

# FIRST EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

Slide 1 – Title Slide

Slide 2

I. WRITER: Paul the apostle

II. AUDIENCE: Church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:2)

Map

III. DATE: 57 A.D.

IV. NOTES:

**\* MAP \*** The ancient city of Corinth was located on an isthmus and had access to two seas--the Aegean to the east and the Ionian on the west. Its eastern port was Cenchrea (Phoebe was out of the church at Cenchrea). Corinth was the capital of the Roman province of Achaia. So, whenever "Achaia" is mentioned in the Bible, we can assume Corinth is either intended or included. At the time of Paul, Corinth was 4<sup>th</sup> largest, and one of the most important cities of the Roman Empire.

Corinth had a population of approximately 600,000. Corinth was a strategically located, well-traveled commercial center. Corinth also benefited from fertile fields and a good supply of spring water. But along with prosperity came bars and night clubs. Self-indulgence and unbridled pleasure seeking became the norm in Corinth. Not exactly an easy environment to live as holy unto God.

The pagan Temple of Aphrodite dominated the religious scene in Corinth. The temple had one thousand temple prostitutes known as priestesses. It contributed to rampant prostitution and widespread immorality. Eventually the term "corinthianize" came to represent sexual immorality and rampant drunkenness. Not surprisingly, the city was also known for crime.

It is not surprising that the believers who made up the church at Corinth struggled with immorality and pride. But separating themselves from living like their neighbors, and in many cases from their former practices, was not an impossible task.

When Paul came into Europe on his second missionary journey. He first stopped in Philippi, then traveled south to Thessalonica, then Berea, and then came to Athens for a period of time before traveling further south to Corinth. Paul stayed a year and a half (Acts 18:11) and a church was planted. In the Corinthian church were both Jews and Gentiles. A lot of conflict would result from the interactions of these rich, proud Greek/Romans and the strictly religious Jews.

This book reveals the problems, pressures, and struggles of a church saved out of a sexually immoral and very wealthy pagan society.

Slide 4 (Slide 3 is the hidden map) – Watch/listen to Chapter 1

Slide 5

## Chapter 1 – Team Meeting

Summary: Paul opened his letter to the Corinthians with a team meeting. He played the role of coach for team church, reminding them that they were all on the same team and that none of them had a reason to boast or claim to be a superior player. Paul called on team church to glory in the Lord because the Lord had saved them and provided them with the opportunity to grow spiritually.

### 1. The team coach: Paul (1:1)

Paul makes it clear that he is "called to be an apostle". He feels he must emphasize his apostleship to this church in particular. Often carnal churches will challenge the authority of the man of God. In presenting his apostolic (coaching) credentials, Paul declared his authority for reproofing the church's sins, challenging their practices, and directing their behavior.

### 2. The team: the Church at Corinth (1:2)

A coach labors on behalf of the team's owner. Paul directly addressed the Corinthian believers by calling them the church of God (1:2). As their owner, God wanted them to become a successful team. They could be successful because God had sanctified them, a reference to their salvation (1:2). Positionally, the Corinthian believers belonged to God. He set them apart to accomplish His will in Corinth. God also equipped them to live as He desired them to live.

God also called them to be saints (1:2). Saints are people set apart for God's holy use. God desired that the Corinthian believers would live in a way that reflected their position in Christ. He wanted them to represent Him well in the world.

So, in the first 2 verses, Paul is declaring two important points: I am an apostle of Jesus Christ. I have authority given to me of God. And you in the church at Corinth, as saved people, have a responsibility to be holy.

### 3. The team owner: God (1:3-9)

Grace and peace are always in that order: experience the grace of God in salvation before peace of God. Paul reminded them that God provided all the grace they needed to be used by Him. As they experienced God's grace, they would know His peace.

God's grace gave them the ability to understand and communicate spiritual things (1:5). Public speaking and wisdom were particularly important in the Greek culture that dominated Corinth. God enabled the Corinthians to communicate effectively in the public arena of ideas. They spoke the truth because Christ had taken hold in their hearts (1:6).

Paul reminded the Corinthians that they lacked nothing for overcoming sin and for living a life of devotion to God (1:7). They were equipped with all the tools from God to live in a way that caused them to anticipate Christ's return.

God would keep the Corinthian believers spiritually strong until either Christ returned at the rapture or they passed from this world (1:8). By such enabling, they could stand blameless before Christ in Heaven. They could trust God's faithfulness—not their own—to provide the grace for their daily growth in Christlikeness (1:9). They could be triumphant because of the grace they had from God.

#### 4. The Team Meeting (1:10-31)

##### A. The problem of disunity (1:10-17)

Paul mentions 4 different groups that had arisen in the church at Corinth: followers of Paul, of Apollos, of Peter (Cephas), and of Christ. He asked three pointed questions in verse 13 that needed no answer: Christ (the truth) is not divided, none of the 3 men were crucified for them, and they were not baptized in the name of any of the men.

Almost every problem in this church was influenced by a lack of unity and could not be effectively solved if this church was divided. Holiness and divisions stand in opposition to each other. A church cannot be holy and quarrelsome at the same time. And the Holy Spirit is grieved and lifted off a church that is divided but it is upon a church that is unified or “in one accord”.

Paul then places baptism in its proper perspective: it is secondary to preaching the word of God. Why? Because salvation has nothing to do with baptism, and everything to do with the faith that comes by hearing the word of God. Christ sent Paul to do that one thing which is necessary for the salvation of souls: to preach the gospel to them. Once their faith made connection with the word of God, they were saved.

Paul did not discount the importance of baptism; and why is baptism important? For obedience to the command of Christ and to make the convert a member of that local church. Paul was using this argument to show them that Christ is their One Lord, and head over the church: that they ought to unify in Him. Who baptized them is not important.

##### B. The power for unity (1:18-25)

Paul begins his defense of the gospel by showing how the "wise" of this world in their conceit have difficulty getting saved; their pride gets in the way. The intellectuals of this world have a hard time with men of less education than themselves telling them anything. Someone who esteems himself wise will have a hard time getting saved as much as someone who is self-righteous.

Preaching's primary importance is once again brought out in verses 18-23. It is hard for us to understand why God has ordained that the salvation of men's souls should depend on the faithfulness of other men to preach: but He has. The Great Commission is clear that those who get saved are responsible to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, because "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

The gospel itself: that the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ provides for the salvation of men's souls is a stumbling block to the self-righteous (Jews) and foolishness to the intellectual (Greeks). And remember, there were both of those in this church.

The self-righteous cannot understand how they cannot possibly be righteous enough to earn heaven themselves. They stumble at that point of not seeing themselves as lost and deserving of hell. Sure, they can admit that they sin, but they cannot believe that they deserve hell ("I'm not that bad", they will say). The self-proclaimed intellectual thinks it is beneath him, that it's foolish to believe that someone had to die on the cross and shed blood to pay the price for their sins.

We need to come to the point of seeing ourselves as lost before we can be saved. Why? Humility is required for salvation and a self-righteous person is full of pride. The so-called wise, mighty, and noble are often too proud to see themselves as lost sinners deserving of hell. And until we can see that, our trust is not in Christ 100%. Until we can see ourselves as deserving of hell, we really are not putting our trust only in Christ: we still think we are good enough to deserve heaven, we are still trusting in our own goodness instead of in Christ.

### C. The practice of unity (1:26-31)

Paul transitioned to his final point in his team meeting by asking the church to consider their own backgrounds. They were living examples that salvation comes through the gospel rather than through human wisdom, might, or status. The word mighty (1:26) refers to the influential, including the ruling class. The word noble (1:26) denotes those in the upper classes, meaning the rich and powerful. Some people from those groups were saved by God's grace, but their salvations had nothing to do with their wisdom, might, or status.

Most of the Corinthian believers were considered foolish, weak, base, and despised by the world (1:27, 28). Yet God saved them and thereby demonstrated that all the wisdom, might, and status in the world is powerless to save a person from his sins. God united the Corinthian believers to His Son, and in Christ they had wisdom from God, righteousness, a holy separation unto God, and redemption, meaning freedom from slavery to sin and freedom to serve the Lord (1:30).

They were complete in Christ. Paul, Apollos, and Cephas had nothing to add to what the members of team church already had in Christ.

Paul summoned the church at Corinth to unity. Instead of forming their own teams within a team and claiming superiority over each other, they were supposed to follow the Lord in humility.

Corinth was an especially wicked city that desperately needed the gospel. It was incumbent upon the church to present a clear, unified witness about the saving power of the cross. In doing so they would glorify the Lord.

Slide 6 – watch/listen to chapter 2

Slide 7

## Chapter 2 – The Team’s Playbook: The Word of God

Summary: Paul reminded the church that he preached Jesus Christ so they might put their faith in the wisdom of God rather than in him. He then went on to demonstrate that the wisdom of God, or God's Word, is far superior to the wisdom of man. God's Word is a result of revelation and inspiration. And understanding and applying God's Word is a result of illumination. Consequently, God's Word served as Paul's playbook for team church.

### 1. Paul’s Preaching (2:1-8)

Paul’s approach is an example for all preachers and missionaries. He was careful not to approach them with his own plans and ideas. His focus was on simply presenting the basic truth of the gospel: "Jesus Christ and Him crucified." When a man of God presents the gospel in this fashion, there will be those carnal ones who will look upon it with disdain: they want eloquence, they want to be amused, they want to be entertained.

Three hundred years ago, Jonathan Edwards preached a sermon entitled, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”. He simply read it with his elbow on the pulpit and his hand on his head as he struggled to see his notes in the church that night. It was not eloquent or delivered with flair: but the power of God on it was unmistakable as those there that night came under such conviction. The effects of that sermon (in the 1740s) started a revival in the New England colonies that changed the course of a yet future nation that will become known as the United States of America.

The "mystery" in v. 7 "which God ordained before the world unto our glory" refers to His plan for our redemption: the crucifixion of Christ that was ordained even before the world was created. In v. 8, some believe the reference to "the princes of this world" that crucified Christ, means Pontius Pilate, Herod, and the rulers of the Jews who were responsible for Christ's crucifixion. But others argue that the "princes of this world" refer to the demons and satanic principalities that were behind the scenes at the crucifixion of Christ, stirring up the rulers and mob. It could be either one or both.

### 2. Paul’s Reception of God’s Word (2:9-16)

For a man to understand the gospel and receive the redemption that is in Christ by faith, he must have it revealed to him by the Spirit of God. "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit". Revelation is a disclosure of God’s truth that would be otherwise unknowable. Once we have received the Holy Ghost at salvation, we can then know the things that are freely given us of God.

The unsaved person lacks this spiritual understanding and finds the things of God, especially the plan of salvation, foolishness. The saved person possesses the mind of Christ, enabling him to discern truth and the will of God. He also possesses the will to investigate doctrine to discern whether it is truth or not.

Slide 8 – watch/listen to chapter 3

Slide 9

## Chapter 3 – Back to the Basics

Summary: Paul exposed the church's carnality. They failed to use God's wisdom to grow spiritually, which led to their emphasis on personalities instead of Christ. Paul explained servant ministry to them and exalted God's wisdom as the only option for growing spiritually and ministering faithfully.

### 1. Paul exposed Corinth's carnal ministry (3:1-4)

Carnality prevents us from receiving and understanding deeper spiritual truths ("meat" of the Word). Our growth stops once we stop obeying anything we have already learned. It's been said, "God will not reveal anything new to us if we haven't surrendered to the truth, He has already revealed to us."

An unmistakable sign of a carnal church is the presence of factions or divisions within it. For there to be divisions requires: (1) pride - thinking we are better than the others, (2) selfishness - not willing to go out of our way to serve the others that are not a part of our group, and (3) conceit - thinking they are not worth the effort to reach out to them. The presence of factions proves the absence of Christ-likeness within that church.

### 2. Paul explained servant ministry (3:5-17)

In the effort of winning souls to Christ, we are just servants, and the results are completely dependent upon God's grace. The initial presenter of the gospel is pictured as the planter of the seed, and the subsequent laborers as the waterer of that seed. But it is clear who is behind all positive results: it is "God that giveth the increase". And at the judgment seat of Christ, each worker will be rewarded according to his or her **labor**, not according to their results.

Even though in this life, the one who finishes the job of leading the person to Christ gets the credit in the eyes of men as the "soul winner", God is most certainly keeping track of all work others put into getting the gospel out. Paul wants their focus on pleasing God: to just be faithful laboring for Him.

Our labor in this life will be judged by our motives – gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and stubble. Our works in this life are represented as a building that we add materials to, with Christ being the foundation. What we have built will be judged at the judgment seat of Christ by fire. We cannot lose our salvation, but we can lose all of our rewards if built with wood, hay, or stubble. If our materials are going to survive the fire (gold/silver), they must be Christ-centered, not self-centered.

To emphasize the importance of building on Jesus Christ, Paul compared the structure to a temple dedicated to God (3:16). The Spirit indwelt the temple. The Spirit also dwells in the church and in each individual believer who makes up the church. The church is the focus of God's activity in this age. He indwells and works through the church. If any among them defiles or corrupts that body, God will mark him or her for destruction.

### 3. Paul exalted God's wisdom (3:18-23)

Paul stated that people who depend on human wisdom for salvation and ministry think they are wise when they are actually deceived instead (3:18). Paul called on them to become fools so that they might become wise.

He means that from the world's perspective they need to become what appears to be foolish in order to become truly wise. The Greeks considered trusting in Jesus for salvation and serving Him to be incredibly foolish decisions. But from God's perspective, those who make such decisions are wise.

Paul called on the Corinthians to live counterculturally by not seeking a mere man as an object of their boasting (3:21). Paul, Apollos, and Cephas were all part of the same team. They served so Christ's church might be edified. But none of them could rightly serve as the foundation for a church ministry.

Paul instructed team church to view him, Apollos, and Cephas as gifts from God for their growth in the Lord. In fact, God uses all Creation and the full range of life circumstances to work all things for the good of His church and for His glory (3:22). God's wisdom provides the church with all it needs to flourish.

God uses all His ministers and resources to further His people because they all belong to Christ, and Christ in turn belongs to the Father (3:23). Both Christ and the Father have a vested interest in each believer. That means they both have a vested interest in our church. They care about this ministry, so they provided us with God's wisdom that we might grow and flourish.

Slide 10 – watch/listen to chapter 4

Slide 11

## Chapter 4 – Reality Check

Summary: The Lord has entrusted Christians with ministry responsibilities, and He requires faithfulness. Instead of judging someone else's service, each of us should perform his own service faithfully to meet the Lord's approval. He will judge pride and divisiveness.

### 1. God will disclose faithful service (4:1-5)

Every servant of God should receive the respect due the office that they hold. The Pastor is to be obeyed and submitted to because of the office (Hebrews 13:7,17). But Paul warns of placing too much amazement in a man. Each person is simply a minister of Christ and a steward of the mysteries of God. Those at Corinth seemed to place too much esteem on the men, aligning themselves with their favorite: either Paul, Apollos, or Peter.

Furthermore, men tend to judge other men in ways they ought not: such as regarding their spiritual worth or spirituality. Paul makes it clear that men should not judge those things, but Christ will judge our hearts and motives when He comes. There is a day coming, that will bring men's secret sins into the open, and reveal the secrets of their hearts. Then every slandered believer will be justified, and every faithful servant approved and rewarded.

### 2. Paul demonstrated faithful service (4:6-13)

Paul applies this warning not to esteem men too highly to ourselves. We all need to realize that if we have anything, whether a talent, ability, or material possessions; we received them from God on loan to use for His glory, not our own.

Pride in any form, but especially in the spiritual realm will bring a man down. It causes contention (Proverbs 13:10). It causes God to resist the one who has it (1 Peter 5:5 and James 4:6). And it goes before destruction and a fall (Proverbs 16:18). So, if we are called to any ministry, we need to guard our heart against pride. For once it enters our heart, God will be resisting us instead of enabling us.

Paul then in what seems to be a mocking tone rebukes them for their attitude of pride, telling them that they are full, rich, and "have reigned as kings without us". He seems intent on helping them to realize their wicked self-righteousness and pride.

To do so, he describes a picture of what it was like for him as an apostle: appointed to death, being made a spectacle for the rest of the world, made out to be fools for Christ's sake, made out to be weak, and despised.

The Corinthians seemed to clamor for glory and recognition, being all puffed up about their spirituality and wisdom, while Paul wanted them to see that he as an apostle of Christ endured just the opposite from other men. He received no appreciation, no credit, no glory, and no honor.



He makes a reference to the persecution suffered by himself and the other apostles. The life of an apostle was one of suffering, being lied about (defamed), reviled (hated), persecuted; all without answering back, without defending themselves against their accusers.

Imagine being treated as "the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things", but that is what they endured, and Paul implies that that is what Christ calls all of His saints to endure for Him as He, Jesus, did for us.

### 3. Paul demanded faithful service (4:14-21)

His aim was not to simply shame them, but to get them to humble themselves and behave as Christ intends all His saints to behave, and to get them to follow his example as he followed Christ's, and to teach them to have the mind of Christ as found in Philippians 2.

He reminded them that he was the one responsible for bringing them the gospel and leading them to Christ. He was their spiritual father in that sense. Sometimes a son or daughter does not heed his or her father, so the father must reinforce his teaching with discipline.

Some Christians at Corinth thought that Paul was giving vain threats. They interpreted Timothy's arrival to mean that Paul would never personally intervene in their affairs. So some rebelled against Paul's teachings (4:18). Paul assured them, however, that he would visit Corinth and discipline his rebellious children if the Lord willed (4:19). They would learn the hard way that Paul was very serious; he had apostolic power to back up his words with action (4:20).

Like a faithful father, Paul did not withhold discipline when it was necessary. But he preferred to give his spiritual children an opportunity to repent first. So he offered a clear choice: the sinning members of the Corinthian church could continue in their wicked ways or submit to his inspired counsel. If they chose to keep on sinning, Paul would institute discipline among them (4:21a).

If they repented, he would leave the rod on the shelf and be a loving, gentle father in their midst (4:21b).

He warned them, that he is coming back (God willing) and he will judge them not by their meaningless words, but by the presence or absence of the power of God on their lives and ministry. Words are useless without the power of God behind them. Eloquence without the power of the Holy Ghost upon the preaching or teaching is just a bunch of hot air.

Slide 12 – watch/listen to chapter 5

Slide 13

## Chapter 5 – Church Discipline

Summary: A church must not be complacent about sin in its midst. For the sake of the church's testimony and its spiritual good, the members must practice church discipline.

### 1. A Serious Problem (5:1, 2)

This church was not only allowing this church member to have a sexual relationship with his stepmother, but they were also "puffed up" by it. Why were they puffed up by it? I have no idea.

Paul said that the sexual sin of incest would not even be going on among the Gentiles, even in such a wicked city as Corinth. It is a sad thought to realize that even the most wicked of sins can be going on among church members. This one, however, was not done in secret, it was public. It was ruining the testimony of the entire church.

### 2. A Specific Procedure (5:3-5)

Paul did not need to even hear the man out: there was no justifying what was being done: it had to stop. He instructed this church to discipline the man out of the church. This man had to be put out of the church and allowed to be punished by satan ("for the destruction of the flesh") until he repented and got this sin out of his life.

Why does an unrepentant person in public sin need to be put out of the church?

1. So that person can get right with God.
2. As an example to others in the church to not do the same.
3. To purify the church so there is not sin in the camp.
4. To keep the testimony of that church intact within that community.

### 3. A Spiritual Purpose (5:6-8)

Leaven is yeast. When yeast is added to a lump of dough, it by nature affects the whole lump. Sin, like leaven, that is if allowed to fester in the church, it has a tendency to spread and affect the church's members and ministry of the church. Sin left unchecked can destroy a church's testimony where the unsaved community may perceive the whole church as hypocritical and unholy.

The feast of Passover and the Lord's Supper should be kept with unleavened bread. Unleavened bread is a picture of the sinlessness of Christ. Paul pictures a church as unleavened bread, and therefore he tells them to get the leaven of sin out of them.

#### 4. A Sensible Practice (5:9-13)

Paul refers to a previous letter in which he wrote not to fellowship with church members who were living in fornication. We need to practice "ecclesiastical separation", keeping the church pure. If someone claims to be saved and is a member of a church, but continues in a public sin such as fornication, they obviously need to be put out of the church and separated from.

But it is impossible and not the will of God to separate from everyone in the world who continues to practice their sin. "For then must ye needs go out of the world". We are called to go into the world and preach the gospel to them. This requires going to them and talking to them. But those who are a "brother or sister" in the church who are in public sin needs to be disciplined and separated from.

Judging them that are within the church can also get some into trouble. We are not called to be each other's "fruit inspectors" or private investigators. The natural man wants to find sin out in other's lives: it makes us feel better about ourselves. But that is not the mind of Christ.

We must remember Romans 14:4 – "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth." We should bring an issue regarding the sin of another church member to the pastor's attention and let him determine who needs to be disciplined within the church.

Matthew 18 gives the steps: (1) Go to that individual alone, and if they don't repent, then (2) Take two or three witnesses, and if they don't repent, then bring it before the church.

Slide 14 – watch/listen to chapter 6

Slide 15

## Chapter 6 – Disputes and Distinctiveness

Summary: The Corinthian Christians acted like unsaved people by suing one another in court. As God's redeemed people, they were called to settle their differences within the church family and to glorify God in every area of life.

### 1. Resolving disputes (6:1-11)

Lawsuits were common in the Greek culture at Corinth as they are today. When Corinthians became Christians, however, they gained an opportunity to resolve disputes with one another in a godly manner. Instead of employing this opportunity, they preferred the old system of going to court before unsaved judges.

Paul reminded the Corinthian church that someday they will judge the world, including angels, during the millennial reign of Christ (6:2, 3; Dan. 7:22). Believers might also take part in judging fallen angels when Satan, and by implication his angels, are cast into the lake of fire after the conclusion of the millennial Kingdom (Rev. 20:10; see also 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). Paul's reference to judging angels might also indicate that believer's will rule over good angels during Christ's millennial Kingdom.

Paul exhorted them to bring such disagreements before someone appointed to judge within the church. He states that the ones to judge be someone who has a fear of God, a knowledge of the word of God, yet is not a glamour seeker.

Brothers who brought brothers before unsaved judges blemished the church's testimony in Corinth (6:6, 7a). Instead of suing a fellow church member, Paul taught that taking a loss or suffering damages would be better than going to a secular court.

Paul made a sobering point to those Corinthian believers who insisted on suing each other, He stated that their actions were like the actions of the unrighteous. Their lawsuits were no better than the wicked Corinthians who were destined to hell if they did not turn from their sins and trust in Christ as their Savior (6:9, 10).

The Corinthian believers had responded to the gospel. The Lord had reached down into the miry clay, scooped them up, washed them from their sinful filth, set them apart to honor and serve Him, and gave them a righteous standing in His sight (6:11). They were sanctified in their position before God, but they were acting like they were still unrighteous unbelievers.

This point is sobering because God counted on the Corinthian believers to be His witnesses to the lost in Corinth. When the Corinthian believers acted like they were still unrighteous, they hurt their ability to communicate the gospel effectively to the lost. Even though in verse 11 he says that some of them had been saved, he seems to be implying that some of them in this congregation are not.

Included in the list are "**effeminate**" which is a person who allows himself to be sexually abused contrary to nature and "**abusers of themselves with mankind**". These are two clear descriptions of homosexuality. Can a homosexual be saved? Yes!

The key is the phrase, "And such **were** some of you". Homosexuality was fairly common in the Greek and Roman cultures. But some of them had repented and received Christ. We are told in Hebrews 7 that Christ is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him no matter how wicked and enslaving the sin they were in.

## 2. Maintaining distinctiveness (6:12-20)

Paul went on to develop the truth that a believer's life is not about freedom to do what he pleases but about how he might use his freedom in Christ to glorify God and reach the lost. Paul gave four questions for believers to ask to determine if they should engage in certain practices. Paul then used those questions to show that sexual immorality is obviously not an acceptable practice.

Paul's first guideline in determining whether to engage in a practice was to ask if the practice was expedient, or profitable (6:12). Did the practice help Paul in his walk with God? Paul's second question focused on whether the practice would enslave him and damage his reputation and his relationships (6:12). Sin is usually enslaving, but other practices may become enslaving and sinful if they take a believer's time and keep him from serving God faithfully.

Paul's third and fourth questions addressed the lie that practices, that involve the physical body, cannot be wrong. Some believers in Corinth thought that since eating is not a spiritual exercise, then other physical activities, including those of a sexual nature, must not have any bearing on a believer's spiritual life. This thinking originated with the Greeks, who believed the physical body was worthless and therefore had no bearing on a person's spirituality.

But Paul was clear that a believer's physical body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord (6:13). All a believer's actions, including physical activities, are supposed to be for God's glory (cf. 6:20). So Paul's third question asks whether the practice in question helps the believer glorify God. His fourth question builds on the third. It asks whether the practice demonstrates that the Lord owns the believer's body (6:13).

To emphasize his point that the believer's body belongs to God and is therefore important, Paul reminded the Corinthians that God raised up Christ from the dead and would one day raise all believers from the dead (6:14). Their physical bodies were important to God.

Taking his argument even further, Paul taught that a sexual relationship is more than just a physical act because believers are members of Christ (6:15). When a believer has a sexual relationship with a harlot, he becomes a member with the harlot. Should a believer who is a member of Christ also become a member with a harlot? Paul emphatically said, God forbid (6:15).

God's plan for marriage has always been for one man and one woman to become one flesh. That is the only godly sexual relationship because it is the only one that reflects the Lord's union with the believer (6:17). The only fitting course to follow, then, was to flee fornication (6:18). Indulging in fornication, Paul explained, is equivalent to destroying one's own body (6:18; cf. Prov. 6:32).

Paul summoned the Corinthian believers to honor the Lord with their bodies, living for Him as redeemed people. The Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Ghost (6:19). Since a believer is the Spirit's temple, wherever the believer goes, the temple of the Holy Spirit goes. Whatever he does, the temple of the Holy Spirit does. These sobering facts ought to grab our attention and influence our actions. Perhaps we need to rethink our priorities, redefine our interests, reorder our habits, and rearrange our schedules because we are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Paul went on to tell the Corinthians that they were God's purchased possession (6:19b, 20). We are God's purchased possessions. Just as a buyer purchased a slave in the slave market and set him free, so God bought us at the cost of His Son's blood, and He has set us free to serve Him. Our lifelong ambition ought to be to glorify God in our bodies and in our spirits (6:20).

As God's redeemed people, the Corinthian Christians had received the opportunity to show their unsaved neighbors that Christ did make a difference in their lives. They could have let their lights shine so others would see their good works and glorify their Father in Heaven (Matt. 5:16).

Unfortunately, they lost that opportunity. They condoned sin in their church and then drafted lawsuits against one another. Their light was dulled. The effectiveness of their future witness hinged on their willingness to heed Paul's exhortation to glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's (6:20).

Slide 16 – watch/listen to chapter 7

Slide 17

## Chapter 7 – Marriage Relationship

Summary: The Corinthian Christians faced several issues involving their marital status. Paul addressed these complicated and controversial issues and urged the Corinthians to honor and serve the Lord, whether married or unmarried.

### 1. Principles about getting married (7:1-9)

Paul's opening words support the conclusion that marriage is normal and certainly is an option for the believer. Jesus did not impose celibacy. In fact, He chose to perform His first miracle at a Jewish wedding ceremony, thereby blessing the institution of marriage.

Later in his discussion on marriage, Paul did point out that celibacy can have advantages (7:29-34), but he never demanded anyone stay single. He regarded marriage as normal. And knowing how immoral Corinth was and understanding that sexual temptation abounded there, he presented marriage as the only honorable intimate relationship between a man and a woman.

Marriage is not a 50/50 proposition, as some suggest; it is actually a 100/100 partnership. In Paul's description of marriage, a husband gives himself 100 percent to his wife, and she gives herself 100 percent to him. The sexual relationship offers both husband and wife the opportunity to give themselves to each other in a selfless and loving manner.

Each partner ought to respect and meet the needs of the other, withholding physical intimacy only by mutual agreement for the purpose of pursuing spiritual concerns (7:3-5a). To avoid any temptation to become unfaithful, abstinence must not continue indefinitely (7:5b).

Paul wanted the Corinthian church to understand that his counsel did not command anyone to get married (7:6). In fact, he preferred and recommended singleness (7:7a). However, he recognized the ability to live as a single as a gift from God. If a person does not possess that gift, he or she should not insist upon remaining single for all of life. Every Christian has some gift (7:7b), which he or she ought to accept and develop.

To the widowed and unmarried, Paul recommended the single life but sanctioned marriage for those whose desires made their singleness unworkable (7:8, 9).

### 2. Principles about staying married (7:10-24)

God clearly intended one woman for one man for one lifetime. Which is why choosing who to marry is so important! If a person gets saved and has a spouse who is not yet saved, it is God's will for them to remain with that unsaved spouse (as long as the lost spouse is willing to stay with them). If two Christians did divorce, they were to remain unmarried, or be reconciled.

Many believe that the Lord allowed an exception for divorce based on adultery (Matt. 5:32; 19:9). Jesus was speaking in the context of Jewish marriage customs, however, making interpretation of those verses more challenging. Thus, some believe that even adultery does not give Biblical grounds for divorce today.

Paul clearly instructed that divorce for any other reason is unacceptable between Christians. In cases where divorce has occurred, reconciliation should be sought if possible.

Paul addressed those who were married before getting saved but whose spouses were still unsaved. Having no command from the Lord to quote, Paul had to give his own counsel, which in this case was divinely inspired. He ruled that a saved husband should not divorce his unsaved wife if she wanted to continue the marriage (7:12).

Similarly, a saved wife should not leave her unsaved husband (7:13). A believer's presence in the home places the unsaved family members in the favorable position of receiving blessings (7:14). As God pours blessing into the believer's life, some of the blessing spills onto his family members. If an unsaved spouse insists on filing for divorce, however, the saved spouse need not contest the action (7:15).

Naturally, a saved spouse would try to keep the unsaved partner in the marriage, hoping to be able to lead the partner to the Lord; but there was no way of knowing if this would happen (7:16). Indeed, if a saved spouse tried to force the unsaved partner to stay in the marriage, this might lessen the likelihood that the partner would trust in Christ.

In Paul instructed the Corinthian believers, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. . . . Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Those who were married when they became Christians did not have to dissolve their marriages; nor did single Corinthians have to get married because they had become Christians.

Because they were saved, the Corinthians did not have to switch jobs or change their marital status. Furthermore, they did not have to become uncircumcised or circumcised. They were to focus their concern on obeying God.

### 3. Principles about singleness (7:25-38)

Because persecution was increasing, Paul felt it was best not to marry (7:26, 27b); but despite the difficult times, married persons should stay married (7:27a). Singles would not be committing a sin if they married, but they could expect additional stress (7:28).

Paul understood that the world order was passing away and that what Christians accomplished for Christ far outranked earthly values. He knew unmarried Christians could devote more time to Christian service than their married brethren could devote to it. The responsibilities of married life might distract Christians from spiritual pursuits. So it seemed best to recommend singleness (7:29-35). Once again, though, Paul assured the Corinthians that marriage was a viable option.



A father was free either to give his daughter in marriage or to refrain from doing so (7:36, 37). Paul's personal preference was the latter option (7:38), likely because of the distressful times in which he and the Corinthians lived (cf. 7:26). The choice was not a matter of right or wrong but of good and better under first-century conditions in Corinth.

#### 4. Principles about remarriage (7:39,40)

Marriage is supposed to bind a man and a woman together in a permanent, loving relationship. Ideally, marriage is supposed to last until death and not simply until divorce. The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth, Paul wrote (7:39a), echoing the clear truth of Scripture throughout both the Old and New Testaments. But he made it clear that a widow, and by inference a widower, is free to remarry.

Widows and widowers face one restriction in remarrying. They may marry only in the Lord (7:39) – a saved person marrying a saved person - be not unequally yoked.

As grand as marriage is, for those who have received the gift of singleness, singleness is better. Believing he was Spirit-directed in his writing, Paul counseled, but she is happier if she so abide, after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God (7:40).

Slide 18 – watch/listen to chapter 8

Slide 19

## Chapter 8 – Addressing Christian Liberty Problems

Summary: The Corinthian Christians held contrasting opinions about eating food offered to idols. Writing by inspiration, in chapters 8-10, Paul gave them principles that would help them handle these situations. The principles help us understand how to use Christian love to guide our Christian liberties.

To understand this entire section, it is essential to recognize the value that Paul placed on the individual conscience. The conscience is like an alarm system that alerts a person to the fact that a thought or action is violating the standards set for the conscience.

Every believer should endeavor to strengthen his or her conscience by building it up on the Word of God so that it functions properly under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Since no Christian's conscience is perfect, no one should attempt to force his or her views on another person unless those views are based on Scripture.

Every Christian, as a believer-priest under Christ, is given the liberty of determining his own mind on questionable matters. This takes us to the heart of the tension in chapter 8. What do we do when Christians differ on matters that seem important to them?

The Greeks worshiped numerous false gods, but Paul and the Corinthian believers knew there was only one true God (8:4). The Corinthian believers also knew that the one true God controls everything and created everything through Jesus Christ (8:6). But these knowledgeable Christians needed to exercise love toward new believers who still imagined the idols were real and therefore could not with a clear conscience eat food sacrificed to those idols (8:7).

Paul will spend 2 chapters in this book (8 and more in 10) and another chapter in Romans 14 on eating meat sacrificed to idols. There were many idols in Greece and much of the meat offered for sale in public marketplaces had first been offered in sacrifice to some idol. Since the believer's relationships to God was not affected either by eating food or abstaining from it (8:8), they needed a set of principles to guide their dietary decision in light of its effects on other believers.

These issues may seem obsolete to us today, but their principles are not. Today we face the same questions of separation from the world and what our convictions are on certain standards: will we eat in a restaurant that serves alcohol? What will we allow ourselves to watch? What should a woman choose to wear? And the principles being taught by Paul are:

1. To surrender our decision to Christ.
2. Consider how our decision will affect those around us; both the lost and saved.
3. Ask, will it bring glory to God?
4. To be fully honest with how it is affecting our walk with God.

Although a believer in Corinth might claim Christian liberty in eating food offered to idols, Paul advised him to consider how this would affect weaker believers (8:9). If a weaker believer observed him in the act of eating sacrificed food, the weaker believer might be emboldened to eat the sacrificed food in violation of his own conscience, which would be sin (8:10).

Although the knowledgeable believer would not be ensnared by the pagan beliefs and practices associated with the eating of sacrificed foods, the weaker believer, having already violated his conscience, might be tempted to go even further into active disobedience (8:11). The knowledgeable Christian would be sinning against Christ by injuring the weaker believer (8:12).

Paul's appeal to the knowledgeable believers, then, was to be considerate of weaker believers and control their use of liberty in order to avoid deterring the spiritual progress of others (8:13).

For the new convert to eat it brought an inner battle within that caused them to think about the idols to which it was offered. They had trouble just ignoring it. They did not realize how meaningless the offering was. The eating of meat offered in sacrifice to idols was harmless in itself as long as:

1. The eater realized that the idol was nothing, meaning they did not think they were worshipping the idol.
2. Their eating of the meat did not cause either a weaker brother to stumble. I.E. If a new believer thought eating the meat was part of worshipping that idol, then it would cause him to stumble.
3. Cause their testimony before the lost to be tarnished in that the lost might think that they were still worshipping the idol by eating the meat.

Those same principles are still viable for us today. Does our participation in something cause us to be tempted to slip back into a sin from our past, or does it cause a brother to feel it's OK to participate in something that will cause them to slip into a sin from their past? For example, taking a former alcoholic to a restaurant that serves alcohol, he may be tempted to drink alcohol and slip into past sin.

There are two consequences to failing to separate: one is our own personal destruction, the other is the spiritual destruction of those around us.

It can cause "weaker" brethren to stumble by emboldening them to do something which places too much temptation on them to sin (because they see you doing it and assume that since you think it is OK, it must be OK for them also).

But also it can ruin our testimony as the lost see you doing something that in their mind is "not what a Christian should be doing".

Slide 20 – watch/listen to chapter 9

Slide 21

## Chapter 9 – Exercise Self-control

Paul used several illustrations to make one basic point at the end of the chapter: managing Christian liberty through self-control will help the disciplined believer to run like an athlete toward his eternal reward. But before Paul could lay out his arguments that led to this conclusion, he needed to address the fact that some believers in Corinth questioned his apostleship and his motives for preaching.

Paul carried genuine apostolic credentials—Jesus personally commissioned him. And the Corinthian Christians themselves were evidence that the Lord had blessed his apostolic ministry (9:1, 2). As an apostle, Paul could claim the same liberty and privileges as other Christian workers. He was free to marry and to receive financial support from those to whom he ministered (9:4-14). Nevertheless, for the sake of the gospel, Paul applied the principle of self-control and set aside these privileges (9:12).

Paul gave an excellent defense of the principle that God ordained that Pastors and full-time Christian service workers should be paid financially and supported by the people they spiritually serve. He gives three quick examples:

1. The man of God is in God's army and ought to be paid by God's people
2. He is a farmer and ought to eat of the fruit of his labor
3. He is a shepherd who ought to be supported by the flock.

Paul had every God-given right to take pay for his labor in preaching the gospel, but he was driven to offer the gospel without being paid. His calling to be an apostle to the Gentiles was what drove him. "For necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" was his cry. He also seemed to believe that he could gain more converts if he did not take pay: "yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more."

Rather than have someone accuse him of preaching only because he was paid to do so, Paul adopted the policy of preaching without pay (9:15), He did not preach to live; he lived to preach (9:16). He preached because the Lord had commissioned him to preach. He believed the Lord would supply his needs (9:17, 18).

Paul's motives as an apostle were pure. Paul chose to limit his liberty for at least three reasons:

- (1) to set an example void of criticism (lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ [9:12b])
- (2) to consider his own motives to ensure that he would be qualified for heavenly reward (if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward [9:17a])
- (3) to discipline himself from going beyond that which he was actually at liberty to do (that I abuse not my power in the gospel [9:18b]).

Paul ministered with a servant's heart among Jews and Gentiles alike (9:19). Although his Christian liberty had freed him from the demands of the law, he became as a Jew in order to win Jews to Christ (9:20). Among Gentiles, he lived apart from the Jewish law in order to win Gentiles to Christ (9:21). In a spirit of self-control, he was considerate of all because he wanted to win people to Christ (9:22, 23).

Paul is in no way promoting compromise of Biblical standards or separation for the sake of popularity when he says in v. 22 - "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some". This verse has been used by "Christian" who will use rock music and other worldly methods to attract more people to their meetings.

Paul was simply stating that to reach the Jews he met them where they were; starting with the law. To reach the Gentiles he met them where they were; with no knowledge of the law of God. He did not ignore or break God's law or Biblical principles to reach them.

Likewise, we need to meet people where they are spiritually. Not everyone can be reached with the same presentation of the gospel; some have more understanding in their backgrounds than others, some have minds full of religious ideas that need to be corrected (for example Romans Catholics, Muslims, or Buddhists).

In context, Paul is clearly limiting his liberty —not extending it— for the sole purpose of proclaiming the gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 2:2).

Paul explains one of the secrets to running the race of the Christian life: temperance, meaning to exercise self-restraint. He uses the example of runners in a race; an example with which most of the Corinthians would be familiar from the Isthmian games.

Those who ran in these games were kept to a strict diet, they got used to hardship, and worked out regularly to gain a short-lived victory. They practiced self-restraint to win the race.

Christian liberty functions best within the bounds of self-control. We are not free to do whatever we feel like doing. Unchecked fleshly impulses would surely wreck our testimony and Christian service record. Knowing this, Paul disciplined himself. Like a dedicated and well-trained runner, he kept his eye on the finish line and the winner's crown.

Paul feared his flesh and its weakness, that even he could fall and become a "castaway". What is a castaway? Does it mean he could lose his salvation? No! It's not that he would lose his salvation, but that He would be no longer used of God and at the judgment seat of Christ he would lose rewards.

Slide 22 – watch/listen to chapter 10

Slide 23

## Chapter 10 – Applying Christian Liberty Principles

### 1. Separate from sin (10:1-22)

Having raised the possibility of becoming disqualified for a reward, Paul reflected upon what had happened to the Israelites who lacked spiritual discipline in Moses' era. Although God had redeemed all the Israelites from Egypt and directed them in the wilderness, fed them and gave them water from the rock, He overthrew them there. Why?

Because they failed to practice self-control in obedience to God. They reveled in golden calf idolatry and committed fornication. Also, the unfaithful Israelites put God to the test and murmured that He was unfair. Again, God responded with judgment.

What happened to the Israelites, teaches Christians to stay close to God and far from potentially harmful situations (10:11). These Corinthians who felt they could exercise their Christian liberty by participating in the idol feasts were running the risk of falling into sin (10:12). If they fell, they could not blame it on God (10:13). So the wise course of action was to separate from idolatrous situations.

Paul uses the Lord's Supper as an example of Christians in "communion" or participation with Christ's blood and body as we drink the fruit of the vine and eat the bread. It means there is a spiritual agreement with the participator in the ordinance with what is represented.

Concerning meat sacrificed to idols, even though the Christian knows that the meat and the idol is nothing, but to the unsaved, eating the meat was their equivalent way of "communion" with that idol. It was their way of fellowshiping with the idol and worshipping it.

### 2. Edify others (10:23, 24)

Apparently, some Christians pushed their liberty to the point where they felt free to do anything. Paul differentiated for them between what is lawful and what is expedient (profitable) and between what is lawful and what will edify (10:23). An important guiding principle in deciding a course of action is not, Do I have the right to do this? but, How will this impact someone else? (10:24).

### 3. Keep a clear conscience (10:25-30)

If a believer purchased a cut of meat in a Corinthian butcher shop, he should eat it with a clear conscience and not investigate its origin (10:25). After all, the Lord owns the whole earth, including the food supply (10:26). Similarly, if a believer sat at a Corinthian's table as a dinner guest, he should not ask where the food came from, but rather eat it with a clear conscience (10:27).

However, if the butcher or the host volunteered that the meat had been offered to idols, the believer should not eat because the unsaved would interpret that as fellowshiping and worshipping that idol.

It would be a stumbling block to the brethren and be a bad testimony to the lost. Again, as Paul said, all things might be lawful, like eating meat sacrificed to idols, but all things are not always profitable, meaning they do not edify those around us, which is way more important than our own personal freedom.

If a stronger Christian ignored another's concerns of conscience, his Christian liberty might be interpreted as license to sin. Any time a believer eats, he must do so in a manner that would cause himself and those around him to give thanks (10:30) and not have others feel he is sinning.

#### 4. Glorify God (10:31-33)

Though Paul has given us some principles that may be complicated both to understand and to practice, he concludes these three chapters with an unmistakably clear command.

In deciding questionable activities, a Christian ought to ask how he can best glorify God (10:31). If his planned course of action would dull his testimony or hurt a fellow believer's walk with the Lord, he would glorify God by surrendering his liberty out of love for others.

If his planned course of action would enhance his testimony and edify a fellow believer, he would glorify God by pursuing it.

If a Christian conducted himself in a way that glorified God, he would not purposely offend Jews, Gentiles, or the church of God—the three classifications of humanity from God's perspective (10:32). Paul's goal was to strengthen Christians and to bring non-Christians to Christ (10:33).

May we, like Paul, be so consumed with the spiritual needs of others that our insignificant preferences will fade in comparison.

Once again, the most important element in deciding where to draw our line of separation is: how will it affect others and will it be to the glory of God? Paul is emphasizing how our behavior will affect our brethren in Christ, and our testimony to the lost around us – v. 33 -"Not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved."

Slide 24 – watch/listen to chapter 11

Slide 25

## Chapter 11 – Proper Order

Summary: Paul instructed the Corinthian church to honor the principle of male headship in worship and to observe the Lord's Supper reverently and in harmony, declaring the Lord's death till he come.

### 1. Order in Worship (11:1-16)

Paul concluded his comments on the limits of Christian liberty by encouraging the Corinthians to follow his example (11:1). He praised them for remembering him and for holding the teachings he had given them verbally (11:2). The Corinthian church had a good doctrinal foundation, but its attitude and behavior needed correction.

Vv. 3-16 is a difficult section of Scripture. Bible students are divided on whether Paul's words, especially regarding head coverings on women, deal with a local custom (11:16) in Corinth or whether they are to be taken as binding upon the churches of God (11:16) throughout this church age.

In favor of taking this passage as treating a localized custom is the fact that it stands alone in the New Testament in discussing the subject of head coverings. In support of seeing it as binding throughout the church age is the fact that the text does not appear to make local customs a limitation of Paul's commands.

If Paul intended his counsel to apply both then and now, his words have been mostly forgotten over the centuries. Yet even if one takes the view that Paul is commenting on the local situation in Corinth, there are still important points about gender roles in the church that we must learn and apply.

Gender roles have been increasingly blurred. Some in society have even claimed that gender is defined by one's feelings rather than one's anatomy. But the Bible is clear that gender is part of God's design and order. And God's Word, not public opinion, sets the standard for behavior in the church.

Paul's instructions are rooted in the character of God as expressed in His plan for Creation. They are not to be dismissed as bigoted ramblings. In the larger context of Paul's writings, we know that his teachings barred women from positions of authority over men in church worship and instruction.

Some claim that cultural considerations in the first century were the only grounds for Paul's prohibition. Those who make that claim argue that women then were apparently uneducated and unskilled while women today are as well-educated and as highly skilled as men. They therefore conclude that women can even be ordained for ministry if the women so desire. But Paul's reasoning in this section dismisses such logic.

God is a God of order. Within the Godhead, God the Father is the head of Christ (11:3). In His earthly ministry, Jesus willingly subordinated Himself to the Father, although He and the Father are co-equal, co-eternal, and co-essential. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit share one divine essence yet have distinct roles.



In the marriage relationship, the husband is the head of the wife (11:3). This does not give him dictatorial power but rather a responsibility to provide loving leadership in his marriage to a woman who is of equal value in her person and equal standing before God as a believer (cf. Gal. 3:28).

The woman is not inferior to man in terms of her nature or character or even in terms of her abilities. Certainly Christ, who ranks under the Father in terms of his role in the Godhead, is not inferior to the Father. The teaching of subordination in v. 3 relates to order; it is not a statement about anyone's worth as an individual, nor does it imply a lack of capability.

A professional woman may wonder why she would need to be under the authority of less-qualified men in the church. The issue is not her worth as a person or her level of knowledge and skill. The issue is God's created order. God, not culture, originated the male and female distinction in the church. And God intends His standards for worship and service to be for His glory.

In his leadership role in the Corinthian church, a man was supposed to pray or prophesy with his head uncovered. Otherwise, he dishonored his head (11:4). In Corinth, men did not wear veils over their heads, but women did. If a man wore such a covering, it suggested he was abdicating his role as a man and a leader and would reject his God-appointed headship of both the woman and earthly creation. It would also be a denial of Christ's authority over him.

Women, on the other hand, wore veils. If a Christian woman prayed or prophesied (in a church ladies' meeting) with her head uncovered, she dishonored her head just as if she were shaven (11:5, 6). Her uncovered head would signify she was unwilling to accept her husband's headship (11:7-9).

This lack of cooperation with God's order would offend the angels, who were observing the Corinthian assembly with keen interest (11:10; cf. Eph. 3:10; 1 Pet. 1:12). The veil was also a token of modesty. Any woman who chose not to wear a veil was likely to be considered immoral.

Paul felt some in Corinth might regard the woman as inferior to the man, or that some man might use his teaching about headship to lord it over the woman. Therefore, he reminded his readers that the well-being of both man and woman is reliant upon the other. The Lord so ordered His plan for humanity that the Christian man cannot degrade woman without degrading himself, nor is the woman to be detached from the man (11:11, 12).

Paul asked the Corinthians to evaluate this whole matter from two perspectives. First, did it seem proper for a woman to pray (in a church ladies' meeting) with her head uncovered? After all, even by nature it is normal and respectable for a woman to have long hair and a man to have short hair (11:14, 15a). Since God gave woman the natural covering of long hair (11:15b), should she not understand the importance of covering her head when she prayed and prophesied (in a ladies' meeting)?

Second, Paul did not want to debate this teaching; he simply concluded the matter by stating that neither the apostles nor the churches accommodated any custom that violated this principle of the headship of the man (11:16).

God created the male and female as distinct genders with distinct roles. As the world blurs these distinctions, the church should seek to highlight them even more to the glory of God. This is the time when bold but gracious men and meek but courageous women should step forward in the church and proclaim the Lord's plan loudly and clearly.

## 2. Order at the Lord's Table (11:17-34)

Another area in which Paul had to correct his Corinthian friends was their observance of the Lord's Supper, or Communion. The Corinthian church was guilty of poor manners and poor attitudes at the Lord's Table. They failed to take Communion seriously.

According to verse 17, observance of the Lord's Supper had become a negative experience for the Corinthian believers. Instead of participating as a united body of believers, they were divided (11:18). Paul recognized that schisms are to be expected, but he never ignored or condoned them.

Although the whole church met together in one place for Communion (11:20), the church was not together in one spirit. Their disunity became particularly obvious as they met for a feast before observing the Lord's Supper.

The Corinthian believers were supposed to bring food to share at the feast, but the well-to-do believers placed their food on the table and indulged in it without sharing it with the poorer believers. They ate and drank until they were overstuffed and intoxicated (11:21).

They essentially turned their fellowship feasts into replicas of pagan feasts. Such selfish indulgence showed a total disregard for church unity and for fellow believers who lacked the money to contribute any food to the feast (11:22).

Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper as an ordinance to be observed by the local church. He did this the same night in which he was betrayed (11:23). How inappropriate it was for the Corinthians to turn the occasion of the Lord's Supper into a drunken, gluttonous festival.

In the Lord's Supper, the bread symbolizes the body of our Lord that was nailed to the cross and subjected to excruciating pain (11:24). The cup symbolizes His shed blood, the price of our redemption (11:25). Christians are to partake of both the bread and the cup in remembrance of Christ. Communion declares Christ's death until He comes to take the believers to Heaven (11:26).

The Biblical view of Communion is not transubstantiation or consubstantiation, but commemoration. Transubstantiation is the Roman Catholic doctrine that the bread and juice are turned into the literal body and blood of Christ before eating. Consubstantiation is the Lutheran doctrine that the bread and juice are changed into Christ's body and blood after eating.

Commemoration is the Biblical teaching—namely, that the bread and cup represent the body and blood of Christ. Communion should be regarded as a solemn ceremony, and our eating and drinking in this context should be taken as no light matter (11:29).

Paul warned of discipline from the hand of God if a Christian partook of the Lord's Supper unworthily (11:27). This relates to the disorderly way the Corinthians approached the ordinance. Every participant in the Lord's Supper ought to examine himself (11:28). He ought to discern the way he approaches the ordinance and confess his sins to the Lord (cf. 1 John 1:9). Having done so, the believer is commanded to eat.

Self examination is an often overlooked aspect of the Lord's Supper amongst saints today. In verse 29, if we are not right with God, we can expect judgment from God upon us. In Corinth that took the form of many becoming sick, and "many sleep"; in other words, they died. It apparently was a sin unto death for some. The key is verse 31; that if we would be honest with ourselves, repent and get it right, then God will not have to bring His punishment.

This request of self examination should not stop us from participating, however. We can take it too far, never feeling that we are "right enough" with God to participate and therefore not obey the command to observe it and also miss the blessing of participating. We shouldn't lose sight of the fact that we are in fact **commanded** to observe it, so we should do all we can to get right with God and make sure we do attend it.

The 5 points about a scriptural Lord's Supper Service:

1. Proper materials: Unleavened bread and fresh fruit of the vine (not fermented wine which is a picture of sin).
2. Proper participants: Saved and baptized members of that particular local church, who have examined themselves and are right with God and with each other: "Closed communion".
3. Proper motive: Their reason for participating in the Lord's Supper was not to "receive Christ", or to have their sins forgiven, or anything other than to simply obey the command **and to "remember" Christ's sacrifice for them, and to "shew" His death.**
4. Proper frequency: No exact timing of how often to have the Lord's Supper is given.
5. Proper duration: To be done "till he come". Until we are raptured.

Slide 26 – watch/listen to chapter 12

Slide 27

## Chapter 12 – Bestowing Spiritual Gifts

Summary: The Holy Spirit has given every believer at least one spiritual gift to employ in love. The Corinthians overemphasized temporary gift to the neglect of the greatest gift of love.

Spiritual gifts are not primarily for the believer using the gifts. Rather, they are to serve others and to evangelize unbelievers. The diversity of gifts originates from the same Spirit, going to the members of that church body. These gifts allow the body to function effectively when the members use their gifts for the purpose for which they were given, to benefit one another and to get the gospel out.

The triune God is involved in distributing spiritual gifts widely and wisely (12:4-6). And once distributed, we can trust Him to oversee the use and effectiveness of each believer's gifts (12:6, 7).

The believers at Corinth had received a variety of spiritual gifts. These spiritual gifts are divided into two groups: temporary and permanent. The temporary gifts faded out as the writing of the New Testament neared completion. When the New Testament was finished, the temporary gifts ceased altogether. The permanent gifts continued and are in use today.

There is some disagreement about how to categorize the gifts of wisdom, knowledge, and faith. Some believe they are permanent gifts, but most likely they were special temporary gifts to help the early churches in the beginning stages of its development. Notice the following descriptions of the gifts.

- Wisdom: A direct understanding of divine mysteries not yet explained in the New Testament.
- Knowledge: Direct spiritual insight into truth not yet revealed in the New Testament.
- Faith: Trust in God for the working of miracles.

Certainly, a believer today can gain wisdom, knowledge, and faith through the written Word of God, but what they gain is not like spiritual gifts described above. In the apostolic era, before the New Testament was written, the Spirit gave the gifts of wisdom, knowledge, and faith specifically for transmission of truth and working of miracles to authenticate that truth.

The miraculous sign gifts were limited to the first century churches. We can be certain that the following gifts that Paul listed were temporary.

Healing: The miraculous ability to restore health without medical attention.

Miracles: Extraordinary divine interventions to authenticate the message of the cross.

Prophecy: Foretelling the future and telling forth truths before they were revealed in the NT.

Discerning of spirits: The supernatural ability to distinguish whether a doctrine or teaching was of God. This was a special gift before the New Testament was completed. (Today, believers need to discern truth and error based on New Testament teaching.)

Tongues: The ability to speak in a foreign language without having learned it.

Interpretation of tongues: The ability to interpret what was spoken in an unfamiliar foreign language.

Apostles: Men, directly chosen and commissioned by the Lord to preach the gospel; they were also eyewitnesses of Christ's resurrection.

Prophets: Those appointed by God to announce direct disclosures from God concerning His will.

Paul's list also included permanent spiritual gifts that clearly are still in use today.

Teachers: Those who help others learn God's Word.

Helps: Service on behalf of others; relieving others of their burdens.

Governments: Competence in watching over ministries in the church.

The Holy Spirit imparts spiritual gifts to believers as He chooses, and He over looks no one as He shares them (12:11). Some believers may have several gifts, but every believer has at least one. This means that every believer can contribute to the work of the Lord in a significant way.

The body spoken of here in vv. 12-13 is the local church, the body of Christ, in this case the local church at Corinth. If the universal church position is correct then Paul was not saved, see v. 27. Back in v. 13, we are made a member of the body of Christ, of the local church, by being baptized into that local church body (vs. 13). And every member has something to contribute to that church.

The Holy Spirit then uses believers to make the church a multi-equipped body (12:14) prepared by the Spirit of God to serve Christ obediently for the good of others and for God's glory.

Who decides who is put into each church? vs. 18 - **God does**. God is the One that determines who is to be in that church: He knows what people are just perfect for that church. And if God sets us into a certain church body, we best be certain that it is God leading us out when we leave, and that we are not leaving based on a decision we are making in the flesh, such as to get a better job or to find a spouse, or because we got offended over something.

In v. 31 - We are to "covet earnestly the best gifts". So, what are the best gifts we are to covet? Those which edify the other saints and/or reach the lost. Paul now will go on to show us "a more excellent way". That more excellent way is the Christ-like attitude, "charity", *agape* love.

Slide 28 – watch/listen to chapter 13

Slide 29

## Chapter 13 – The Best Spiritual Gift

In a church, love for the Lord and one another knits hearts together in ministry. Agape love, defined as sacrificing to meet a need in another's life, guides the believers in the right use of their spiritual gifts because it is self-sacrificing and Christlike.

The Corinthian church set a high value on public speaking (cf. 2:1). Perhaps that is why the gift of tongues ranked at the top of their list of coveted spiritual gifts. But Paul informed them that even public speaking, delivered without love, was no better than the harsh sounds of sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal (13:1).

The gifts of prophecy, knowledge, and faith were also ineffective without the added dimension of love (13:2). Even the gift of giving, demonstrated in the surrender of possessions and life itself for the sake of others, was worthless without love (13:3). Such a sacrifice would not yield the full potential of eternal rewards.

True *agape* love has the following characteristics. We tend to think of these as applied to marriage, but Paul's primary application is within a church.

1. Longsuffering, it is able to put up with a lot, able to endure a lot of injustice, a lot of neglect, a lot of mistreatment.
2. Kind. It means "generous". In other words, it is giving of oneself for the benefit of others.
3. Envieth not - the lack of jealousy.
4. No "vaunting" of self means no bragging or even seeking glory.
5. "Not puffed up" means it is not made proud.
6. "Unseemly" is indecent: true *agape* love is ethical, moral, and decent. Pushing the other person into premarital sex is not "love".
7. "seeketh not her own": selfishness
8. "Is not easily provoked", means is not easily irritated. Able to let offences slide off without becoming bitter or getting upset.
9. "Thinketh no evil" means it never thinks of anything harmful to that one it loves.
10. "Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth". *Agape* love is heart-broken over iniquity.
11. "Beareth all things" means it endures patiently and forbears all things.

12. "Believeth all things" means it has faith in them, it trusts them:

13. "Hopeth all things" means it trusts in them with an expecting confidence.

14. "Endureth all things" means it has fortitude, it perseveres, it abides, and waits for them through all trials.

Using a word that describes a leaf falling from a tree and dying on the ground, Paul wrote that love never fails (13:8). It will endure long after prophecies have failed, tongues have ceased, and knowledge has vanished away (13:8).

Tongues would cease because the written New Testament would fully validate the believer's message. Incomplete knowledge of God and incomplete preaching about spiritual truth would be done away upon the arrival of that which is perfect (13:10).

The word "perfect" is the Greek word *teleios* meaning fully complete. It does not mean sinless and is **never** used to refer to Christ anywhere else in the NT. If it meant Christ, it would be "P"erfect referring to a person. In James chapter 1, it is used in reference to God's Word.

Once Scripture was complete, the need for prophecies, tongues, and knowledge no longer existed, and they ceased. The speaking in tongues that you hear of in charismatic and Pentecostal churches did not come about until the 1900's and are not the tongues spoken in the Bible.

Slide 30 – watch/listen to chapter 14

Slide 31

## Chapter 14 – A Church’s Focus: Edification

Summary: The Corinthian church valued speaking in tongues above prophesying. Paul taught the Corinthians to value prophesying above speaking in tongues and to conduct their worship in an orderly manner for the edification of other believers. His emphasis on edifying others through personal ministry in the church is timeless.

At the time Paul wrote this epistle, they were certain "spiritual gifts" given by God to edify the churches and for evangelization (healing, working of miracles, and tongues). Specifically, since the New Testament canon of Scripture was not yet completed, the gift of prophecy seemed to be very much prevalent amongst the New Testament churches.

There was also the gift of speaking in a known foreign language that the person had not studied. It had the express purpose of being a "sign" to lost Jews. Lost Gentiles need preaching (prophesying). The Corinthians thought the gift of speaking in another language was great: they all wanted it.

The purpose of the gift of tongues in the Bible was to get the gospel to those whose language they did not know (Acts 2).

We are to desire "gifts" that edify others, not for the purpose of puffing ourselves up. The gift of prophecy had two aspects – foretelling and forthtelling (preaching). The foretelling aspect ceased with the completion of the NT. The forthtelling is still alive today in the sense of preaching the truths contained within the completed Bible. The gift of prophecy (preaching) had a 3-fold purpose (v. 3).

Edification: The act of building in a spiritual sense; to cause to grow spiritually. This would be the teaching aspect of preaching.

Exhortation: This is the persuasion aspect of preaching.

Comfort: This is the encouraging aspect of preaching.

Paul believed worship should be intelligent and not simply emotional. There was no point in praying, praising, or preaching in church in an unfamiliar language if no interpreter was present. Only as people understood what was said could they add their amen to it (14:16, 17).

Although Paul spoke several languages, he preferred to speak five words in a language his audience understood instead of 10,000 in a language they did not understand (14:19). He urged the Corinthians to consider that the purpose behind the gift of tongues before the Bible was complete, if used properly, was a sign to unbelieving Jews (v. 22).

That was one of the rules of tongues – unsaved Jews must be present. If no unsaved Jews are present, they were not to speak in tongues. It was to demonstrate to the Jewish people that God was validating the gospel and that it was for all nations.



The purpose of prophesying (preaching), however, was to benefit believers (14:22b). Paul said that unbelieving Gentiles and Jews alike would be greatly offended if they attended a church service in which the Corinthians spoke in unfamiliar languages (14:23). They would think that believers were crazy! However, if an unbeliever heard and understood the congregation proclaim God's Word, he might come under conviction and turn to God (14:24, 25).

Apparently, the Corinthian worship service was very unruly. Many wanted to contribute (14:26a), but no one wanted to wait his turn to do so. The situation in Corinth required placing restrictions on the use of tongues. The inspired rule was that no more than two or three should speak in tongues (of unlearned foreign languages) and each person was to speak in order, not all at once, and then only with the assistance of an interpreter (14:27, 28). If these rules could not be followed, the person with the gift of tongues was to remain silent.

Paul applied the principle of order in worship to the women in the congregation in Corinth. If they had questions about what the prophets taught, they were not to interrupt the service but were instead to wait until they could ask their husbands at home (14:34, 35). Paul's teaching regarding the role of women in the Corinthian church is primarily addressing the specific issue of women being involved in preaching and speaking in tongues in a church setting, that is to speak authoritatively in the church. The modern equivalent of this would be preaching to the congregation.

Paul finished his instructions on worship by exhorting the Corinthian church to elevate the value of prophecy above tongues without despising the legitimate use of the gift of tongues (14:39). In worshiping, they were to do everything decently and in order (14:40).

One of its foremost duties of a church is worship. This will mean that our church gatherings must essentially be directed upward, to God, not outward, to people. The declaration of God's truth is one of the foremost elements of worship. When saints gather as a church for worship, this is a prime opportunity to teach others also. Then, if there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned (14:24), the people of the congregation will be able to share God's saving Word with that person.

The gifts of tongues and prophecy ended when the NT was completed. Today, preachers declare God's Word as His fully authoritative message. In doing so, they exercise their spiritual gifts and pray that the lost will trust in the Savior and that the saved will grow spiritually. In closing, the use of tongues within churches in Paul's time had several rules but modern-day Charismatics and Pentecostals break every one of these rules.

Most of the time they are speaking gibberish that is not a known language (but they will use the excuse that it might be a language of angels, or now extinct language). They will often all do it at once. Women will often be doing it in the service, and women preachers are common. There is no interpreter. They believe if you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you will speak in tongues as evidence it. Finally, there is a major emphasis on the Holy Spirit, not on Christ. And they always hold to the teaching that you can lose your salvation!

Slide 32 – watch/listen to chapter 15 and then Slide 33

## Chapter 15 – Certain Victory

Summary: The resurrection of Jesus Christ is foundational to our hope as believers. Because of this glorious hope of the resurrection, believers ought to stand fast in the faith and should abound in God's work.

### 1. Christ's resurrection is real (15:1-11)

The word "gospel" simply means "good news", the good news of salvation through Christ. Here, Paul defines just what the good news is. The "good news" is the fact that Christ, the Son of God died, was buried, and rose again to pay for the sins of all mankind; belief in which gives the believer salvation. And its by the preaching of the gospel that we are saved (v. 2).

The phrase, "believed in vain" (at the end of v. 2) may refer to a false profession, a form of belief that does not save. This type of belief is described by James. It is commonplace today. It is a mental consent to the facts of the gospel without repentance and without receiving Christ as Lord by faith. It is most often made before coming to the realization that they are lost, deserving of hell.

In defense of the resurrection, Paul summoned a host of eyewitnesses to the witness stand. Cephas (Peter) saw the risen Christ. Then all the Twelve saw Him. Later, more than 500 believers saw Him. Then He was seen by James, Jesus' half-brother. Next, Paul mentioned the entire group of the apostles again as having seen the risen Christ. Finally, Paul recounted that he saw the risen Christ (15:8). This personal reference recalls Paul's Damascus Road experience (Acts 9:1-9).

Paul was driven by a deep sense of indebtedness and unworthiness. Paul worked harder than all the apostles: God's grace given to him "was not in vain". What a statement! Is the grace of God bestowed upon us in vain? Are we laboring as hard as we ought to be, as hard as God expects us to, consider all He has invested in us?

### 2. Christ's resurrection gives hope (15:12-57)

Apparently, some were teaching that there would be no resurrection of the dead at all. Paul states that if that is so, then Christ did not rise from the dead either. If such a thing were true, then all of Christianity would be false: our faith would be a waste, preaching would be a waste also, and all who did preach would be false witnesses and liars.

We would all be still in our sins, unredeemed and lost with no hope in eternity, just hell to look forward to. If there is no resurrection of the dead, then "we are of all men most miserable", we have nothing to live for but today, "let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die".

Many of the lost of this world have this mind-set. It is no wonder that there is so much hopelessness and depression in this world. Nothing beyond the grave. They exist day to day attempting to derive peace, joy, and some sense of security from this life: an utterly futile task. Only to one day "awake" spiritually when it is too late, in hell.

Christ's resurrection may be considered the first fruits in at least three ways:

- (1) His resurrection was the first of its kind—being raised in glorification never to die again
- (2) His resurrection was the first in priority and position (Col. 1:18)
- (3) His resurrection was the first of more to come (John 14:19; 1 Cor. 15:23).

Paul assured the Corinthians that Christ is risen from the dead. There is a valid gospel to proclaim, for Christ truly rose, and we can aspire to rise as well. There is hope of life beyond the grave, the prospect of reunion with departed Christian loved ones, and a reason to endure persecution.

As death came to all by Adam, so life came to all who are in Christ (15:21). The order of the resurrection and other future events appears in verses 23-28. Paul included the hope of resurrection for Christians at his coming (15:23), as well as the resurrection and judgment of unbelievers that will occur following the Millennium.

Baptism for the dead (v. 29) is difficult to understand. There are as many interpretations. Paul was in no way inferring that there were people at that time being baptized in place of those who had died without being baptized (like the Mormons do). So, what did Paul mean? Some think Paul is referring to that in baptism we are identifying with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. That they had been baptized with the hope and expectation of a resurrection of the dead. And so, why are we baptized in reference to Christ's death if there is no resurrection?

The resurrection of Christ made Paul's perilous life worthwhile. He faced death daily for the sake of the gospel, having turned his back on the allurements of a soft and comfortable life (15:30-32). His reference to fighting wild beasts at Ephesus may be to the wild public demonstration that opposed him when he preached there. Sometimes human foes of the gospel can act like vicious animals.

In verses 33 and 34, Paul called upon the Corinthian believers to turn away from false teachers who denied the resurrection. What they believed about the resurrection would determine how they lived. False teaching would produce false and ungodly living.

Anticipating questions about the resurrection, Paul provided helpful answers. How are the dead raised up? was the first question Paul addressed (15:35). He drew upon a principle of nature in doing so. He explained that death always precedes life like as when a seed is sown (15:36, 37).

Next, Paul answered the anticipated question about what the resurrected body will be like. He explained that there are different kinds of flesh: human, animal, fish, and bird flesh (15:39). Then he pointed out the astronomical and earthly kinds of bodies in the universe. He noted each has a distinct glory (15:40, 41). And since God has created such a glorious diversity in the universe, He can be trusted to provide glorious resurrection bodies for His people.

At the resurrection, a believer's dead body will come out of the grave in a glorified state. It will no longer experience the corruption it underwent in the grave; it will be incorruptible forever (15:42, 43). It will be a spiritual body that is fit for use in eternity (15:44).

Drawing from Biblical history, Paul told the Corinthians that Adam became the head of the natural human race. Since the Fall, his sinful tendencies characterize his descendants. Adam's sin became our sin. Then came the last Adam (15:45), Christ. All who trust in Christ become a new spiritual race under Christ's headship. The natural preceded the spiritual for all of us believers. So in the resurrection the change is from the lower, natural order to the higher, spiritual order. We have a natural body, but in the resurrection, we will have a spiritual body like Christ since His resurrection.

When will Christians receive new, glorified, spiritual bodies and inherit the kingdom of God (15:50)? Paul associated the time with the Rapture. He presented this truth as a new disclosure, a mystery (15:51a). Christians alive on the earth when Christ returns to rapture believers will not experience death but will undergo a dramatic transformation (15:51b). Instantaneously at Christ's command, the bodies of dead Christians will arise and become incapable of decaying again, and the bodies of living Christians will be changed to become incapable of dying.

Regarding the last trump in 15:52, Roman soldiers were accustomed to hearing three trumpet signals. The first summoned them to break camp; the second, to fall into line for the march; and the third, to march away. At the Rapture, we will break camp with this life, join resurrected Christians, and depart from the earth to be with Christ in Heaven.

Because the resurrection of Christ assures our resurrection, we need not fear death. When we are resurrected, we will leave death behind (15:54). From our perspective, death is like a defanged snake and the grave resembles a prison with its doors removed (15:55). He removed sin's sentence from us and fulfilled the law's demand on our behalf (15:56). Our response is one of thanks to the Lord Jesus Christ for procuring the victory over sin and death for us (15:57). Indeed, we enjoy a full and bright hope because Jesus arose from the grave.

### 3. Christ resurrection encourages diligence (15:58)

Paul encouraged his readers to maintain a steadfast perseverance. It was time they put aside their petty differences and joined together in faithful Christian service. They had a big job ahead of them. According to verse 58, the job required being stedfast (having a fixed goal), unmoveable (unswerving from the faith), and always abounding in the work of the Lord (remaining diligent in ministry).

Paul assured the Corinthians their labour is not in vain in the Lord (15:58b). Neither is ours. By His power, we will make an impact on our community and even upon the world. Then, when we see Him face to face, He will reward us. Let's keep our eyes on that goal!

Slide 34 – watch/listen to chapter 16

Slide 35

## Chapter 16 – Church Stewardship

Summary: Every member of a church should view his life as a stewardship privilege and responsibility. He ought to submit his money, time, and efforts to God, trusting God to use them for His glory. Every believer is responsible to get out there and participate as a good steward of Christ.

### 1. Stewardship of money (16:1-4)

The Christians in Jerusalem had fallen upon hard times. They were poverty stricken and persecuted. So, Paul launched a fund drive for them and wrote to the Corinthian church to take up a love offering. The collection was to be built by offerings given upon the first day of the week (16:2). By following this procedure, the Corinthian Christians would avoid the necessity of taking a last-minute offering when Paul arrived (16:2b). This disciplined pattern of giving shows us how to give. We ought to give regularly to support the Lord's work.

No Christian is exempt from the privilege and responsibility of giving to the Lord's work. Paul told the Corinthian church, Let every one of you lay by him in store (16:2). If anyone considers himself too poor to give, he should consider the condition of the poor widow who dropped all she had into the temple treasury. Jesus did not say she was too poor to give, but rather commended her.

The Lord is more concerned about our motive for giving than the amount of our gifts. 2 Corinthians 8 indicates that we should give not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. Giving reveals our gratitude to the Lord for His blessings (2 Cor. 8:7), and it measures our love (16:24).

Paul set high standards for how church funds should be collected, handled, distributed, and accounted for (16:3, 4). He wanted to make sure that handling offering money would not disgrace his ministry. Like Paul, a church ought to be wise in its practice of collecting and disbursing the freewill offerings of a church. The members ought to adopt a budget, share the responsibility of meeting it, and select responsible and highly respected individuals to handle the offerings. Keeping detailed records, and reported regularly to the church, will safeguard not only the money but also the reputations of those who handle it.

### 2. Stewardship of opportunities (16:5-9)

Paul hoped to visit Corinth and spend the winter there. He submitted the matter to the Lord's will (16:7b). Until Pentecost, however, he planned to stay at Ephesus (16:8). He recognized the Lord had given him a wide-open door of ministry at Ephesus, which was where he was when he wrote this letter. He wanted to act as a wise steward of the opportunity (16:9a).

Paul understood that opportunity is one of the great spiritual treasures God gives us. Every opportunity offers the possibility to accomplish something of eternal value, so Paul approached every open door as a new adventure with the Lord.

Paul also knew that in God's economy every opportunity is part of the stewardship for which we shall give account to God (Rom. 14:12). With a vision of the awaiting Judgment Seat of Christ clear in his mind, Paul did not want to miss, lose, or waste even one opportunity (9:24-27).

Like Paul, every believer receives opportunities to minister for the Lord. An opportunity may be as close as next door, where a spiritually hungry neighbor resides. It may be a Sunday School classroom, where a teaching ministry is available. It may be an opportunity to show kindness or an opportunity for personal spiritual growth. A wise believer will seize the open door and rely upon God to accomplish His will in it.

Churches also have many opportunities for ministry. A church characterized by good stewardship will grab hold of such opportunities under the direction of the Spirit. There is a harsh reality to the issue of opportunity, however, and that is when an opportunity is lost, it may be gone forever.

Paul knew well that the Devil opposes believers who seize opportunities for serving the Lord. As every spiritual leader can attest, there is constant opposition to any attempt at making progress in Christian life and ministry. There will always be enemies of the gospel, naysayers, hindrances, and obstacles. But these must never become excuses for failing to attempt something spiritual for God.

We can expect the Devil to oppose us when we step through doors of opportunity that the Lord has placed before us. Paul wrote this epistle from Ephesus, as he was waiting there until Pentecost, because he had a great opportunity opened to him there. Paul stayed as long as he was able to get churches established. He also focused on training men who would then take over the work and continue it as he moved on.

### 3. Stewardship of testimony (16:10-24)

#### A. Paul's commendations (16:10–18)

Foremost among Paul's group of disciples and workers was Timothy, with whom he shared a lasting bond (cf. 2 Tim. 2:2). Let no man therefore despise him, Paul told the Corinthians (16:11). Though Timothy was relatively young in years, he was spiritually mature and a great resource for the Corinthian church.

Apollos, who's following in the Corinthian church was significant (cf. 1:12), decided not to go to Corinth despite Paul's counsel. God had apparently opened other doors for Apollos. And perhaps Apollos wanted to avoid stirring up the divisions that the Corinthian believers had formed.

Paul interrupted his commendations to give a brief but powerful admonition. He commanded the Corinthians to watch . . . stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong (16:13). He wanted the church to obey his instructions and to do so with love (16:14).

Finally, Paul was thankful that Stephanas (1:16), Fortunatus, and Achaicus came to Ephesus to help him. They refreshed his spirit in the Lord.

## B. Paul's conclusion (16:19-24)

Paul was joined by a host of believers in greeting the Corinthian church. He named Aquila and Priscilla, a husband-and-wife team of Christian servants who had opened their home in Ephesus as a place where Christians worshiped and fellowshiped (16:19).

This godly couple, originally from Rome, had left Rome when Emperor Claudius ordered the expulsion of Jews from the city. Next, they settled in Corinth, where Paul first met them and resided with them (Acts 18:2). Later, they moved to Ephesus, where they joined Paul here in conveying their goodwill back to Corinth. Finally, after the death of Claudius, they moved back to Rome (Rom. 16:3). Aquila and Priscilla maintained an outstanding testimony wherever they lived. Their example ought to inspire Christian couples today to devote their hearts and homes to the Lord.

All the Christians at Ephesus sent greetings to the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 16:20a). The bonds of Christian love spanned the many miles between the two communities and underscored the truth that Christians are one in Christ.

Greet ye one another with an holy kiss, Paul told the Corinthians (16:20b). Today, a handshake is the cultural equivalent to the Corinthians' holy kiss, which merely signified friendship. The Corinthians had alienated and avoided one another. They had quarreled over leadership and practices. It was time for them to show appropriate affection to one another.

The matters contained in the Corinthian letter were so important that Paul signed his name to it (16:21). No one could dispute the letter's authority when they saw his name affixed to it.

Finally, Paul closed the letter with a warning and a benediction. The Christians were to consider anyone who does not love the Lord Jesus Christ as "anathema (cursed) maranatha (at Christ's coming)". Paul was anticipating the Lord's return for believers and His judgment on the enemies of the gospel at His coming.

First Corinthians closes on a bright, positive note. The Corinthians needed help from the Lord to work through their problems. So, Paul prayed, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you (16:23). Also, the Corinthians needed to know that Paul loved them despite the serious tone of his letter, so he wrote as his final words in 1 Corinthians, My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen (16:24).

Slide 36

And so ends the first epistle of Paul to the Corinthians....

This page is intentionally left blank