centered people are touchy and easily exasperated. Love is not vindictive but generous. Love keeps a diary of good and keeps no bad record. v.6. Love isn't happy with others' mistakes but rejoices in God's purposes. Love is not malevolent but high-principled. Does not make gain out of others' faults. Does not delight in exposing others' weaknesses. Love is not rebellious but brave. It is not glad when others go wrong. Does not talk about it. Love suffers wrong without retaliating. v.7. Love is not suspicious but confident. Takes the high view. Love is not despondent but is undiscourageable. Love hopes for better things in the future and doesn't despair of everybody. Love is not conquerable but is indomitable.

Verse 1-3 is what the church at Corinth was and should not have been. Verses 4-7 was what they were not but should have been. Verses 1-3 were gifts without love. Verses 4-7 are love without gifts. Love's value remains even without gifts. Verses 4-5 is love in restraint - holding back. Verses 6-7 is love in constraint - letting go.

The Permanence and victory of love is revealed when v.8a. A Climax is Reached: Love never faileth - it lasts; it is deathless. v.8b. A Contrast is Presented: prophecies fail; tongues cease; knowledge vanishes. Love has patience, kindness, generosity, humility, courtesy, unselfishness, good-temper, guilelessness and sincerity.

**1Corinthians 13:13.** *“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”*

#### **THE GREATEST OF THESE.**

The words are there like angels' sound - but noisy, cheap, tinkling: insincere.  
The gifts are there - impressive, knowledgeable, mysterious: powerless.  
The faith is there - like earthquakes, earthmovers, overwhelming: hard as nails.  
The works are there - food for the hungry, needs met, body parts given away: no love.

But...

Patient - when I have a right to be impatient.  
Kind - when nobody sees or knows.  
Generous - when not expecting recognition.  
Humble - that doesn't have to be pretended.  
Courteous - even when no one cares or even notices.  
Unselfishness - that wants the best for the others.  
Good temper - evenness when pressured.  
Guileless - not trying to second guess anyone.  
Sincere - I really mean what I say.

And...

Wronged and yet maintains a kindly spirit - love.  
Humble in character without advertising - love.  
Wants the best for others without being foolish - love.  
Thinks the best, so doesn't display anger - love.  
Rejoices in God's purposes, not others' failures - love.

So...

Is not hasty but patient; is not boastful but unostentatious  
Is not inconsiderate but benevolent; is not arrogant but humble  
Is not envious but content; is not rude but courteous  
Is not irritable but good tempered; is not selfish but self-forgetting  
Is not vindictive but generous; is not malevolent but high-principled  
Is not rebellious but brave; is not suspicious but confident  
Is not conquerable but indomitable; is not despondent but undiscouraged - this is LOVE!

It rises high above all others as sovereign in the human heart; as sovereign in the human mind; as sovereign in the human will – it is Christ in you! Love never faileth! LOVE IS THE GREATEST!

**“Of all evidences of Christ-like character a human could have, Father: love is the greatest. In every part of His walk here on earth among men, it was plain to see He loved His Father and He loved us. I want to be like this when people look at me - to know I love Thee and them. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

**1Corinthians 14:1-5**

#### **EDIFICATION OF THE CHURCH**

Spiritual gifts given by God, and love expressed in the assembly in the way God intends, is the way the people of God are built up in their faith. Edification is the means by which believers in Christ are being brought to maturity. Some in the Corinth assembly were using their gifts for, what they considered, self-edification and they felt they were superior to other saints. Insight, encouragement, warning and correction were the benefits given by God to the believers in the assembly there through the gift of prophecy. That gift was far more valuable to the edification of the church than one speaking in a language not known by those who were in the meeting.

In the early church people were able to speak "in our own tongue" and tell others of the "wonderful works of God." They were enabled by the Holy Spirit to speak in known languages they had not previously learned, to edify the Lord's people. Some were speaking in those languages without an interpreter and that caused disorder in the gatherings of the saints. This Spirit-given gift was not a sign of spiritual superiority to make them feel good about themselves. The point of that gift was to promote spiritual unity so those of a different language could be edified. When someone was able to be understood by those of a different culture and language, that was beneficial. Such a gift was not a sign of faith and was less in value to the church than

teaching and prophesying.

This gift was not for the benefit of unbelievers but to the believers who God had saved and were being "built up in their most holy faith." The ones most profited by speaking in his native tongue would be himself and those who had the same first language. In order to be of any benefit to others of a different language, there had to be an interpreter who could make sense of what was being said. Paul knew several languages but emphasized the need of preaching to benefit the whole congregation with comfort, encouragement and teaching that was to the edification of the whole church and would build them up in their faith.

What is that man saying?  
Does anyone understand?  
He seems to me to be praying -  
He's obviously from a different land!  
Can anyone here interpret?  
Good! Tell him to speak more slow -  
You interpret so we can get it-  
And what he's saying we can know.

It is more useful that we learn  
From those men who prophesy.  
That challenges us to turn  
To God alone and only on Him rely.  
Some of us need edification,  
Others need comfort in trying times.  
There is always the need of exhortation  
That we the will of God may find.

**1 Corinthians 14:1.** *"Follow after charity, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy."*

**FOLLOW AFTER CHARITY.**

Love is supreme because of its origin.  
Love is superior because of its nature.  
Love is surpassing because of its duration

Its initiation is in the heart of God.  
Its application is in the acts of the Savior.  
Its appreciation is in the work of the Holy Spirit.

Love when first experienced brought salvation.  
Love when first practiced brought fellowship.  
Love when first extended brought blessing.

When love endures, we learn to practice patience.  
When love is passed on, we learn how to live godly.  
When love is received, we learn how to express appreciation.

Love never collapses under pressure.  
Love never retaliates under antagonism.  
Love never quits under weariness.

Therefore, I must pursue love to truly experience it.  
Therefore, I must pursue love to make it personal.  
Therefore, I must pursue love to make it known to others.

By pursuing love, I will become more like Christ.  
By pursuing love, I will be less self-centered.  
By pursuing love, I will be more loveable.

Following after love will have me following Christ.  
Following after love will lead me in the paths of His choosing.  
Following after love will keep me ready to go to heaven at a moment's notice.

**"My heart does pursue charity Father, when I keep my thoughts on fellowship with Thee, my mind on the needs of my brothers and my hands on the "Gospel-plow" because of the value of precious souls. 'I am Thine...I have heard Thy voice,' Amen."**

**1Corinthians 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?"*

## **SOUNDS.**

Words unknown to men are mysteries and God knows the heart.  
Others help, build, encourage, comfort - the sounds bless the souls.  
Strange noises, no sense made nor reason - except to self.  
Clear words: teaching, framing thoughts before unformed - the church is helped.  
Many voices, but one is clear, unmistakable, meeting needs.  
The one that speaks for the other: understood, explaining, bringing light.  
Down from God; brought forward from experience; from within by the Spirit - life words  
Pipes, harps, trumpets: sounds under control, or the point is lost.  
The tongue can make or break, with sounds controlled or uncontrolled.  
A reason, there must be a reason for the sound of words spoken out to others.  
Gifts uplifting the saints; the sound of "Amen" from here and there - it's good.  
A voice raised to God who knows all sounds and languages known to men -  
And yet; what about the rest, the called, the waiting, the ones for whom I speak.  
The sound of singing, melodious, uninformed, garbled, missing the unity.  
Sing, pray, speak with understanding - let the listeners say, "Amen," when you are done.  
A short message - five words or a few more; the impact is felt and action comes.  
Ten thousand words: all day the sound comes, but no one knows the meaning.  
Please stop - my thoughts are not what are intended here. It's babbling words.  
Make plain to all with sounds and words and expression of voice, truth before unknown.  
Make light with sounds energized by inward grace and love.  
Loose the tongues of those who hear from your spoken sounds of truth and life.  
See knees bent, and faces low as sounds of worship flow as a river at its source.  
And hear new sounds of gratitude and joy and hope and new life, "God is in you..."  
The psalms with sounds from God's own home and Person.  
The hymns: graceful and grateful words from those who God now knows.  
The silence broken by sounds again from God to men, and man to man - to help.  
And silences from them who faces speak but voices stay unheard, until interpreted.  
And one by one, without the sounds of voices discordant or uninformed.  
Come sounds of blessing from those whose right it is, without confusion.  
And sounds of silence from those whose modesty and ways speak soundless  
Volumes: not unheard by God, but only men whose role is different, and with sound.  
The order of sound and soundlessness speaks clear to those who hear.  
With ears and eyes and hearts attuned to sounds from God; we worship and we serve.  
With joy, and fellowship and unity, the order stands and God speaks!

**"O God and Father of order and decency and clear unmistakable sounds: I know the sounds I hear from Thee are not unclear, only when I have other sounds in my ears. I may not know all the words mean or even the intention, but I am certain there will always be a word from the Lord when my ears are opened to hear Thy voice. Amen."**

### **1 Corinthians 14:6-25**

#### **UNDERSTANDING BY THE CHURCH**

The value of passing on the truth of God is very important. Paul made the fact plain that as an apostle, to whom had been given foundational truths, he had to speak so people could understand. A revelation from God is of no value if people don't know what is said. The same is true of telling personal experiences in the Christian life if people cannot relate to them in some way. In teaching things not heard before or that haven't been understood, and in reviewing doctrine that has been previously taught, those who speak must be understood by the people those who listen. Otherwise it is only sounds with no real hearing.

The illustrations used of musical instruments, a battle-field horn to give signals and a conversation between people was how Paul, under the Spirit's guidance, pointed out what was wrong among those people in Corinth. Discordant sounds of words without understanding is a negative thing rather than positive. Discordant music is much worse than no music at all. If a person can't play music right, don't play. The same is true of the bugler in a battle. Clear tones give clear messages. The right notes played on the battle horn means the difference of life or death to the hearers. When one is having a conversation with another person, he or she needs to know what is being said, or the conversation is frustrating, and usually does more harm than good.

Paul confronted those who were using the gift of tongues for their own self-centered purpose and - they thought - self-development. He was not speaking about heavenly languages either, because he wrote of the "many kinds of voices in the world." In order for anything spoken to be applied, it must first be understood. The spirit and soul of a person are both needed to intelligently pray, speak and sing with understanding. The person who speaks must understand what he is saying himself before it can be beneficial to other people. When we understand something first ourselves, we can pass it on to other believers in the assembly for their

understanding. The use of tongues was always, and still is, for the purpose of communicating truth with understanding to all who hear what is being said. The main purpose of tongues was for the benefit of God's people when those who speak a different language had something to pass on from God. Unbelievers who listened to an unknown language being spoken without interpretation would think the people were crazy to be wasting their time listening to someone speak they were not able to understand. Tongues were not a gift to be used for evangelism as a sign of God's power. They were a sign to Jews of God's judgment.

In the local assembly the saints of God are able to be built up as the teaching of the Word of God edifies them and helps them grow and be strong in faith and grace. It is important that what is said be understood if it is to have any profit to those attending the meeting. The real purpose of gifts is not for private use and personal benefit, but that the whole assembly can understand God's Word and God's will, and grow in the Lord.

Yes, I can understand, it is much plainer to me now.  
Not only do I know what is meant, but what and why and how.  
Languages are divisive it's true, but to those in the family of God,  
We have a uniting fellowship that's based on God's written Word.

If one from a different country is a brother with a message to pass on,  
He is able to communicate through an interpreter if one is here to be found.  
But if no one knows his language, then it is not right for him to speak.  
Edifying the saints is the reason the church comes together to meet.

If one who is not saved observes the order, and wants to hear all that is said  
That person can grasp truth by what is spoken easier than what is read.  
The one who is unlearned can be convinced when listening he understands,  
This is God's truth to me; God is the same in every land.

**"Gracious Father, there are those coming out to hear Thy Word each night. Give Thy servant the right words and the right understanding, that with the right attitude and plain speech I can speak Thy Word faithfully and plainly. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."**

**1Corinthians 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."*

#### **OTHERS ALSO.**

"In the church...": A called out group of people, who have left the world system (cosmos) and gathered to the name and Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, is very important to God. The church has a calling to further the work of the Lord in its own area. The church provides a place of safety for those have thus been called out. It provides a place of fellowship with - and worship of - God. It may seem small in the eyes of men around, but the size doesn't make it a church. It is the nature, character and convictions of the church that makes it so valuable to God. A scripturally gathered group of people that carries out the commands of God in His way, is a power before God and to man.

"Five words...": Five words can have a lot of meaning – "Ye must be born again;" "Christ died for the ungodly;" "Christ died for our sins" are all five-word phrases that bring clearly a message from God to me. What five-word phrases can I give that would have meaning for other people beside the ones that God Himself gives in the Bible? How about: "You are important to God." Maybe another phrase would be: "You can be saved now." Do I really understand the meaning of these five-word phrases? In a way, I can give the sense of the meaning but understanding goes beyond that. It means to me that I have made the meaning of the words my own by experience.

"That by my voice...": It is a great responsibility to be called by God to speak for Him to the people. It requires my diligence to know first of all where I am speaking and to whom. I am to speak in the church. I am a part of that living organism. Then I must give understanding to that body of the true meaning and implications of those five words. God is willing to use my voice however feeble, to make known His will and purpose of those five words.

"I might teach others also...": Paul knew what he was talking about because he had the understanding that was necessary. He charged Timothy to "commit to faithful men" what he had learned from Paul. Then they were to be instructed to "teach others also." It has finally come down through the generations of humanity to my generation. Then in my generation, I am responsible to carry on the process of teaching that has been passed on. May I never multiply words that are unknown. May I never speak carelessly or without serious thought before hand. May I not take anything said, for granted as if everyone

knows all God wants them to know. May I be willing to speak out of my experience and understanding in words easily understood. May I always speak from my heart as well as my mind.

**“O heavenly Father who is willing to pass on to men the most serious and important message in the world. Please help me to avoid speaking unfelt truth. I want to be the Lord’s messenger in the Lord’s message. I feel the need of learning to be simple and precise with words, and I am not doing a very good job of speaking specifically. Mold these lips of mine around “five words with my understanding” every time I speak. Amen.”**

**1Corinthians 14:20.** *“Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be ye men.”*

#### **BE NOT CHILDREN.**

It is time to grow up, act like a man.  
Quit childish things that draw attention to you.  
When you are an infant learning to stand,  
We can put up with all the foolishness you do.  
But now in this place where God lives with men,  
Don't be childish in the strange voices you use.  
Make sure you're understood by the words and the tone;  
Because if no one understands, then everyone will lose.

A child makes noises just for the fun of it.  
There is no real reason to worry about him.  
But when a man makes such noise that sounds like a fit-  
There is no glory for God - especially then.  
Speak right, make it clear what God gave you to speak.  
Clarify the truth He has told you to give.  
Then people that hear what you say will not think-  
You are a child in mind inside a man's head.

Understanding is important, it makes clear to others,  
What God wants when the saints come together.  
The gift that God gave you to help others to further  
His work, and spiritual food then to gather;  
Will give strength to the body of saints where they live,  
They will use what you say to advantage.  
So, with a sense of the value of the truths that God gives,  
Speak the word clearly, not in childish chatter.

**“Heavenly Father, I am conscious of the fact that people will often quote what I say. I am also aware of the fact that it is easy for me to slip into some foolish talk without thinking. Help me guard the door of my lips, that I do not sin and that I do not mislead someone who is listening. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

#### **1Corinthians 14:26-40**

##### **ORDER IN THE CHURCH**

The public gatherings of God's people as a church at Corinth were not being carried out in the way that was edifying to the body of believers. They had to be reminded that when speaking publicly, a participant was to help the saints to mature in Christ and so they always needed to understand what was being taught. Edification was the objective. Understanding was necessary to reach that objective. To promote understanding there had to be order in the meetings. In Corinth the saints had no Bible, at least no New Testament. So instructions were given by Paul as to how a meeting was to be conducted to the benefit of all. The use of gifts has never been for the purpose of pleasing ourselves or hearing ourselves speak with a sense of accomplishment and pride. Gifts, and their use is to be for the benefit of others.

When one thinks his contribution to a meeting is more important than others, he becomes impatient and does not wait and listen with interest courteously until the other person finished what he has been given to say. On the other hand, if one speaking goes on and on thinking his message is of greater value than others, that too is disorderly and discourteous. One may have a scripture passage to read, another may have some exhortation to give, and still another may have a hymn for the congregation to sing. If all of these contributions come at once and each wants what he has to give to be done first, there is disorder, disgust and chaos. The teaching of the orderly conduct of a meeting is the same for today as when Paul first gave it.

Speaking is to be done one person at a time in an orderly courteous fashion. If the one speaking is using a different language, there must be an interpreter. Three speakers at any one meeting was the limit. A message was evaluated by those who were mature and responsible to determine if it was the Word of God, not just a person's opinion. Today we have all the scriptures to test the message by. When the Holy Spirit leads there will be order and each one speaking will be considerate of others. He will control his own voice and the way he presents the truth God has given him will be appropriate.

Not only is a meeting of the assembly to be orderly and conducted courteously, but what is spoken must be scriptural. When a word from God is passed on, it must be given relevantly and, of particular concern, scripturally. The practice of comparing scripture with scripture is important when determining whether women are to speak in some meetings and not in others. There are ways for gifts to be used that are not audible nor available for all. As far as the silence in teaching and preaching, instructions in 1st Timothy 2 when compared with 1st Corinthians 11 and 14, give clear understanding of how meetings are to be conducted, who the participants are to be and the orderly way things are to be done.

There was in Corinth, and there are places today, those who claim to have new revelations from God which they think are as authentic as that which we have in the canon of scripture. "The commandments of God" are not to be taken lightly. What we have in the Word of God has been given by the Holy Spirit and tried and proven by the people of God since the early days of the Church age. The powers of darkness have tried, and still are trying, to introduce their demonic doctrines into local assemblies to hinder and stop the work of God. We accept apostolic authority. We accept the canon of scripture as it is because it has effectively worked in all parts of the world. We base our teaching on what has been given to us in the Bible and reject that which breaks a biblical fellowship. If some choose to ignore that which is given by authority from God at the beginning of the Church, the result will be he made the choice to be ignored by others himself.

The review Paul gives of his teaching regarding the public gatherings of the assembly is concise. Edify the saints in words they can understand. Maintain order in a respectful and profitable way. Silence is not evidence of disapproval but of spiritual order. We must remain committed to church life that brings glory to God, spiritual growth and maturity to the saints and the blessing of salvation to the lost around us.

Evidence of order can be seen wherever we see signs of the hand of God.  
There is order in the atoms, order in creation and even in the stars scattered abroad.  
So, it does make sense that there is order in the church where we believers meet.  
Otherwise we would have to stop and the early lessons learned we'd have to repeat.

The gifts God has given are valuable to all, though each one is unique.  
There is no reason to feel superior or ignored when the use of our gift we seek.  
In a scriptural assembly there is room to use what God Himself placed there.  
Each one fits with the other in orderly fashion when what God gave to us we share.

Pride quickly negates the value of a gift when used for self-exaltation.  
Order replaced chaos at the beginning when God made an orderly creation.  
A biblical church is a work of God's grace, and fulfills the purpose He had  
When He made the choice to dwell in our midst, and His presence made us all glad.

There is danger, when we do things our way, of creating a lot of confusion.  
Careless behavior controlled by human nature gives only a false illusion  
Of what life is supposed to be in a church of God where the Spirit of God only leads.  
By His gracious guiding and spiritual gifts supplying, He knows how to meet our needs.

By maintaining order and the gifts edifying, the assembly becomes what God intends.  
Understanding is given when by interpretation a foreign speaking servant God sends.  
And even though his language is different, doing things God's way blesses all who hear.  
So we yield to God's Word and truth prevails when together to Him we draw near.

**"I am sure, heavenly Father, that there can be lasting good come from this day's activities if we are guided in Thy ways by Thy Spirit. I actually don't know what is before us in the hours ahead, but Thou knowest, so here I am, waiting and trusting, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

## **1 Corinthians 15.**

### **THE ULTIMATE TRIUMPH.**

- v.1-11. The resurrection of Christ.
- v.12-34. The resurrection of the dead.
- v.35-58. The resurrection of the body.

CHRIST'S RESURRECTION: Proofs... The preaching and effect of the Gospel and the facts of the Gospel and the lives of changed Christians in the days following the resurrection of Christ has impacted the world from that day to this. Those eyewitnesses were changed people and were motivated to carry out the commission of the Lord in spite of serious opposition and martyrs' death on the part of thousands of people. The essentials of the Gospel have never changed and it still is having the same effect on believers today. Christ (a) died for our sins *according to the scriptures*. 14 times Paul uses this phrase giving it authority. (b) Christ was buried. He did not vanish. (c) Christ was raised again. Paul preached it in the Gospel and the Corinthians received it. The demonstration of the Gospel was a living proof in the soul of the apostle Paul, and all those in this list of witnesses never looked back.

The resurrection of Christ is central to Christianity. The early Christians had no difficulty believing in the resurrection and ascension of Christ. Apostles were there and saw Him and were with Him after His resurrection. They heard Him speak, saw Him eat, and watched Him ascend into heaven. These two events unleashed a world-changing power that transformed the lives of people from that day until now. Without God, death ends all hope, is the final indignity to the body, and is the final frustration to a purposeless life. Christ's resurrection changed all that. Christians know that Christ's resurrection opened the doorway to eternal glory for all the redeemed. His resurrection was the promise of our own resurrection. Early Christians who had never seen Jesus ("whom having not seen we love") actually loved Him. If someone says I love Shakespeare, they really mean they love his writing or his plays. If a widow speaks of her love for her husband, she would say, "I loved him," not "I love him." But all Christians speak of their love for Christ as a Living Person who we haven't seen but we love. We sing to Him, talk to Him, worship Him and live our lives to please Him. This is not idealized fantasy or assumption, but are real responses to many evidences of Christ's resurrection.

RESURRECTION: the evidence is in place. 1Pet.1:3-4, 8,21.

THE EMPTY TOMB: on the Sunday after His death, the first visitors to His tomb did not find His body – only the grave clothes that were wrapped around Him, lying flat and undisturbed as if the body of Jesus came right through them. Soldier/guards started a preposterous rumor that while they slept, some disciples got past them, rolled away the heavy gravestone, stole the body, hid it and deliberately concocted a lie that said He had risen from the dead.

THE BEHAVIOR OF THE DISCIPLES UNDER PRESSURE: people will not suffer for a lie they invent for themselves. None of the disciples under tremendous pressure broke down and confessed that the resurrection was a fraud. Even when they saw many people persecuted and executed for believing their story of the resurrection, they did not change their message. Even when they were martyred they did not change their message.

THE BEHAVIOR OF THE WOMEN AT THE TOMB: they didn't leave their things there so there would be a shrine and place of pilgrimage like other religions or even superstitious "Christians" do today. They, and all the early Christians, abandoned the tomb. Why? Because it was empty. No one makes a shrine around someone who is alive.

THE TESTIMONY OF EYE-WITNESSES: a list of them is given in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15. In various circumstances, at various places, in both large and small groups they saw Him, spoke to Him, and were even invited to touch Him. He appeared in early morning by a lake, on a mountainside in broad daylight, in the evening behind closed doors, and walking along a road conversing with the travelers.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION: Greeks did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. There were three views in Corinth: (1) Epicureans: the philosophy of matter only; materialism; *no existence* after death. (2) Stoics: at death, the soul goes back to Deity, so *no personality* after death. (3) Platonism: the soul is immortal but *no bodily resurrection*. In regards to our salvation: Christianity is validated upon the fact of the resurrection of Christ. The power that catapulted Christianity onto the stage of world history, was the resurrection of Christ [Acts 1:22]. The purpose for which the early Christian community came into being, was to witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The prime function of the Christian community is to witness to the resurrection of our Lord Jesus. The transforming power of the Gospel is not the ethical teachings of Jesus, but the resurrection of Jesus and all the implications that go along with that fact.

Paul and all Bible-believing preachers are false witnesses and liars if there is no resurrection. The faith of Christians is unreal if there is no resurrection. Dead saints have perished if there is no resurrection. In regards to the program of God, the whole of human history until His coming looked forward to this

redemptive work that was foretold. "But now..." life in Christ is new. "in Christ shall all be made alive..." Christ is the first to be raised to endless life. He is "the first fruits." The Christians' resurrection is a sure fact because we belong to Him... "they that are Christ's." The on-going saga of human history after the resurrection doesn't conclude with the words, "then cometh the end." The initiation of Christ's kingdom will be accomplished. "He must reign." The whole future of humanity centers ultimately in the resurrection. "

You may ask, "Why should I believe in Him unless I can see and touch Him?" That is like saying, "I will not deceive myself into thinking an electric light comes on just because I touch the switch. I must see the man at the power station who connects the main switch." When the Lord ascended, He promised that He would, and He did, send the Holy Spirit. The evidence of the risen Christ is seen in the experience and power of those in who the Holy Spirit dwells. If you press the switch of repentance and faith, the light and power of the Spirit will come on in your heart.

The resurrection and ascension of Jesus opened the way for the unprecedented invasion into our world of the Holy Spirit of God. Joel prophesied it 800 years before. When people received the Holy Spirit, that opened up a personal fellowship with God. The cross of Christ reveals man's basic problem – hostility against God. Some of those who were involved heard Peter preach and were called upon to repent and face up to the resurrected Jesus who was Lord and Christ. If they wanted to be saved, they were to demonstrate their sincerity by calling on the name of the Lord. Then they were baptized as evidence of the reality of their profession.

In regards to our present condition, baptism is useless if there is no resurrection because the very teaching of baptism includes death, burial and resurrection. By coming out of the water of baptism we identify ourselves as having spiritual life now and we are alive in Christ forevermore. The physical suffering thousands of believers have experienced for Christ is useless if there is no resurrection. Paul endured suffering all through his Christian life for the sake of the Gospel. He knew, as we also know, that there is a future ahead beyond the grave that constrains God's people to evangelize so lost sinners can be saved. Physical suffering that is endured in the body will end in glory at the resurrection of believers. Those who do not believe in the resurrection have been in the wrong company and listening to the wrong teachers if they think there is no resurrection.

When the subject of the resurrection of our bodies comes up in conversations we have with people, usually there are two questions they have: "How will it happen? And what will we be like? What kind of body will we have?" They are concerned with the manner of the resurrection, because it reveals the mind of the one who asks who denies the resurrection, and they wonder how can a disintegrated body be reconstructed? The scripture is plain that when we die, it is like a seed that dies and disintegrates but the One who gives life, our Lord Jesus Christ, is the source of life that comes from death. A seed can't bring life until it dies. That life-process bears the characteristic of the Lord. He was "the corn of wheat that fell into the ground and died." By His death He has brought eternal life, His kind of life, to millions of people. The new life He had at resurrection was real life but in a far more superior way than the previous limitations He chose to put upon Himself as our representative substitute. We will still be known by our personalities as individual persons who began our life on earth in the natural sphere. In our new spiritual life after the resurrection we will have spiritual bodies. We will not just be spirits, but spirits with bodies made like His body of glory.

"What body?" is asked because one cannot imagine resurrection. The apostle Paul makes it clear that our old bodies are not going to be reconstructed to be like they were before. It will be our body, there is continuity so our identity will be maintained, but there are fundamental differences. It will be raised in glory, not dishonor as when we die. Weakness gives way to death but in the resurrection the body will be raised in power far greater than anything we have known because of our sin-nature. Two answers come from the two questions. One comes from nature: a new body comes from the death of the old body by the design of nature. Life comes from death. There are mysteries we can't explain but we believe what happens before our eyes. Each seed has a body of its own. "God giveth it a body." "How are the dead raised?" God giveth it a body. With what body? Just as there is variety in nature in seeds, animals and stars, so there will be in our resurrected bodies. "We will know even as we are known." Incorruption, honor, power, spiritual, heavenly are descriptions of the new resurrected bodies of the saints. With what body? Some things we are best to leave with God. "As it pleaseth Him."

The coming of the Lord is both an assurance and a challenge. The first fruits is Christ; the harvest is the saints. The assurance is that we believe what has been revealed to us by God but it is beyond our finding out by the intellect. This we know: we shall be changed. As the seed is changed after it dies, so is the body of the believer. We know we shall continue to exist but we will be changed and we will have both a personality and body. We know not all Christians will sleep in death. Some will be alive when the coming of

the Lord for the Church happens. Those believing saints alive at the rapture of the Church will be instantaneously changed. We are wise if we remember this can happen at any time, and we live daily on the edge of this event.

The challenge to believers is to not fear death – both the action and the fact. We look beyond the grave and all that is associated with the whole region of departed spirits. For believers we are absent from the body and present with the Lord. The sting of death, the fear and foreboding caused by the strength of the law, which is caused by sin is not something to be concerned about. The ultimate appeal of the whole letter is in verse 58 and is the answer to verse 9 of chapter 1.

**1Corinthians 15:23.** *“But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterwards they that are Christ’s at His coming.”*

### **HIS OWN ORDER.**

CHRIST...

Christ – the Message of the Gospel: preached, received, saved.

Christ – the Substitute for us: died, for our sins, it really happened.

Christ – the Fulfiller of the scriptures: it was written, He fulfilled them.

Christ – the Resurrection: visible, real, heard, touched, real communication.

Christ – the Subject: it’s about Him, He is raised from the dead, faith in Him is real.

Christ – the Person: in Him, trust in Him, rest in Him, die in Him, asleep in Him.

Christ – the Hope: assurance, confidence, happiness, real joy.

Christ – the Life: dead in Adam, life in Christ, activity, purpose, service.

Christ – the First-fruits: there’s more to come, the fruit will continue.

Christ – the Coming One: His saints, His friends, His supper, His kingdom, His authority.

THEY THAT ARE CHRIST’S...

They are His own – bought with a price.

They are His creation – given a body by Him.

They are earthy – belonging to earth.

They are corruptible – because of mortality.

They are laborers – in the work of the Lord.

They will be His – at the resurrection.

They will be changed – by His power.

They will be heavenly – suitable for heaven.

They will be changed instantaneously.

They will be incorruptible – made immortal.

They will be victorious – through the Lord Jesus Christ.

**“O God of creation in the past and of all that will be in the future: I can see through the word of the scripture that the resurrection will open up new spiritual vistas that I would have never dreamed of, let alone experienced. I am anxious for that change to come and all that will happen after that will be a continual unfolding of things not able to be imagined. Thank you for the written foretaste. Amen.”**

### **1Corinthians 16**

#### **THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST**

The assembly in Corinth had serious problems and serious problems need to be addressed not overlooked. So in a very spiritual way the apostle Paul responded to those problems of division, conflicts between brethren, selfish demands regarding money, lack of consideration regarding personal freedom and the consciences of others, disorder in public meetings, the wrong use of spiritual gifts and a wrong understanding and attitudes about the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of the believers. He very plainly corrected what was wrong. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ was very evident in the way he dealt with each issue. His love for them came across as genuine in spite of all that was wrong about their attitudes and actions. When difficulties arise, it is not a good idea to leave them unattended because usually they don't go away. Sometimes they remain covered for years but a simmering unrest and discontent is just under the surface of apparent fellowship.

When it comes to finances: giving to God is introduced here as an act of worship that is done in the assembly. The way to give was clarified as to the responsibility, the system and the method [1Cor.16:1]. This was not just tithing. Tithing was done before the law was given. Abraham tithed. This was a part of the order of things God established. The Levites (those in full-time service) in Israel, received and gave tithes. There was joy and blessing linked with tithing [Prov.3:9-10; 11:24; Num.18:25-32; 2Cor.9:10]. Giving of our

substance lays up treasure in heaven [Phil.4:17]. Collective obligations in fellowship with the assembly [Acts 11:24,30; Rom.15:25-27; 1Cor.16:1-2] goes beyond the practice of tithing because this is not just for the maintenance of earthly obligations. We set aside proportionately what we are going to give on the first day of the week. It is a part of our worship, giving evidence of the degree of our appreciation of the Lord. No scripture indicates it is done at gatherings where the unsaved people come to hear the Gospel. That practice is unknown in the New Testament. The offerings of the Corinthian believers were to alleviate the suffering saints in Jerusalem and was without demanding a particular sum from everyone. They were to give proportionately to the Lord Himself from what He had given them as a stewardship.

Giving to full-time servants was done when the assembly at Philippi gave to the support of the apostle Paul. No scripture indicates appeals, hints, announcements of needs were given by Paul. A servant's own ministry and character are his greatest commendation. Paul did not want to be obligated to the Corinthians so he was willing and able to support himself when necessary. It is important when giving of our money, to give to God first [Prov.3:9-10]. Then when giving from our heart we can give joyfully [2Cor.9:6-8]. There are blessings of giving to God because He always out-gives us [Lu.6:38]. There will always be someplace to benefit from our giving when we give what we can [Prov.3:27]. Some brethren who serve God's people need us to share what we have with them because they are spiritual leaders who are committing a lot of time to their responsibilities [Gal.6:6]. Give, and you will receive God's blessing [Mal.3:10]. The generous man is blessed as a result of what he is willing to give [Prov.11:24-25]. Though He was rich, Christ became poor for us [2Cor.8:9].

When giving to God, the manner of giving is without show [Mat.6:1-4], according to one's ability [1Cor.16:1-2], willingly [1Chr.29:3-9], liberally [2Cor.9:6-15], cheerfully [2Cor.9:7] and proportionately [Mal.3:10]. Examples of giving in the Bible include the Israelites [Ex.35:21-29], princes of Israel [Num.7:2-28], the poor widow [Lu.21:2-4] and the Macedonian churches [2Cor.8:1-5]. There needs to be carefulness in handling of assembly finances [2Cor.8:16-] because we can learn from history of the evils connected with money. There still is, in people in our well-to-do society, greed [2Kings 5:20-27], debts that people hope they will get away without paying [Neh.5:2-11] and covetousness [1Tim.6:9-10].

When there is a personal exercise to give privately, we have biblical support to do that very thing [3Jn.5-7; Gal.6:6; 1Tim.5:18 (communicate); Lu.16:5; Phil.4:10; 2Cor.8:1; Col.3:23-24; 1Thes.4:11-12]. So, who can give to support the work of God? Believers only lest someone thinks they are able to find favor with God because of their giving, [3Jn.5-8; Prov.15:8; 21:27] and in that way we give no offense to the Gentiles – unconverted [1Cor.10:32] who sometimes are turned off by those who make appeals for money. Why should I give? [Lu.16:5]. I am a debtor to God because all that I have I owe to Him and the blessings of His gracious provision for me. Now I am also a debtor in a sense to those who don't have what they need and I can supply it for them. Where shall I give? [Phil.4:10-19]. To the assembly – it is a priestly service for all (men and women). Privately [Gal.6:6]. Communicate – have fellowship with others when I am able to share what I have with them. (Heb.13:16 – Gathering unto Him, v.13; Worship through Him, v.14; Sacrifice for Him, v.16). How much shall I give? [2Cor.8:1-5]. Liberally –give yourself first. How can I ever repay what I have received? But I can show sincere appreciation for all God has given me, and financial giving is one way of expressing that appreciation. When do I give? [1Cor.16:1]. On the first day of the week. That indicates that It should be an on-going response to God's grace to me. Will I love what I give? [Col.3:23]. It is a challenge to me to heartily give to God because God loves a "hilarious" giver. That is to be my attitude. I should be looking for ways to give to God of my substance.

**1Corinthians 16:7.** *“For I will not see you now by the way: but I trust to tarry awhile with you, if the Lord permit.”*

#### **PLANS.**

God has given, that I might give.  
The saints (churches) have received that they might give.  
I have received that I might give.

Choose with care; the responsibility is great.  
Send with care; the distance is great.  
Plan with care; the need is great.

Stop awhile; the believers need you.  
Stay awhile; you need them.  
Tarry awhile; the work needs you.

Go ahead; the door is open.

Move ahead; the time is right.  
Plan ahead; there is too much to be done.

Work together: there are other true laborers.  
Rejoice together; the work is one.  
Fellowship together; the strength is there.

Look to the future; the Gospel needs vision.  
Praise now; the grace of God is here.  
Love always; we are one in Christ.

**“Father, I know it is my responsibility to use my time and energy in profitable ways. I really don’t want to waste time, and yet I can see it is easy to act without wisdom, work without purpose, preach without a message and pray without a point. I need discernment to plan ahead as a steward of this lifetime that You have given me. I am asking for some insight into how to use care in planning. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

**1Corinthians 16:18.** *“For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such.”*

#### **REFRESHING MEN.**

Three men that were willing; what more could you ask.  
Three men that left home to bring help to the apostle; that was what he needed.  
Three men that could put themselves in the shoes of another; we still need that kind of people.  
Three men that didn’t expect others to do what they could do; they had compassion for the saints.  
Three men that were willing to speak words of comfort; how refreshing such conversations are.  
Three men who knew what to talk about for the greatest benefit; their interest reached to the spirit of Paul.  
Three men who were able on their return to warm the spirits of the cold hearted; Corinth needed them.  
Three men who knew the value of service to others; what one had learned he passed to the other two.  
Three men who had a right to the respect of all; acknowledged as to who they and by what they did.  
Three men who could be trusted; they filled in the blank spaces that were left.  
Three men who stand out in a crowd; they’ve been there and done that.  
Three men whose names are hard to say but whose hearts are soft; we need men like that today.  
Three men that ventured beyond their comforts; who of us will go to visit the laborers in the field?

**“O Lord of the harvest; there are those out there that need us. Give me the willingness to be addicted to service to the saints like Stephanas; the grace to supply what is lacking like Fortunatus; the humility to go along with others no matter where You lead us like Achaicus. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

