



So much is misunderstood by believers regarding their standing “in Christ” that they often look on the challenges and regular temptations in life from the wrong perspective. The church at Corinth was such an example of a group of believers that had allowed their natural tendencies to dictate their priorities and overall life direction. This had a direct impact on the local church shortly after Paul had left when the initial church had been established. The account of Paul’s first visit to Corinth is in Acts 18 where he worked for a year and a half getting the church established “...teaching the word of God among them.” After leaving for Ephesus, it appears that it did not take long for issues to arise in the church to which Paul sent a letter. This letter we do not have (mentioned in I Cor. 5:9) but later Paul received news of disension in the church and also questions they had for him to address. These issues provide us with several practical matters that we face as churches and individuals to this day. It is interesting to note that Paul begins this letter by clarifying their position as “saints by calling” because they had been “sanctified in Christ Jesus”. This will be the starting point for us as well as we must face the same types of challenges, realizing the essential realization we are to have of who we really are before God in Christ.

The city of Corinth was known for its prevalent and extreme immorality. This was so much the case that the term “corinthianize” was coined to indicate an immoral or indecent person. Sexual immorality was not only stressed, but was part of the city’s religious practices (seen in their temple prostitutes sent out nightly). It was a popular city of trade and business with intellectual and religious influences from several surrounding and distant regions. It would be in the midst of this perverse and materialistic society that God would plant a church, His church. The original congregation would not be made of “seasoned believers” but would generally be those whose lives had been given to the societal norms of immoral and perverse lifestyles and world views (I Cor. 6:9-11). The others that made up this congregation would be converted Jews and others given over to an undue emphasis on knowledge and clever oratory (a fixation on learning and the appearance of learning, but not necessarily learning the truth).

Much of what we will cover in this study will hit us “close to home”. Issues such as misdirected religious quarrels, self-will, unaddressed sinful allowances, moral purity, marital issues, selfishness and assurance will be dealt with at length. As with all Scripture, we must come at this with a heart and mind poised to submit and obey, realizing our ongoing need to have our pride kept in-check and our perspectives on life refocused.

I. An Introduction to Saints - 1:1-3

A. It is important to recognize that Paul begins his exhortation to this church suffering with “sin issues” with the clarification of their identity in Christ (which is assumed and not explained) as “saints by calling”

1. As will be discussed further, who we really are is at the core of dealing with the inconsistencies of sin in our lives (they are inconsistencies because they are not in harmony with who we really are)

As Paul so specifically deals with in Romans 6-7, sin is not “who we are” and is seen as an intruder “warring in my members”

- a. If we primarily see ourselves as “sinners” who happened to have been saved from the ultimate judgment of sin, then we are missing the most significant part of our true identity
- b. What I see myself to be will directly impact what I see myself obligated to answer to - if a “sinner” then I expect sin to be a normal part of my life and do not see it as too “odd” in my daily practice; if I am truly a “saint” then sin is seen as the oddity it is and I do not expect it to be (nor do I plan on it being) a regular part of my daily focus
- c. The Corinthians would need to see who they truly are first, so as to see the distinct contradiction of sin being practiced and treated as normal in their midst

2. This acknowledgment of their identity is not some psychological trick, but is a clarification of their identity provided by one with the authority to say it - an “apostle of Jesus Christ”

Paul was certain of his calling by the Lord but, as seen in several places in his writings, he was constantly defending this calling because there were those seeking to discredit him - if he could be discredited, it would be assumed his message could be as well

- a. It really is who we are! - this is based off what Paul begins with - as he will stress later in this epistle as well as others, he was truly an apostle “by the will of God”
- b. This is important credentials lending the true authority to what is about to be written - the same is true with us realizing the authority of the message is not in us but in the source
 - This is important since if we see ourselves as the authority, we might change our minds when things get difficult

An apostle's authority was never of themselves - they were "sent out ones" to do the Lord's bidding

Paul was "called" to be an apostle, they were called to be "saints" - vs. 2

Seeking out the "opinion" (will) of God in what we pursue will impact what we value and why we value it - if this is not set in God, our values will change with that of society

see Gal. 6:10 - we do "good" to all especially those of the "household of faith"

"church" being ἐκκλησία meaning "called out ones" or "congregation"

This focusing is in constant need of adjustment/correction

read also Jude 1:1

This is key for the Corinthians to understand if they are to effectively deal with the "carnal" issues they were being confronted with

"...here God begins His work... and brings it to completion little by little." Calvin

Even when disagreeing with other churches, we are fighting ideas not each other

- c. The literal rendering would be "a called apostle" - the idea behind the word for "apostle" is that of one with the responsibility to go out giving the judgements of the higher authority - theirs was a responsibility of declaring accurately and clearly what they had been given to declare
3. In a few words Paul answers the ongoing issues of the ages related with "entire sanctification" and the extreme opposite of "license to sin" - first, the group called "saints" are the same ones he must deal with sins, and in dealing with their sinful inconsistencies he clearly proves that positional sanctification does not excuse or justify in any way a life characterized by sinful practices
4. Paul was who he was "by the will of God" - this is in contrast to his own will or by the will of man - few could have stated that their earthly position was known to be the will of God because He had told them
 - a. As to be discussed later in this study, Paul clarified further that he was what he was "by the grace of God" and not because of his credentials - I Cor. 15:9-10
 - b. He had previously persecuted the "church of God" and would not have had an initial reputation that would have endeared him to most believers
 - c. Accepting our "lot in life" (His calling and using of us) as God's will is important so as to not fall prey to the rankings of God's service defined by men - this was significant in a society such as Corinth where many would have found their "worth" in the opinions of people
- B. He was joined in this by "Sosthenes our brother" - Sosthenes, as we read in Acts 18:17, was the leader in the synagogue in Corinth who had been beaten after the failed attempt to convict Paul of a crime - it is likely he was beaten because they did not get the resulting judgment against Paul that they hoped - so, two synagogue leaders had come to Christ and now Sosthenes stands with all Paul was about to write - some speculate that this may not be the Sosthenes of Acts 18 since it was a popular name
 1. As seen not just with Sosthenes but with Paul also, it is important for us not to try to discern the spiritual merits or authority of someone by their former lives (positive or negative)
 2. There is stronger belief that this is Sosthenes of Acts 18 because of the definite article in the greek making it "Sosthenes the brother"
 - a. It is easy for us having heard "Christian" terms so often that they lose significance, but the term "brother" (Σωσθένης ὁ ἀδελφός) is an endearing, family term
 - b. The significance of being family is important to the church at large. but essential to the local church to understand in forming a proper "bias" in this world
- C. The true identity that must remain "in-focus" throughout life - vs. 2
 1. At the highest level, they were "the church of God" that happened to be in Corinth
 - a. These "called out ones" were so of God's calling - there will be innumerable "groupings" (assemblies) of people made so by all sorts of temporal, ideological reasons but none must be seen as equal to (certainly not higher) than this (being the church), our truest identity
 - b. As stressed throughout the New Testament, we are called **OUT** from what we would normally see as our earthly purpose, and **TO** one of eternal significance
 2. As a group and now, as individuals, they are "sanctified" in Christ Jesus - this phrase, which has become common, has lost its significance to many professing believers - yet it completely defines us!
 - a. This clearly identifies us as those set apart (consecrated) and that by being "in Christ Jesus"
 - b. As discussed previously, how we see ourselves (what we know ourselves to be) has an overriding control in our daily priorities - we are the ones "called out" of the world to be "in Christ"
 - c. "Saints by calling" or "called to be saints" - it has been well noted that "Holiness is received, not achieved" (Conzelmann) and in clarifying the harmony of what we are to labor for in being holy versus what was won for us by Christ, Thiselton in his commentary in I Corinthians writes, "...just as Joshua was called to "possess" the land because he already "possessed" it as a divine gift (Josh. 1:11-12), so believers are *called* to a lifestyle which reflects their already given status. Hence the theological and ethical make contact in this phrase in 1:2."
 - d. And, we're not alone, but are in this journey with all "who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours" - this is a unique phrase of unity, uniting local churches (believers) with the entirety of the Church - each local body cannot see itself as if an island to itself, but must be aware of all true believers throughout the world (and even in Heaven)
 3. We are then all characterized as those who "call upon the name of the Lord" carrying the idea of invoking His name as our authority and the with whom we identify and also that we are at His disposal for whatever He sees fit to do with us

D. A standard greeting full of meaning - vs. 3

1. "Grace and peace to you..." - "χάρις" is in contrast to a traditional word which expressed the idea of rejoicing (as we might communicate that we hope all is well with someone) and this different term carries the idea of not just "favor", but the undeserved favor of God

It is from God as He willed it and from the Lord Jesus Christ in that He won it

- a. Because of the grace, it naturally follows that there is then true peace (a quietness) of mind
- b. It seems polite to wish others well and that they be at peace, but as will be indicated throughout this letter, this peace is firmly founded in the grace of God by means of Christ

2. As it is for us also, the Corinthians needed to live each day in the constant awareness of their dependence on the grace of God for a life of true peace in the midst of life's troubles

It needs to be clear to us that where there is the awareness of God's grace there is peace

- a. "The condition is constant and essential, the feeling may or may not always be present. The condition is to be our fixed possession, and this fact will assure us that, when the feeling fluctuates and at times sinks very low, it will revive to greater strength." - Lenski
- b. The opposite is also dealt with in this letter - pride, "self-ness" and the numerous religious alternatives will all detract from the peace we are to live by being in Christ (they distract us)

II. Taking Inventory of the Grace Given - vs. 4-9

A. Before being challenged, the Corinthians are given encouragement in what they have already - vs. 4

1. These "graces" are reviewed before the challenges come - it can be overwhelmingly fatiguing when we face challenges and see our "stores" empty or lacking (in comparison)

All gifts are from (because of) God's grace (His favor) and this is only through Christ - No Christ, no favor, no favor, no gifts!

- a. Paul expresses his gratefulness for what they have but these "graces" are mentioned in passives (stressing their gratuitous nature) - they have what they have because they were given
- b. There will be more resolve to press on when weaknesses and other areas lacking are seen in light of the resources/tools that God has provided ("lavished on us" as in Eph. 1:7-8)

2. As with any parent or spiritual leader/guide, the only source for ongoing encouragement in the face of upcoming challenges and present weaknesses is the grace given - to fret and worry will not accomplish or change anything, and places too much attention on our desire to control circumstances

B. Because this grace "was given," you were "enriched" in everything, not lacking - vs. 5-8

1. This "everything" carrying the common idea throughout the New Testament of "all kinds" - it, as so often used, is "qualitative not quantitative" - the idea is that "you've been given so much in so many ways" especially in the areas of "speech" and "knowledge" - vs. 5

So often the issue is not so much the absence of useful information and teaching as their is the lack of using (obeying, doing) what has been learned

- a. They were richly graced with all sorts of "words" (literally) - much is contained in this phrase and encompasses not only being gifted in relation to speaking (oratory, abundance of teachers and teachings) but that they were so blessed especially in the areas of what they had been taught by Paul, Apollos and others (sometimes abundance lessens our appreciation)

Many good speakers and teachers have nothing truly good to teach and speak about - talent does not guarantee success as much as the substance of what is actually said does - delivery of the words must not outrank the words themselves

- b. They were also enriched with much learning (γνώσει) - they had many resources for learning and they were good learners of truth - yet it must be understood that the truly gifted learners aren't those driven by what they know as much as they are driven to learn and know more - the best learner knows they have a lot to learn! (and they take steps not to forget and neglect)
- c. And, above all this the "testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you" - again, it is in the passive (was confirmed in you) - it (the assuring "witness" as one would testify to something being fact in a court of Law) made them sure of Christ (this described the inner working of true faith, having a conviction of what they had learned - they were made sure of it)

But this is often lost when worldly priorities become the bulk of our focus and we "talk" our selves out of it

- (1). Not only did they have confidence, but the object of their confidence was reliable (many have a misguided and uniformed confidence not having been "graced" as these were)
- (2). The idea of "confirmed" also carried the idea of building and establishing a community - not only was the "testimony" of Christ built-up within them but they as a group were built-up around it - it united them in belief and purpose

2. With all these "graces" having been given, they were not lacking in any "gift" - vs. 6 - 7

Many have blamed what they were taught or how it was taught for their decisions to turn to error (lies) - Paul takes this away at the start

- a. When confronted with their needs for obedience and change, they could not appeal to a stance that they were not taught or given enough - many will attempt to use this "excuse" to try to justify their curiosity to learn and explore areas they should not
- b. It is shameful when we seek to blame God for our bad decisions as though He somehow let us down or left out something we needed - many have attempted to explain their sins on some self-conceived idea of a "God-error" (as with Adam, "The woman YOU gave me")

Understanding the source of such gifts and their nature/ purpose they are clearly not intended to stir within us pride

- c. So the challenges to come cannot be skirted with an idea that somehow they have not been given enough to fulfill their responsibilities (callings) - we must be alert to the awareness that what God calls us to (brings us to) we are not lacking any gifting for it - the word for "gift" here is "χαρίσματος" having its root in χάρις the word for grace (God's gracious gifts of enablement to do what He has called us to do) - we cannot do our "calling" or do it right without them!
- d. So, they were assured that they had not nor would they "come short" of what they needed

3. If we know we have what we need, we "eagerly" wait for the Lord's coming - vs. 7-8

- a. This is our prime motivation in staying with the tasks (at hand) given us by God - it pictures one trying to get in as much as possible before the end comes
- b. It is far too easy to become so distracted with the "cares of this life" that we fail to live day-by-day in the realized anticipation of this day coming - this specific day (the "revelation") is when He comes again and is seen and known by all for what and Who He is
- c. Not only do we live in anticipation of it because the Truth of all life will be revealed to all (to the doubters, antagonists, skeptics and the fearful), but we are excited for it because we have nothing to fear being in Christ "Who will confirm you to the end blameless..." - this is encouraging to all believers but especially to those who see themselves "too far behind" in their sin/inconsistencies to try anything for God

see Php. 2:10 as well as Isa. 45:20-25

It is key to note that the "testimony of Christ" is confirmed in us (passive) and we will be "confirmed blameless" by Christ in the end

And, based upon what Christ has done and will do for us, we are without excuse in the neglect of duty - see also II Pet. 3:11

4. Because of Christ, each one in Him will be confirmed as "unaccusable" before the greatest judge of all - vs. 8

This is judicial terminology describing the reality that whatever might have been brought in against them will literally "not be called in" (Rom. 8:33-34)- this is to motivate to the freedom to do our calling versus the "freedom" to live as we might desire (sensually - living for the senses)

- a. The underlying word for "blameless" is also translated "unimpeachable" (cannot be openly or privately charged with misconduct before any judge)
- b. This "day of the Lord" is a phrase used of the anticipated dreadful day of judgement in the Old Testament yet now, when suffixed with "Jesus Christ," it has a motivating result
- c. It is on this day, because of and through Christ, we will be "confirmed" (strengthened (prepared) for and established) when, as in the truest of judgements, all things are "made right" - ironically, our being "made right" is our true position in Christ being seen (revealed) for what it truly is
- d. This is also one of the clearest phrases that could have been used to indicate "preservation of the saints" (in answer to how we will remain faithful "to the end")

C. God is faithful - vs. 9

1. In light of what we just discussed, this point is essential to realize - how is it any will be "strong to the end" and stay focused as we ought? We know instinctively that it cannot be because of ourselves, but must be dependent upon something/someone truly reliable - see also I Cor. 10:6-13; II Thes. 3:1-5

see Php. 1:6-11

The realization of God's faithfulness stirs us to act not neglect - to see it any other way is to demonstrate a significant flaw in character and integrity and most likely an absence of being in Christ altogether - Rom. 2:4

- a. This is all laying the foundation from which the Corinthians will work - they are shown the work and working of God (through Christ) before they are challenged with what they are to be doing, and how they are to be living in light of it - the solid "footing" on which to stand!
- b. The understanding that "God is faithful" is fundamental to our outlook in our Christian walk - when frustrated by sinful contradictions, we look to His faithfulness over ours to have hope for strength and our own faithfulness - see also Eph. 3:14-21 (He's not limited to our imagination)

2. And this is the one (God) through whom we were "called into fellowship with His son"

read Gal. 2:20

- a. We are not just called to be "saved" from judgment, we are called to be literally a "stakeholder" with His Son - we are now not just recipients of the blessings, but fellow "investors" having been given the "riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:7) - we "share in the life of His son" now
- b. As true to the idea of the word for "fellowship" (κοινωνία) this is our identity - He is the One with Whom we now identify ourselves - this will be important for them to understand since it is usually the loss of identifying our true "community in Christ" which leads to unnecessary divisions in the church (especially the local church) which is about to be discussed
- c. His faithfulness (unchanging consistency) prompts us to consistency, and our prodding on each other to be faithful as well - see Heb. 10:23-24

3. Our focus then is set sharply on the faithfulness of God - the underlying word for faithful (πιστός) indicating God's trustworthiness (He is the One to be trusted with our being "confirmed blameless"), His responsibility in the processes making it happen, and ironically, His belief/confidence that it will take place (He knowing who He is and what He is able to do)

His faithfulness is even more impressive realizing what He works with; us!

III. The Exhortation that They Agree to Agree - 1:10-17

A. With verse 10, we come to a key verse in the entire epistle which not only reveals a key issue to be addressed throughout the letter, but also sets the underlying motive for what will be discussed - vs. 10

1. After expressing what he was thankful for (to God), he now begins the challenges - they, knowing what they had been actually given, and its value, can face these challenges with confident resolve
2. The term for "exhort" is a term picturing not just a challenge, but a personal challenge (as one would call someone close to them to strongly encourage them) - thus the term "brethren" (someone close)

This helping us more carefully interpret the following verses regarding what is meant with Paul's discouraging their slogans of "being of" someone

- a. Paul will come to a point in this letter where he must defend his apostolic authority, but in dealing with the issues at the beginning, he appeals "by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ"
- b. It is interesting to note, realizing he is discouraging factions and "parties" among them as a local body of believers, he will later use the same term "exhort" (same underlying Greek word) for them to follow him (see I Cor. 4:16)

3. Seeing Christ has been so exalted in the opening statements, Paul keeps their focus on Him and His authority over his own in his upcoming challenge - we must be reminded of the "First Cause"

No doubt, many have justified their disobedience to what they should do because they "sense" a flaw in someone offering guidance from God's Word

- a. So, "by means of Christ," by "His authority," in keeping with whatever should be invoked or should be in harmony with "His name," follow these instructions as from Him
- b. It is essential to our obedience that we are able to see past the human "tools" God uses to direct, instruct and correct us - we are often guilty of reading into the motives of those that God has placed in our lives to lead us and reason around submitting (to God) as we ought
 - Truly, one of the great mysteries of God is His ability to use imperfect tools to bring or work-out (precisely) His perfect plan!

4. The first part of the instruction is to "all agree," which is also translated "speak the same thing"

More than simple unity, but unity on what we "say" as a group

- a. It is preferable to indicate "speaking" the same seeing the phrase is αὐτὸ λέγητε πάντες (the same thing ye may all say (YLT)) - this is part of the reasons for doctrinal statements
- b. The idea is agreement on where you stand and why you stand *there*
- c. All with the objective to have no "divisions" (tears/rifts), but instead be "made complete" or mended/fitted together (as if the opposite of a rift) - one of the causes and results of their disunity is about to be discussed and dealt with
- d. This pursuit of unity ending in the "same mind" and the "same judgment" (or, of the same "mind-set" (same way of thinking) and the same "consent" and agreement) - with these two in place, we will all "say the same thing" about life purpose, priorities and thus life-focus - all these, for us, stemming from our submissive unity around and from the Scripture

Again, this is not purposeless unity or unity for unity's sake but it is a unity around something - many splits have occurred through factitious pursuits of unity

see I Cor. 2:12-16

- e. Significant individuality is never to be our goal - Christ is preeminent in our lives

B. The report of quarrels, divisions forming and ultimately, "discords" in the church at Corinth - vs. 11-12

1. The concept of unity in a church, marriage, family or any group is more important than we might think

Maturity is seen in a responsible approach to a solution: immaturity is often seen in avoiding attempts at facing and addressing issues that arise that should be faced

- a. False/pseudo unity will still have divisions in it, just hidden and therefore undealt with
- b. Open discords must not be seen as common companions in life (though they may seem to be) but should be evidences of issues that *must* be dealt with - as Paul is about to illustrate, conflicts need to be addressed for what they really are, and to promote the right responses
- c. Factions within a church "family" are extra painful as they are in our natural families - we are more vulnerable emotionally, thus are apt to overreact

2. Paul had been informed by some of "Chloe's people" - vs. 11

Paul seems to clearly believe this report and uses it as the basis for his initial response

- a. We are unsure of who she was, though since it is a woman's name and she "had people" it is believed she was a well-to-do person associated with the church and that some of her servants were the ones reporting what they had seen in Corinth to Paul
- b. The concept of quarrels in the church was one always treated with great seriousness - it has become commonplace in the church but this should not be the case - In I Cor. 3:1-4 it is evidence of their "carnality" (controlled more by their natural impulses than by the spiritual) - later, Paul would dread the possibility that these conflicts had not changed (II Cor. 12:20) - In Gal. 5:15 Paul warned of the end result of not correcting this (being "consumed by one another") - the objective then being that the standard is that "all things are to be done without grumbling or disputing" (Php. 2:14) - one of the causes of these types of disputes in the church is warned of by Paul to Timothy in I Tim. 6:3-6 (advocating a differing "doctrine" not one that is "sound," "of our Lord Jesus Christ" and not "conforming to godliness")

It is important to note that Paul addresses them as "my brethren" and not as one "lording it" over them - he comes to them with sincere concern for their well-being and not to just rebuke them

We may not appreciate these “brave souls” but their service can be invaluable - we face many issues we should because we are forced into them!

- c. One more note to consider; sometimes the best friends we have are those that will “inform on us” to those who would be a help to us (versus gossip, when information (secrets) are shared to others who don’t play a legitimate part in a possible solution)
- d. This issue had apparently been left out of the letter they had sent him with their questions and concerns (I Cor. 7:1) and it just happened to be passed onto Paul - it may not have seemed important to them, but Paul does not get to their points until chapter 7

C. The “sloganeering” of the church - vs. 12-13

1. “Now I mean this...” - how have these wranglings evidenced themselves? (they may not have seen this type of speaking and “positioning” themselves as a problem)

It may be, based on the usage of “each” that it had become so common in their church to differentiate themselves that everyone practiced it

- a. “Each” was characterized by saying “I am of...” followed by a name, and the intent was to distinguish themselves from each other based mainly on “personalities” (“celebrities”)
- b. Each had their “slogan” by which they were identifying themselves rather than seeing themselves and uniting with each other in who they were in Christ
- c. They had come to identify themselves as unique from each other by the one they claimed to follow - they had become a celebrity-minded church - it was no longer their stand with the Gospel as much as it was their stand with a personality

2. Much has been written on trying to figure out the characteristics of each group based upon what is known by each person named, but since this is not explained, these particular points were not the issue at hand (also, it is apparent that those named did not sanction these divisions) - vs. 12

It may also indicate that this particular group stood against having teachers/preachers altogether

It has become commonly accepted to identify ourselves theologically by the names of men which may have merit at its intent, but has been seen to elevate these men above measure - some are called “divines” and are often sought out above Scripture itself - this is not healthy!

- a. Based upon I Cor. 3:4-9, it is clear Paul stood against their identifying with people over against WHO and WHAT they are in Christ versus the wisdoms, personalities, teaching styles of these men (Paul Apollos and Peter (Cephas))
- b. As to the group identifying themselves as “of Christ,” we can conclude at least two things: Paul did not seem to agree with them, seeing that either they identify with Christ in this way to separate themselves from “the brethren” (which was the issue) and/or they were claiming a special relationship with Christ and received what they learned straight from Him and not with these other men (the other groups no doubt thought they were following Christ also)
- c. As will be starkly displayed in verse 13, no man should be exalted in the way they were doing - yet we see the same in our day and the professing church at large seems to encourage its practice - any true servant of God, used to teach God’s Word, never desires to be the object of attention seeing, “...neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.” I Cor. 3:7 (it’s easy to focus on the seeable over the unseen)
- d. This practice was being used to pit fellow believers against each other and to portray a divided “front” for “the cause” and against any enemy

When our Lord is not truly magnified above all else (even the best of our teachers who were used to bring us to Him) there will be misplaced focuses and priorities

If the messenger for the King becomes the “object” of the hearers faith over the King, something has gone dreadfully wrong

Paul is dealing with himself in these questions since, to make his point with himself will make it with the others)

We never want to be any part of any movement or practice which seeks to draw men to a man!

3. Paul gives piercing rhetorical questions to demonstrate the folly of such a practice - vs. 13

- a. “Is Christ divided?” - is this the real state of Christ’s body (the Church)? - the natural way to take this question is to see it as the Body being divided (apportioned) into differing parts and trying to accomplish the same goal (this may be part of it but it is more likely that it is more than this)
- b. This is really asking something like this - Do you really see it that Christ is one among the many? Can He ever be seen as an option to be chosen amongst other men?
- c. This then makes it even more clear why Paul then asks the question, “Paul was not crucified for you was he?” - these questions are designed to demonstrate the absurdity of their stances when brought to their logical conclusions - even though many may not have meant this when standing with their favorite Christian personality, it is what it leads to
- d. Of course Paul was not crucified for them! He told them of Christ and, as Paul himself declared that even the feet of the one who brings good news seem beautiful, they do not outshine the “causer” of the Good News itself - see Rom. 10:15
- e. Then, “were you baptized in the name of Paul?” - “To be ‘baptized into the name of someone’ means that the baptisand has turned over allegiance, has given himself/herself, to the one named in the rite.” Gordon Fee - This may have been a big issue in itself seeing that Paul goes on to distance himself from the numbers he baptized as if baptizers did so to accumulate followers and disciples to themselves inducing various forms of competitions in the Church
- f. So, they truly are “of Christ” but never over and against each other! - Our Lord mentioned “.. if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” John 12:32

D. "That the cross of Christ would not be made void" - vs. 14-17

1. There was in the church at Corinth the desire to somehow be "connected" to a well-known name in the church at large so as to somehow gain a higher status

Just as the baptizer became a wrongful point of focus, so also can the method become overdone - Baptism is demonstrated elsewhere throughout the NT and it's purpose should be stressed more than its ceremony!

- Apparently, who baptized "you" became a status symbol as well - this, as has happened in other ways as well, took away from the significance of what baptism really is
- Baptism itself was not belittled by Paul (since he demonstrates he did baptize some whom he names) but he down-plays his part in it
- As it is (or should be) with any ministry, "Ministry remains a shared partnership, and points away from itself to that which it bears witness." Thiselton
- A spirit of competition in the church family is not healthy - we "run the race" not to beat the other runners (in our case), but to please the "Judge" over the race (of life) - Heb. 12:1-2

see also II Cor. 10:12-18

2. Paul was, in a sense, relieved that he had baptized so few so as not to have been an unwilling contributor to this divisiveness in the church - vs. 14-16

The focus must remain on the message, not allowing ceremony or methodology to become the goal itself - it would be like the packaging of a product replacing the product itself - it was supposed to be used to deliver it but instead is allowed to replace it

- There is often a temptation to "join fights" especially if our name is "invoked," but it is important that we not "answer a matter before we hear it" (Pr. 18:13) - sometimes the best answer to a potential debate is distracting from it to something more important
- Paul literally thanks God that he did not baptize many, as if to indicate God's making this the case so that he could say what he is now saying (in helping downplay his role in their baptisms but not downplaying baptism itself)
- One of the key points in these verses is to understand that if the "rite" of baptism itself and the "wisdom" (or cleverness) of what we say and how we say it becomes "the point" (more than the Gospel itself) it is wrong - ministry is a necessary tool, but ministry must not become the goal
 - Many "ministries" become entities to themselves, losing site of their original purpose
- The same goes with any "minister" - Paul did not want anyone, ever, to consider themselves as being "baptized in my name" - there is no "efficacy" in the servant, only in the message given (and that because Who the message comes from) - it might be tempting, in the desire to protect others from false teachers or bad influences, to "win" others to ourselves (not the Lord)
- Paul then clarified in verse 16 that he did (just as he was writing this) remember his baptizing the household of Stephanas - he was being careful not to have an apparent trivial "error" become an unnecessary distraction (and it demonstrates its not being a priority in his thinking)

Compare with John the Baptist's response in John 3:25-30

These and other "distractions" can direct attention away from the Gospel, lending to it's being "made void"

3. Paul's objective to not detract from the "cross of Christ" - vs. 17

The same is described of the Lord in John 4:2

History is full of "smooth-talkers" who took the Scripture and distorted it, detracted from it and overshadowed it with their outstanding personalities and persuasive skills

Our pursuits of creativity with the "preaching of the Gospel" will only take away its true power and influence and will potentially make it palatable to those who should, in reality, reject it

The fear of man is a trap (snare) and those seeking the approval and acceptance of people over well-informed obedience to God are doomed to be trapped in it and truly "demoralized" by it - see Pr. 29:25

- "For Christ did not send me to baptize..." - because baptism was a result of what he was sent to do (declare the Gospel and make disciples - Mt. 28:19, Mk. 16:15) - the symbol of identity was never to be more sought than the identity itself with Christ
- His purpose was to literally "gospelize" - we see this accounted in Acts, but we also see its outworking in the epistles (the Gospel is not just the message of the Cross and redemption, but continues on to all that comes with it) - it's not just the "birth" but the growth also
- And this forthtelling of the Good News was not based upon or even associated with "cleverness of speech" (literally in the Greek "wisdom of words" (σοφία λόγου)) - this figurative wording includes the idea that somehow the message needed to be couched in the popular philosophy of the day as well as administered with ear-tickling oratory (see II Tim. 4:1-5)
- If the cross of Christ is to be so associated with and seemingly dependent on the cleverness of any age and popular appeal (along with "man-support"), it will result in the message of the cross and all that goes with it to be made empty, just as all the other human philosophies and religions (all having their time of glory only to be found facades, and empty containers letting-down their followers - the goal, whenever dealing with the Scriptures, is to see them for what they say and not seeking to add or take anything away to make them more appealing
- There has been some discussion over handling the phrase for "cleverness of speech" in that it just means "wisdom of words", but is more narrowed down by Paul's usage of these terms later in this chapter and later in the letter - Paul is about to contrast the wisdom of the world (and age) with that of God's wisdom
- There is often the temptation to change the Gospel Truth by either leaving out things or by altering them (even slightly) to appeal to the varying wisdoms of the day - but the pursuit to make something fit everything is to truly make it fit nothing at all!

IV. Identifying Between Wisdom and "Foolishness" - 1:18-25

A. The perception of "the word of the cross" by mankind without Christ - vs. 18

1. The "word of the cross" - it is the message of all that the cross involved (as will be covered more in this epistle) which would include a necessary sacrifice for sin, that being a vicarious sacrifice (in our stead) and that it was fully effective in dealing with the "sin issue" and all associated with it (pain, suffering, death)
 - a. This "word" of the cross is considered silly and absurd by those, as revealed in this verse, that are those who are in the state of perishing (thus, left unchanged will end "perished")
 - b. More will be explained as to why but it is interesting that Paul begins more by associating their end with their position before he describes their reasonings
 - c. It is their perspective of the "word of the cross" (as given in Scripture) that seems foolish and some, trying to be "Christian," "They see no sense in it. Some try to put sense in it: they add their own σοφία to this σταυρος, their "wisdom" to this "cross." After it is thus embellished, but in reality nullified, they are pleased with the gospel (as they still call it) and with the cross."
2. In contrast, to those of us "who are being saved" (in the state of "savedness" versus the state of "perdition" (judgment)), the word of the cross is the "power of God" - "being saved" is a passive participle versus the present middle, "perishing") - we being saved - it being done to us (outside ourselves) while those perishing are participating in the process

see all of II Thes. 2

Lenski

A bloody cross and crucified, shamed and cursed savior would truly be ridiculous in the eye of the uniformed (spiritually blind)

- a. The word for "power" does not necessarily having the idea of the industrial age (measurable energy), but more of the idea of enablement and ability
- b. As with Paul in Rom. 1:16, we are not ashamed of the Gospel because it is the "power of God to salvation" - by it we are saved and who would be ashamed of their means of being saved?
- c. So we need to realize, at the start, there will be two stark differences regarding the cross of Christ - to some it will appear senseless and embarrassing while to others (us) it is precious and lovely to dwell upon, realizing it's purpose and use

B. God already planned to work in such a way as to perplex the "worldly-wise" - vs. 19-20

1. This is quoted from Isaiah 29:14 and the context is very interesting, demonstrating that God will "deal wondrously" by confounding the wise - read Isa. 29:13-16
 - a. It appears that Paul is drawing their attention to these concepts to deal with their infatuation with the "wisdom of their age" and what their age thinks is wise and all that comes with such a pursuit (boastings, competitions and unnecessary divisions of pride) - see also Psa. 33:6-11
 - b. Playing off the same root word in the previous verse for "perishing" (being destroyed), he now reminds them of God's word to "destroy" the wisdom of the wise (bringing them to nought in their own wisdom - their "smarts" lend to their destruction)
 - c. Seeing "it was written," it is to be understood that God intended to work this way, fully realizing His wisdom would look foolish to the intellects of the wise of any age (without Christ)
 - d. This and other texts don't indicate that man's wisdom is useless and futile in and of itself but it is so when it leads one to disagree or question God - the truest "wisdom" is submissive to God's!

Compare with Jer. 8:8-9 and Job 5:13 (which is referenced in I Cor. 3:19)

To the simple, often those that are wise seem foolish and so it is the case with natural man - God's ways and thoughts are so above ours it seems nonsensical

2. Paul now asks questions from Isaiah with one addition to demonstrate that this **has** taken place - vs. 20

Where are these that thought they were wise above God or could act as His critic?

It is always in the perfect timing and when His opponents think themselves most strong, invincible and as having already won that God brings them down!

Just as so many warranty tags warn that the warranty is void if the seal is tampered with - so it is with the Gospel

A simpleton trivializes what is important and treats as important the trivial

- a. So, as if triumphant, he asks, "Where is the wise man?" (now) in light of what God has done in the cross - this is taken from Isa. 19:11-17 (and on) where God warns Egypt, reminding them of their past and the "wise counsellors" of Pharaoh
- b. The reference to the "scribe" is from one of the questions from Isa. 33:18, all of which questions are, almost in a mocking way, asking where are those that were to have taken inventory of the conquered Israel - and just as it was then, now Paul asks in light of the victory at the cross (all of which will be proven in this letter), where are those in opposition to God and His way that thought they would collect the "spoils" of His being found to be wrong?
- c. Then, to bring it up to his time, Paul asks, "Where is the debater of this age?" - where are the "naysayers" of our time, the one that felt they could argue with God? - he is making it clear that an infatuation with the wisdom of any age, pitted against God's, is futile and should not be a pursuit (nor should we seek to find a compromise by blending what we might see as the best of both) truly making it making the word of the cross "void"
- d. Seeing these are rhetorical questions the plain answer is given in a question, "Has not God made foolish (simple, insipid, tasteless) the wisdom of this world?" - This question will also be proven to be true in this letter and the next few verses

It cannot answer life's purpose and it can only offer, at best, temporary hope and temporary hope is not really hope at all!

- e. It may seem unclear as to why Paul does not hesitate to conclude that God made "foolish" the wisdom of the world until we realize the best the world's wisdom can offer - Where does it ultimately lead? Where will it end? We can be sure it will not answer the most important questions
- f. In light of what God has done in the cross, it is obvious the wise man of this age would never seek such success, such victory in such a humble, seemingly defeated way

C. The "foolishness" (madness) of God is wiser than the wisdom of men - vs. 21-25

1. For "in the wisdom of God" the world did not come to know God - vs. 21

As so many of the things and concepts worshipped and served (and sought for) in our society - and yet, at their end they offer emptiness so they are "strung together" with other ideologies to fill up one's limited time on this earth

- a. This is the biggest proof of all of the inferiority of the world's wisdom - it does not, nor can it lead us to "know God" (in Rom. 1 there is enough of the "wisdom of God" on display in all the creation, but mankind, in his wisdom, cannot use it to truly know Him)
- b. "A God discovered by human wisdom will be both a projection of human fallenness and a source of human pride.... The gods of the "wise" are seldom gracious to the undeserving, and they tend to make considerable demands on the ability of people to understand them..." Fee
- c. Another thought to consider regarding "in the wisdom of God" it (how all this works out) is the result of God's wisdom - this is the best way it could have been done!
- d. The result mentioned in this verse, to know God, is the ultimate of goals that is even seemingly lost to those in the Church - this is what we are after; this is the pinnacle of our existence - and since God cannot be fully known, it is the wisest of life pursuits to seek to know more of Him, about Him and the truly wise is wisest and most thrilled to ponder the reality of eternity to come where we will be able to continue this pursuit, never to exhaust its depths!

The world's wisdom is focused on this life and itself, priding itself in its apparent ability to fill-up lifetimes without God and His wisdom

So, it is the height of futility to alter the revelation of God to make it compatible with the wisdom of the world

- e. "The revelation was clear, but men, through their imbecility and perverseness, did not comprehend it. In the midst of the light they continued blind. The fault was in them, and not the revelation." Charles Hodge - compare with Mt. 11:25-30
- f. Instead, God was pleased to save those who believe, by means of the "message preached" which happens to be considered "absurd" by the worldly wise - not only is the message unreasonable, but the "believing" is as well, offering to most too high a risk - to the worldly wise who are religious, it is too risky to stake your eternal soul on the work of someone else (figuring more "insurance" is needed in varying works) and to the worldly-wise, who are secular, the risk is too high since it will take away from worldly fulfillments (depriving them of *potential* pleasures)

The core of the "message preached" is believing it ("it" being a way and an ideology contrary to human sense) thus provoking a startled response by the unbelieving

2. What is being sought by two factions of humanity versus what is being "preached" - vs. 22-23

True believing is not characterized by rejecting "reason" and intellect, but is more characterized by trusting the source of "reason" - this is a fundamental decision all must come to in their life - who/what will we trust to get our information

- a. Mankind falls into the two categories listed here, represented by "Jews and Greeks"
- b. As with the Jews of Paul's day, they "ask for signs," seeing demonstrations of power and the miraculous on which they would seek to anchor their idea of faith
- c. In contrast to these, there are the "Greeks" who search for "wisdom" (reason) - these need their "faith" to be anchored in "reasonable reason" (not seeing the flaw in the subjectiveness of their reasoning) - these are they needing (requiring) all their questions be answered to their own satisfaction before they would even begin to consent to "believe"
- d. Both, as is characteristic of humanism, "demand" "proofs" on their terms, making themselves the authority and God the one that must negotiate with their terms - many (even professing Christians) base their belief off of "signs" (evidences of God's supernatural working) - their "faith" being in a constant state of needing experiences to support it

What if we see no "evidence" where will our faith be then? This is the fundamental point of Heb. 11:1

Their focus would have been their idea of the glorious power most people would expect versus the shame and seeming defeat before men (not seeing the greater victory before God)

- e. Yet, in a profound contrast, Paul declares "we preach Christ crucified" - this is an astonishing contrast to the non-believer - one compared this to a term such as "fried ice" (a seeming contradiction) - here we have the "Christ" the Anointed One and He being "crucified", shamed, defeated, and punished as the lowest of criminals and rebels
- f. So, to the Jews (seeking signs on their own terms) missed the greatest sign of all in the work of Christ (the Messiah) on the cross, thus it became to them a "stumbling block" (an offense that trips them up) - the underlying word is where we get our word for "scandal" - they were looking more for their enemies to be conquered and impressed than for God to be impressed and sin to be conquered

They, being their own standard place their confidence in the belief that they will know truth when they see it and it will make "sense" to them

- g. And to the Gentiles (Greeks) such a concept of a crucified master seemed ridiculous - this is because they look to the "wisdoms" of their society versus the "wisdom" of the cross - these look on mankind as smart enough to spot absurdity when they see it yet as seen in Rom. 1:22, "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools"

3. So, why not make the message more acceptable to these groups? - vs. 24

We are at great risk in disempowering the “message preached” when we attempt to “smooth off the rough edges”

This is the difference between the two - not the ethnicity or culture, but the “call”

And in this verse Christ is again referenced though without “crucified” since the crucifixion is now seen as an ultimate emblem of power and wisdom

- a. There will be issues and topics that we will strive to word and phrase to make them more understandable to various groups throughout our lives, but with God’s Word, we must start with the premise that it (God’s Word/Wisdom) is already as it should be
- b. The key to this verse is found in the first phrase, “but to those who are the called” - we are apt (as the Corinthians were) to look on things from our earthly perspective (as in asking, “Why didn’t God work this way?” a way that fits with our perspective) when we should (reasonably) expect He works from and by His limitless perspective
- c. But to the same groups just mentioned, this message “Christ crucified” is “power” (the ultimate of signs) and the “wisdom” of God (see also Col. 2:3) - but this is only seen by “the called”
 - This is a definite (unique) group no matter how you look on it - even if one takes “the call” as only an invite, this is distinguished from the those mentioned in verse 23
- d. The power and wisdom of God are seen in His working not mankind’s response to it (as we are apt to measure “success” by popular response) - so it is more powerful in that it accomplished more than all of man’s power, combined, could ever do and is smarter in that it was done as no person could have ever figured

4. So, we can conclude God having “outdone” mankind in all aspects - vs. 25

We can start to see that what we see as our own weaknesses and ignorances are not necessarily unmovable obstacles in being used of God

- a. In the final assessment (as will be further proven), “the foolish thing of God” is more wise than the wisdom of man and “the weak thing of God” is stronger than the power of man
- b. “By using these two neuters Paul avoids ascribing the abstract qualities of foolishness and weakness to God as though they were two of His actual attributes, for as attributes both of them are contradictory to God’s very being.” Lenski
- c. This verse and the ones to follow demonstrate the futility of the “fear of man” - see Rom. 11:33-36

V. Consider How God Has Worked In and Around You - vs. 26-31

A. “For consider your calling” - In using the term “calling” Paul is keeping the focus on what God is doing - vs. 26

1. “Look at your own ranks” as it were, when you were “called” (chosen) of God

These would be those that God would not only bring to Himself in salvation but chose to use for His purposes

far to often we are driven by our own inclinations to “box” God into our own understanding (or imaginations) - He exceeds them and this is why despair is absurd

- a. “Not many wise” (as the realm of the “flesh” would say is wise) were called of God - this idea of called not only includes how they would be used (called to “what”) but the calling to faith
- b. Not many of those of “power” and “might” (abilities, influence or truly “strong”) were called
- c. Not many of nobility (significant birth, families) - those typically of high social standing
- d. This, of course, does not mean that none were chosen of these groups, but not many - these earthly qualities are not God’s “choice” means and instruments to work out His will and to demonstrate His wisdom and power - **this** is God’s “norm”, the typical way we can expect He will work (yet we easily fall into the tendencies to seek out and expect His working in the ways our age would typically seek to get things done) compare with John 7:45-48

2. So, in fact, God has chosen contradictory “qualities” in His tools to “nullify” the things which are - vs. 27-28

We will seem odd and dangerous because we do not aspire to the world’s aspirations

All the particulars of these being worked out but this lays the groundwork for God’s overall approach to how He will work, who He will typically use and why He is doing it

- a. “... in Christ God has already set the future in motion, whereby the present age is “on its way out”, is being done away with by God himself.” - Fee - in light of this, we can expect to be looked upon (by our age) as a cancer would be in our bodies - something that needs to be eradicated before it eradicates us
- b. God has chosen (deliberately selected) what the world looks upon as “foolish” for the specific purpose to “put to shame” those who the world deems as wise - the “wisdom of the world” will be characterized by the avoidance of God and any dependence on Him - yet God has and will continue to “confound” them (perplexing them and humiliating them) by mostly using those they deem as “morons”
- c. And, He has chosen the “things” the world considers weak (without strength) to shame the “things” considered strong - these “things” are not just people, but concepts and other items - this can include “ways” or “means” the world considers weak and ineffective
- d. And, He has chosen those “without family” (not of significant birth), those that are despised (those not looked highly upon) and those that are literally “nothings” so that He may “bring to nothing” (literally make useless) the things that are - God uses “nobodies” to make “nobodies” of the “somebodies” - the bulk of our focus and goals must not be centered on what our age seeks as the choice means to get things done

So, God uses the “not’s” to show-up the “are’s”

It could be said that God typically uses the opposite of what man would look to use or would look for God to use see Psa. 135:1-7 as a comparison when He chose Israel (Jacob)

e. Here, in the usage of the word “chosen” is used more of the category of people rather than the actual individuals themselves and seems to display a “preference” God has in who He chooses and who He uses (these verses more describe that characteristic of WHAT He chooses to use and can involve more than just people - He uses weak, base and seemingly “nothing” circumstances, and this is significant for us to understand if we are to be alert to how He has, will, and might work - it’s too easy to overlook God at work in the “little things”

f. We must be careful, also, that we beware the tendency to have competitive “ranks” even amongst the lower “ranks” (one slave is above another) where we’ll acknowledge that we are not among the “prestigious” of the world, but that we have our own “prestige” rankings (as seen in their groupings around their “Christian heroes”)

B. All with the purpose to disarm the “boasting” in man, and keep it securely with God alone - vs. 29-31

1. “God, it turns out, deliberately chose the foolish things of the world, the cross and the Corinthian believers, so that he could remove forever, from every human creature, any possible grounds on their part, of standing in the divine presence with something in their hands. The ground is level at the foot of the cross...” Fee - this needs to be understood at the outset of our motivation - vs. 29

“The Corinthian people lived within an honor-shame orientation, where public recognition was often more important than facts, and where the worst thing that could happen was for one’s reputation to be publicly tarnished... a personal sense of worth is based on recognition by others of one’s accomplishments, hence the self-promoting...” Witherington

a. This is how we come to God (in Christ) - with nothing of our own and then, when we are His, we use His tools, His grace (for strength, ability and know-how), His time, His opportunities, His gifts (graces), the bodies and breath He loans us, His orders (organizations), His wisdom, His strategies, His methods, His creation and creativity and more!

b. By making this statement (that no “man” (or flesh) may glory in His sight) he reveals that this is what “all flesh” attempts and thinks it can achieve - if God is even acknowledged, “man” seeks for Him (God) to be impressed with him rather than the fundamental purpose for the creation to glory in God (many of the religious are more enamored with their relationship to and before God than they are with His relationship to us)

c. This also reveals the fact that the “flesh” really (actually) has nothing to truly glory about - so it makes its own “glories” and promotes them (which is the aim of its “wisdom”) - as with anything “of the flesh”, whatever glory it may have, fades (see I Pet. 1:4; 5:4)

2. For, our true “glorying” (boasting) is our being “in Christ,” and this is by God’s doing - vs. 30-31

As Paul so clearly demonstrate in his own life where he gave-up focus, dependence and priority of his fleshly credentials to be “in Him” and to truly “know Him” - Php. 3:7-11

a. It is not by our “doing” (power, ingenuity, will) that we are in Christ which is the most enviable of all positions that could be sought - for to be “in Him” is to have all He brings, is to be, as it were, all He is before God (excluding, of course, deity)

b. For all that the world seeks to find glory in, their true counterparts are found in Christ, Who has “become to us” “wisdom” (in contrast to the wisdom of the world which, in light of the truth, is really foolish) because His wisdom is from God, and He (Christ) has become to us “righteousness” which is the actual answer to the “weakness” (inability) of the world; He has also become to us “sanctification” which is in contrast to the “noble of this world” (set apart from the lower classes) and we, being in Him are “set apart” to God (of which there is no comparable glory and identity on this earth); and finally, Christ has become to us “redemption” making the “nobodies” into “somebodies” being purchased (ransomed) at such a high price to God Himself (This all being the wisdom of God “on display”)

So, this answers our being the 1. foolish, 2. weak, 3. despised and 3. “nothings” in the world

As Abraham Lincoln challenged, “Let us have faith that right makes might...”

“Redemption” typically speaking of a slave being purchased by another master - both groups are slaves neither is truly an “entity to themselves”

c. So, “wisdom” to us is now how we associate and look on all things in relation to our standing before God in Him (priorities, philosophies) and strength is seen by us in “righteousness” (primarily being right before God) versus the many iniquities of self-will and self-effort; and our being “sanctified” (set-apart for God) as being the answer to this world’s despising of us as lacking significance; and finally, our being “redeemed” by Him as being the counter and priority of the world to be influential by position (for our position is with God (in Christ)) and this, above all identifies us (the *theoretical* controlling the *practical*)

d. And, above all, these are “salvific” terms demonstrating our salvation and what “makes it up” in Christ - the actual answer to the problem (wisdom) supplied righteousness (literally “rightness” before God), being set-apart (sanctified) from sin and its deserved judgment by being “redeemed” (purchased/ransomed) in Christ by His perfect life and sacrifice

We are “creatures of worship and must glory in something: if not the Lord it will be something or someone else of this world

e. And, the purpose statement (“so that”), just as it is written (in Jer. 9:24) “Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord” (Christ) - there is and will be “boasting” (bragging and glorifying something or someone) and it should be the Lord, Himself (the very same “Christ Crucified”)

VI. Faith In The Power Of God, Not The “Wisdom Of Men” - 2:1-5

A. Not only did God not “choose” the “great” among them, but the messenger was not “great” either - vs. 1

1. Paul now reminds them of his coming to them - he did not come with “superiority of speech”
- He would not have been qualified to be on the “speaking circuit”
- The wording also may not necessarily mean he spoke very bad, just that he did not “rise above” (excel) those around him
- There is some value in this in possibly opening and creating dialog, but this will not be enough to “save” them
- Many concepts, ideas or “discoveries” in science and philosophy may not be looked upon as “higher” than the Bible, but may be, at times, put on “equal footing”
- His delivery and overall approach was not one of “high words” and rhetorical skill - as seen in II Cor. 10:10 where Paul acknowledges what is said about him, ...his speech is contemptible”
 - But, he was, as he calls them, among “brothers” (indicating two things: first, they were made his brothers even though he was so unskilled in his speech and, second, they are now his brothers (family), so gifted or not, he should be heard)
 - All this leading to the ongoing evidence of God using the weak, unknown and “nobodies”
2. As in the previous chapter, he also did not come to them “with wisdom”
- He did not come to their “great city” with what would have been considered significant “intellectualism” or “*sophisticated* ideas and words”
 - In the realm of modern apologetics there seems to be a push that the skeptical and atheistic scientists and philosophers of our day need to be “won to Christ” by means of making God relevant to them - this is often done by trying to poke holes in their thinking and defend Christianity using, more or less, their terms and ideas - to some degree this has created a variation of evangelism that could be, at times, “gnostic evangelism”
 - One of the potential dangers of such an approach is the temptation, again, to compromise Scripture (or often a more literal handling of it) so as to better accommodate these “notable” groups
 - So, Paul reminds these Corinthian Christians that he did not come to them, with the Gospel couched and explained by the wisdom of the world

B. This was so important, that before he came to them, he “purposed” to be singularly focused on Christ - vs. 1-2

1. This was not just how it worked out, but was planned this way (determined)
- This is not a “stretch” since the “wisdom” of any age is inclusive of and often insistent in its popular “methods”
- We live in a time, in Christianity, where we have come to see “methods” become more the focus than the message - the message is included, but secondary
- He was purposed not to be distracted with any other “greatnesses” that might be brought in to “sell” them the Gospel (in our day, we face the temptation to use the “profound” of all sorts of mediums (including music which seems to have hit a fevered pitch) and these mediums become the means more than the message)
 - Instead of the “wisdom of the age,” he proclaimed to them the “testimony of God” - this is literally the “witness” of God versus the witness or witnesses of men (these including experiences, personal “testimonies” over God’s (His Word) and man’s best methodologies)
 - There then comes to be no end to the “wisdoms” of each age, enough to keep us “off-topic” from why we are here and where the real power is to be found (covered in vs. 5)
 - Paul, therefore (as planned), did not come to them with “superiority of speech” or as Robertson put it, “Here it means excess or superfluity” - he determined not to be highfalutin in how he presented himself and his handling of the “message preached”
2. The point, the focus was to “declare” to them (say it like it is) the “testimony of God” - some manuscripts have this as the “mystery of God” (the underlying Greek word for testimony and mystery being very close in appearance) - the “mystery” is discussed in verse 7
- Our goal is to be a good witness of God’s witness and not becoming a distraction to the facts in our presentations or our lives in general
- The underlying word for “testimony” is the typical word for “witness” (μαρτυριον) which is a presentation of evidence for something (and, as in a court of Law, trying to get to the truth of a matter, this is best achieved when the witnesses are as accurate as possible, as unbiasedly as possible, represent the facts) - we are “testifiers” of God’s testimonies not ours
 - We need to remember that deceit can come by means of more than deliberate lies - it can come about by what is left out and by misplaced (wrongly directed) emphasis
3. Paul determined to stay focused on this “Christ crucified” even though it would not be popular - vs. 2
- To “know nothing” is a way of demonstrating focus in this verse (we would say “not know anything else”)
- There is an interesting, hard to translate phrase used here where he is essentially revealing that he judged it best (discerned) that he would “know nothing” (*among them*) Christ crucified
 - Some have used this verse to challenged themselves and others to see Christ (and the cross) in all texts of Scripture - this is not the point nor the usage in this verse
 - Paul would come to them not coming to learn the latest “wisdoms” and the latest and greatest oratory technics to present the testimony of God, but would present, clearly and plainly of Christ and His work for God on our behalf - we also need this type of focus for our lives so as not to be distracted with worldly testimonies to the neglect of God’s

As tempting as it might seem at times, we are not to see our imparting the truth as if a competition that is won by “upstaging” the opponent

Though it would be unexpectedly shocking to the Corinthians, it was by no means anything to be embarrassed about!

C. The “weak” and unassuming instrument named “Paul” - vs. 3-4

1. We see some key factors that help us understand his description of himself, when he came to them, as “in weakness, fear and trembling” in Acts 18:1-11

So, Paul looks back to his initial circumstances and his “state” when he first came to them - he was afraid, frustrated and, by what we can see, overreacted - but, in weakness, we must not give-up realizing it would never be by our strength and courage that God’s work will depend

- d. The point was to stay focused and not be distracted with all other “glories” and “impressions” that would vie for his attention as a possible answer and approach - “Christ crucified” was not just a contradiction to the popular thinking, it was the solution
- e. So, to take this as literal as possible, Paul purposed to stay focused (while among them and all that might be naturally or culturally impressive to them) on Jesus (the God-man, His perfect life, His uniquely profound message of absolute truth, His eternal purpose and saving work) Christ (the anointed one, made so by Almighty God and predetermined before the foundations of the world for this purpose) crucified (willfully, obediently facing the death of a criminal, taking on Himself the full brunt of the wrath of God for sin)

2. Paul sums up his “anti-credentials” in three words - “weakness, fear and trembling” - vs. 3

The danger being that some place their faith in the faith of someone else - this is the wrong “object of faith”

This was a significant part of his self-discipline as seen in I Cor. 9:27

Both, though are concerned with what someone thinks

- a. To some degree, it is encouraging to realize Paul struggled with this as well - we often feel ashamed or as if we are somehow doing wrong when we feel intimidated and shy/timid
 - b. At first, when Paul went to Corinth he was without Timothy and Silas (he may have felt some loneliness and it is typically more difficult to stand alone)
 - c. It does appear that Paul was “stressed” when looking at his response in 18:6 when in frustration he essentially gave-up on the Jews in the city
 - d. Then, the clearest indicator is the message from the Lord to Paul telling him not to be afraid, to “not be silent”, that he would not be harmed and that there were many in the city that were His
- a. It is apparent that he had some physical weaknesses based on texts like II Cor. 12:7-10 and it also appears he suffered with some type of personal, emotional weakness - the opposite is often seen in ministries (of all types) where converts are won by the confident personality of the one ministering more than the message declared
 - b. The “fear and trembling” are not so much is lack of faith in God as much as it would be either his fear of what God would have him face (this is not a lack of faith but more a demonstration of it seeing he knew he had to face it), or he was fearful of his possible personal failures (the haunting of which we all carry with us daily) or both
 - c. There is a great difference between the fear of man causing varying forms of anxiousness and the fear of God (one is debilitating the other motivates caution)

3. Not only was his “persona” outwardly unimpressive, but his presentation was as well - vs. 4

“persuasive words of wisdom” - he came not with a “wisdom” made up of persuasive (enticing) technic (the art of persuasion) but of unvarnished truth

It seems, in our day, that we have lost the simplicity of this message because of our sincere (though misdirected) investments in our own devices to perform God’s work

- a. His “words” (message/content) and his proclaiming of it were both not driven to be clever and artificially persuasive (not manipulative) or “of this age” impressive
- b. “And gullible people are easy marks for these plausible pulpiteers. Corinth put a premium on the veneer of false rhetoric and thin thinking.” RWP
- c. And this also was deliberate (mostly on God’s part) that the clear demonstration (transparent) working of the Holy Spirit would be powerfully seen - that it would be clearly God at work and not the ingenuity and cleverness of man (the messenger) - we have seen too many instances where the logic and “genius” of man has become the means to accomplishing what we see as God’s work - the following of the old adage, “the ends justifies the means” (though these “ends” are often decoys from reality (as God reveals it in His Word))

D. All of these seeming disqualifications for the purpose of properly directing faith - vs. 5

1. It is far too easy for our faith to be focused and dependent on “things”, people or circumstances

see this also illustrated in II Cor. 4:7-12 (the “treasure in earthen vessels”)

- a. This is debilitating and potentially eternally deadly, so it is no small matter to consider!
- b. Where our faith truly “rests” (or stands, or IS) affects everything - it controls where we look for hope, goals, purpose, confidence, joy and objectives for living

2. All of this was necessary to establish the placement of their faith - so we must consider the dangers of all other approaches that seek to build faith on the “wisdom of man” (even the glory of man)

“rest on it, owe its origin and continuance to it” JFB

Ironically, so much of our disobedience is a result of our lack of faith - we justify ourselves saying, “I just can’t see it”

- a. Our faith (what we trust and why we trust it (is to be founded upon God’s power (His ability, His “doing”)) - and as defined in Heb. 11:1 it is our confidence (not blind) based upon what God has said and and not dependent on our ability to always “see” the evidences
- b. This is also inclusive of our wisdom - our dependence is to be on God’s “power” - thus, the greatest work we seek to do for God is obey, and submit to whatever He gives at any time

This describes more than a casual approach to were we might influence someone to place/direct their faith - it is the height of seriousness!

- c. This is the ultimate answer as to why some come to Christ and others don't - it is dependent upon the working of the Holy Spirit (and though there will be many "reasoned to Christianity" they are not "in Christ") - after we're in Christ this is all still true that our faith rests on His working
- d. Regarding the incorporation of "philosophy" in the Church, Charles Hodge wrote, "He was not for banishing philosophy from the schools, but from the pulpit. Let the dead bury the dead; but do not let them pretend to impart life."

VII. The "Thoughts of God" Versus the "Thoughts of Man" - 2:6-16

A. There have been some who have attempted to use the previous verses to lend credence to some form of "righteous ignorance," trying to discredit any form of scholarship in Christianity and the study of Scripture

1. This, of course, was never the intent by Paul, seeing as he now distinguishes the "wisdom of God" from the "wisdom of this age" (ultimately the age of man, all throughout history) - vs. 6

When Paul uses "mature" he is not distinguishing between mature Christians versus the immature ones since it would mean he only speaks the wisdom of God to the mature Christians - what then would he teach the immature?

Only those who are truly wise know what really is wisdom! Popular ignorance is not wisdom.

- a. Paul uses a term that presents a picture of the difference between these "wisdoms" ("mature")
- b. When he writes, "Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature..." he automatically alludes to the opposite being those "immature" or "child-like" - true wisdom, as we see illustrated in life, is recognized and understood by those that are mature (grown-up)
- c. He spoke it (presented it) "among" those that were "mature" seeing it wasn't to be understood by those unable to grasp it (not having the "power of God" at work in them)
- d. Following this analogy, the wisdom of God then would seem absurd to the immature
- e. Note also, the underlying word for "mature" means "complete," supporting the reality of our being complete in Christ and, just as it is in real life, there are many truths in life and about life that we don't come to understand until we are grown (though they were truths without our understanding or even accepting them)

2. The wisdom of Christ and the Cross and all that it entailed is not, nor will it ever be a "wisdom of this age"

This is often what characterizes "worldly wisdom"; self - Pr. 18:2

- a. This is also translated "wisdom of this world" which is fitting in light of this world (and its ages) is infected with sin, thus is infected with "self"
- b. Nor is God's wisdom ever the "wisdom" of the rulers of this age (world) who are being made to "pass away" (present passive) - they are fleeting (literally, "come to naught, become useless") - this demonstrates a key part that an eternal perspective plays over a temporal one - if we see ourselves as eternal, we do not truly live for this life, but if we identify more with our living in the moment we have "now," we will see the "wisdom" of living for and following the wisdom of the age in which we happen to find ourselves

see Psalm 2:1-6 and Isa. 40:21-26

B. This particular aspect of God's wisdom (the crucified Messiah) is the revealing of a "mystery" - vs. 7-8

1. This does not mean it is unknowable (now), but that it was unknown to man until now

The very concept of "mystery" in the New Testament is a reminder of our dependence upon God to reveal these truths since we could not come to know them on our own

- a. This word is used to denote a truth not formally known, but has been revealed in God's timing and by means of His revelation (without which it would never be known)
- b. This truth, this "means", this message was predetermined by God before "the ages" - before the world was and any of its wisdom, God set this as His plan, His decree - another reminder that, as it was then, God did not "take counsel" with us, so it is still
- c. Then, almost amazingly, we see it was done "to our glory" - not in the sense of glorifying us, but that it would be what we would glory in (boast in), though with it would also come our "glorification" (which is our being truly "like Christ" being "in Christ" which we have now)

see Rom. 8:28-30

2. Here, again, God has "chosen" something before the world's "wisdom" ever existed - just as He chose to use what the world would see as insignificant, He also affixed **true** wisdom before time

3. Referencing again the "rulers of this age" (the preeminent ones of any age), none "understood" - for if they had known this wisdom, and Christ for who He is, they would not have crucified Him

God had a purpose in concealing His plan and no matter how it is considered, He purposed to confound "popular thinking"

- a. There are two ways to come at this: first, if they had really known, they would not have "killed" Him knowing it to be wrong and, second, if they had known this to be God's wisdom, they would not have cooperated with it in their rebellion (seeking to counter God at all points)
- b. Either way, it is proof they did not, nor will "they" (in our age) understand

4. There is much discussion on the phrase, "crucified the Lord of glory" - some ask how the "divine could have been crucified (attempting to limit it to only the humanity (Jesus) and not the "Lord of glory") - yet, we must be careful not to make the distinction too markedly, but to accept that it truly was the "Lord of glory" that was crucified for us - the creator of life is "killed" as it were by the lives He created

It is futile to live contrary to God's plan

5. These facts, this wisdom were predetermined before anything was created and before anything happened for us to glory in (the "our" being predestined and this very point of *our* "glory" (glorying))

C. The mystery revealed by the Holy Spirit - vs. 9-12

1. Paul uses phrases from the Old Testament scriptures (Isaiah 64:4 and possibly another (Isa. 65:17)) - vs. 10

"From of old we have not heard, neither have our eyes seen a God beside thee, and thy works which thou wilt perform to them that wait for mercy" Isa. 64:4 LXX

a. The clearest origin for most of this in Isaiah reads, "From days of old they have not heard or perceived by ear, not has the eyes seen a God besides you, Who acts in behalf of the one who waits for him." (NASB) - no one has ever seen or conceived of a God that would be this way - man-made "gods" demonstrate, at best, a cordiality and nothing like the selfless love of the God of the Bible! - see also Psa. 31:19, 62:1, 130:5 and Lam. 3:25-26

read the context - Isa. 64:1-8

As has always been the case, God defies our imaginations, thus He must never be limited to them

- b. The underlying idea for Paul quoting this was to demonstrate that this is how it has always been - it has never been by the human eye, ear, or any other naturally perceptive means that man has been able to discern the working and wisdom of God - it is revealed because of God's mercy and, as is about to be discussed, His Spirit (man's discernment is not a reliable source)
- c. Paul also stresses "have not entered into the heart of man" (never even thought of) of all that God has prepared for them that love Him (our creativity will always be less than His reality!)
- d. This is not a verse used to describe the splendors of Heaven for those of us, in Christ, waiting to die so we can then see, hear and understand - instead, this is referenced to impress with the reality of what is being revealed (first in the Gospel) to them now

Spiritual pride is truly absurd in light of the fact that all we know and can do is by the Spirit - we are outlets of God's grace and never the source

2. The "Spirit" teaches us these things (in contrast to the wisdom and "natural" man) - vs. 10-11

We ultimately cannot be dependent on the revelations of man (which always leave us feeling empty and lacking) nor on the new discoveries we believe we reveal to ourselves of ourselves but of what God reveals - the source of wisdom must not be blurred in our life focus

- a. God has "revealed" them to us (lit. "took the cover off") - though the glories of Heaven are included, the focus was the revealing of what had been a mystery, but now has been shown to be the wisdom of God in the cross of Christ (the truest splendor that had not been considered)
- b. This was accomplished by means of the Holy Spirit, and who else? - He is the giver of truth and the One that causes us to see it and understand it
- c. The idea behind Him "searching" all things, in this context, pictures Him "plumbing the depths" of God (knowing, as it were, the deepest thoughts, intents and purposes of God)
- d. This all picturing the Holy Spirit revealing what is truly in the "character" of God (what He really thinks, plans and does) - Who He really is (the Spirit, in us, explores the depths of God)
- It is to be expected, then, that those with His spirit would be driven to search out more and more of God throughout their lives - if this drive is not present, we should be concerned! - we will want to learn and explore (it will be unavoidable)
- e. This was revealed to us - the "to us" being, first of all, the Apostles (compare this to Eph. 3:1-7) and then to us in what was recorded/written in Scripture (the "Apostle's Doctrine")
- d. Just as it is with us, when we truly know more of our own character and true intent, because we know our innermost thoughts, so it is with the "Spirit of God" - all else would be guesswork and speculation (as we often see happening when so many draw conclusions of God without utilizing what He has revealed of Himself... in His word by His Spirit)

The Spirit of God is not an inner inclination and a persuasive influence but is a Person, one of the persons of the Godhead - this must not be missed!

3. We, being in Christ, must realize what "spirit" we have received (how we are truly identified) - vs. 12

The opposite, the spirit of this world, being the conclusion that what we have is deserved and earned

God is not "judged" by the failures of man, man is judged (and rightfully so) by his own failures

- a. At birth we have the "spirit of the world," its character (characteristics) its "ego" (innermost self) and would continue in it until our death if not for the imparting of God's Spirit" to and in us
- b. It is important to note that Paul's usage of the "spirit of this world" carries with it the understanding that there is a spirit of a different world - both have "qualities" that contrast (one being a "spirit" of temporal values the other, eternal values) - the word for "world" is *κοσμος* which includes the concept of its structures, orders, thus its priorities (and this is the clearest distinction between the two - competing concerns)
- c. Having been given the "Spirit from God" we now have His character within us, with the purpose to "know the things freely given to us by God" - that we would understand that what we have, we are gratuitously given by God Himself
- d. That some professing Christians lose sight of this or don't understand (at times) this fact is not a commentary on the deficiencies of God's Spirit but, as Robertson wrote in his Word Pictures, "The tragic failures of men to understand clearly God's revealed will is but a commentary on the weakness and limitation of the human intellect even when enlightened by the Holy Spirit."
- e. This graciousness is, as revealed by His spirit knowing His depths, Who He really is - God is the definition of goodness!

Though one can conceivably "get used to these" and not see them as odd nor seek release from them

- f. Those living by "the spirit of the world" do not, nor can they recognize those things freely, graciously given to us by God and are doomed to live this life (no matter how earthly "good") with disappointments, dissatisfaction, disillusionment and disorientation

D. The "out of this world" message and method by which we receive and understand this great news - vs. 13-14

- RWP 1. "... there is revelation (verse 1Co 2:10), illumination (verse 1Co 2:12), and inspiration (verse 1Co 2:13)" demonstrating here in this text the core of Bibliology

Popularity is, one way or another, the driving force behind worldly wisdom trends

- a. All worldly wisdoms carry with them (without exception) their being subject to change by the pursuits of popularity in any age
b. The message of the Gospel is not just another message among messages (a part of a religious smorgasbord) seeing its words, concepts and origins are spiritual (not of this world)

2. "The philosophers, the dialecticians, and the rhetoricians of the world created and employed many concepts or "thought words" (λογοι) to express their worldly reasoning, but the apostles did not adopt them for their utterance of the divine wisdom. They could not, for these terms and expressions would not be adequate for what the apostles had to convey" Lenski

And is why so many religions seek to redefine the words of the Gospel into their own self-serving terms and ideas

It will be a struggle (often) to "stay with" God's Word and not be lured to novel fads and ideas, but it is essential to stay useful and focused

- a. Essentially, there is much we must unlearn when we come to Christ
b. The wisdom of God is given by comparing (communicating) spiritual concepts with spiritual words (which is one of the reasons why the wording of Scripture is so important)
c. This is why we read and study God's revealed Word, for without it we stray back to our "natural" selves. leaning on our "natural" thinking - we must not let this slip!
d. Since we learn from this text that these are *spiritual* concepts, we must also learn that we are not going to learn these truths apart from God's Word - as good as creative minds might be and sincere their motive in their instructive writings, they will never compare to Scripture

3. The "natural man" does not accept (receive or agree with) what is "of God" - vs. 14

Each age of our history has been run by "natural men" all living by their natural desires and by the "common sense" of their era or their personal bias (the natural man lives for self)

Though they spend a long time and much effort to search out the things of God, they will not be able to discern it apart from God's Spirit

- a. The word for "natural" entails several ideas and basically means "animal man" (living for only what is physical and mental), and one who lives *instinctively* "aliveness" (as in animated) in accordance with the physical creation
b. He has thoughts and a soul but both are blinded by and subject to sin - as in Rom. 3, he cannot accurately assess his condition, thus he feels confident in his perceptions
c. This "natural man" (man truly "of this world" and age) does not nor will he ever truly accept the things of God because he cannot - they are "spiritually appraised" and his spirit is dead to God
d. The idea of "appraised" carries the picture of a judge sifting through evidence and facts, to reach the correct judgement (which is only as good as its accurate information and his ability to understand them apart from any prejudices) - they are "sensual" living only by their "senses"
• See also James 3:13-18 in the character demonstrations of the differing "wisdoms"
e. So, the "carnal" (fleshly) will find them silly - this answers what was discussed in Chapter 1 as to why the wisdom of God was absurd to them - which should be a clue (as in a warning) to us when we sense we are seeing (at any time) God's wisdom as looking beneath us

E. The enlightenment and standing of the "spiritual man" - vs. 15-16

1. The one who is "spiritual" (his spirit is alive by means of the regeneration work of the Holy Spirit) is one who can truly "discern" between all types of things

This is why we do not fear the judgements we may face in this world (the judgements of our wrongness because we are not conformists)

Many have taken this text to say that no one (at all) can say they are wrong on any point, though they miss the truth that we are still distinguished in our rightness and wrongness by God's Word while here

- a. Many in the church at Corinth, being misdirectedly impressed with the wisdom of the world, failed to see who it is that really can distinguish between what is truly right and wrong
b. Seeing as how a "natural" man (of which the world and its leaders and "great" men are made) is unable to accept the things of God, they should not be sought out or looked to for life direction and priorities - it is those who are spiritual (possessing the "mind of Christ") that are able to rightly discern (see correctly for what they are) the things of this world
c. So, those of Christ are not able to be discerned/judged by any "natural man" - they do not have the capacity to understand true truth and what is beyond (above) this world
d. There will, of course, be those who say they are "Spirit led" but contradict what the Spirit teaches in the Word - thus, as John stressed, we are to "try the spirits" to see if they are of God (I John 4:1-4 comparing what they say (and ultimately do) with what was taught)

2. To "blow away" as it were the competition, Paul quotes from Isa. 40:30, "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he will instruct Him?" - the answer is to be obvious, "of course, no one!" - yet we now have "the mind of Christ" so we cannot be truly taught what is of the highest values by any other - the wisest of this world cannot "teach God"

This is one of many "proof texts" for Christ's deity - Christ is equated with God

The “world” will not truly be able to “appraise” us so even when mocked, we do not feel pressured to think like them

3. To have the “mind of Christ” is to have, as it were, His “mind- set” - this does not mean that after becoming a “Christian” that everything we think can be considered “of the mind of Christ” and this is especially seen throughout this epistle where, even though they were “in Christ,” they were not thinking like Him - we see His “thoughts and thinking” in the revealed truth of Scripture

- As **He** was “puzzling” to the world, so we must expect to be when thinking as He did

VIII. Countering “Carnal” Mind Sets - 3:1-9

A. The inability to converse on a “spiritual level” - vs. 1

As to how long, we can’t determine, but the longer the duration (especially in light of instruction) the less doubtful we should become of their spiritual standing of being “in Christ”

We will have “distractions” but they must not define us

1. There was, ultimately, a communication issue stemming from serious underlying problems

- It must be noted first that Paul was addressing “brethren” whom he was about to call “fleshly”
- We would call such “carnal Christians,” a term that has caused much debate over the years - it has been often asked if such a “thing” can exist and the initial answer must be “yes”, followed by a clarifying “no” - they exist, but for a relatively short time
- If these could stay in this condition then they are truly “carnal” but not “Christian”
- So, Paul was by no means excusing them (since this cannot possibly be taken as his “tone”) - Paul was merely addressing why they were facing the problems and why they didn’t recognize it (the problem) for what it really was - their immaturity made it impossible to self-diagnose

2. Paul could (and did) communicate with them but not as he should have been able to; “spiritually” (again, of that which is not dictated to by the flesh and mind of unregenerate people)

compare this to Mt. 16:21-23

When thinking is “worldly” (or of this age) there is almost a language barrier! Infants still can understand, but in simpler terms thus “deeper” (more thorough) content must wait

- These were, currently, like “men of flesh” - their priorities and focus were on the “popular” and the temporal (relating more to the “now” more than the eternal)
- They were this way (as believers) because they were still “infants in Christ” - this was to be expected at the first, but now time had passed and they should have grown - the lack of growth in a child is a serious sign of something physically wrong or a deficiency in their diet
- Spiritual (and mental) growth in the believer is normal and to be expected - this was addressed also in Heb. 5:11-14 where their “condition” was due to their being “dull of hearing” (thus a distracted focus more “taken with” that which was popular, trending and naturally appealing)

B. They were still unable to handle “solid food” which they needed and were about to receive - vs. 2-4

1. “Milk” versus “solid food” isn’t a contrast of good (nutritious) food versus bad (non-nutritious) as all that was given was useful, but its “delivery” was different (one not needing to be chewed, the other requiring teeth - of a different “texture”, essentially more “substantive”) - they needed a mature focus

a mature attention span

“The “flesh” includes all feelings that aim not at the glory of God, and the good of our neighbor, but at gratifying self.” JFB

we seek to live above “normal” not to strive for it

- They were to have gone beyond the elemental (the fundamental building blocks) and now on to the more complex application of the fundamentals
- When he first came to them, they were (as expected) not able to handle too much, yet even at this point (now) they were still unable - they had not been growing because they were “fleshly”
- They could not handle “meatier” concepts because they “walked as mere men” - the underlying word for “walk” (περιπατεω) is a common word for one’s overall conduct (what characterizes one’s life) as John used it in I John 2:6 (we are to know ourselves as “other” than just “man”)

2. This was proven in their “jealousy and strife” (envy and the battle of wills) as seen in their openly and aggressively defining themselves by “Christian celebrities”

- Again, this was the detail they apparently left out of their letter to Paul (with their questions)
- “Really serious faults in the church quite frequently make little or no impression on the members while lesser failings stir them up. The Pharisees were meticulously concerned about tithing mint and cumin and left undone the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith... To put men into rivalry with Christ and to glorify men at the cost of Christ, whether this is done consciously or unconsciously, is to assail Christ himself.” Lenski
- “Is this not what mere people do?” - Exalting self by exalting people and identifying with them - this is often done in the Church as though somehow we are as “smart” as them or that we are “smarter” in our **identifying** with them - either way, when it is used to exalt self above others it is pride which is the essence of “*mere person-ness*”

Their invoking the name of Paul and Apollos was their way of distinguishing themselves among themselves which is at the core of carnality

Paul had already addressed this at the start, but points again to it to illustrate their immaturity - this type of bickering is what children do

C. Paul now proves where the focus, admiration and loyalty belong - vs. 5-9

- Who really are Apollos and Paul? - they are διάκονοι (serving ministers) - this word being used of “errand runners” (we might say today, “gofers”) - vs. 5
- Only, these “servants” were **used by God** to bring about their belief in Christ

This is the origin of our word for “deacon”

“Not leaders of parties or sects, but merely servants through whom ye believed. The etymology of the word Thayer gives as *dia* and *konis* “raising dust by hastening.” RWP

It is our tendency to take credit for any results when they are God’s doing - this tendency also lends to our misdirected and uninformed expectations from our obedience - we do not control results nor the timing of them

False professions are numerous

see II Cor. 3:4-5

Presumption is basically a confidence in self while faith is an ongoing dependence on God

False “answers” and teaching can be extremely invasive!

We are to be “searching out” the “giving out” of God’s Word as our primary focus, far secondary to delivery, style and personalities (and popularity)

God rewarding each in accordance with his labor makes **all** our labor for Him profitable and of eternal value

These verses must not be used to try to justify a non-discerning approach to spiritual leaders/teachers - they must be “judged” but never put in elevated positions to bring factions into the church

So, workers realize they work with God’s land, His soil, His seeds, His plants, His growth all for His harvest (and each worker with the schedule and assignments given him/her)

God’s “building” is people and must not be confused with the physical building used by His people

- a. And that only “as the Lord gave to each one” - as God **gave** (and still gives) the opportunity, the ability and the result - Paul and Apollos were just tools and nothing more (but they were tools in the hand of God) - the idea is that these opportunities were gifts of God
- b. These were not “masters” even though our usage of “minister” has come to reference someone with power in and of themselves - they are servants (not of the people (the “field”) but of God)
- c. It will always be instinctive in any age to exalt people (even those who are God’s servants)
- d. Please note: this text also demonstrates that salvation is of God and not of His “tools”

3. Still following this analogy, Paul “planted” and Apollos “watered” but the “increase” was of God - vs. 6

- a. We are never to look upon ourselves as being responsible for the “results” but just to be faithful with all opportunities God gives us - we “work the field” God has given us
- b. Paul “planted” the Word, the Truth, the Gospel and Apollos “watered” (continued in what had been setup and nourished it) but neither made the growth happen (their faith and their numbers)
- c. This is applicable not just to pastors, but to parents, teachers, evangelists and all other believers who seek to do anything for God - if we see ourselves or others as being the “cause” to spiritual growth of an kind we are apt to look to them or their resources for growth, bypassing the Scripture - these misdirections are often wrongly endorsed with pseudo-results (temporal)

• Counterfeit fixes are seen in superficial, cosmetic, or short-lived results

- d. So, either way, neither deserved the following they were getting from the Corinthians

4. None of the workers is anything, but only find value in their usage by God - vs. 7-8

- a. As far as being the “cause,” neither the planter not the waterer is anything at all - see Gal. 6:3
- b. Independent of God they are truly nothing - significance is found in being used of God (yet so many seek to find their importance in being used and admired of/by people)
- c. Neither do we want to be those who seek to make others dependent on us for their growth
- d. One could conceivably have the “seed” and the “watering” but still not true growth (other than foreign (not the right “crop”) growing and that really becoming a “life-drainer” (parasite))
- e. Actually, as far as the servants of the Lord go, he who “plants” and he who “waters” are one (they are of the same purpose and goal; of the same master) - so to use them as points of division in the body of Christ is to seek to divide the purpose - as will be discussed in chapter 4, the Lord is the judge and we are to leave it to Him (the innermost motives and intentions of others)
- f. Each (including us) will receive his own “reward” in accordance with his own “labor” (not in accordance with his “success”; just his faithful working with what God gave to do)
- g. “God does not reward his servants according to the success of their labour, because that depends on himself; but he rewards them according to the *quantum* of faithful *labour* which they bestow on his work. In this sense none can say, I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought.” Clarke (see also I Cor. 15:58) - this helps us see the dangerous distraction that comes when people and methods are showcased because of their seeming results

5. All who are in Christ are “fellow-laborers” in God’s “business” - vs. 9

- a. This text should not be read that we are “co-laborers with God” since God does not “labor” - the meaning is that (in context) Paul and Apollos are laboring together for God and therefore should not be “pitted against” each other (“doctrine” divides not personalities!)
- b. Any who ministers, serves God and must be mindful of that, else they will become proud or end up defining ministry on their terms and conditions
- c. Paul then clarifies that in the actual scope of things, the church at Corinth was God’s “field” and His “building” and in the “employ” in this field and in the construction process are His workers (ministers) who are there to do His bidding in what belongs (in full) to Him
- d. The Lord’s work is illustrated as a field and building - the field needing constant, daily care and represents multiple growths taking place at the same time and each needing its own care - this care is met by “field laborers” paying individual attention to needs (planting, watering, tending and “weeding” (and dealing with parasitical invaders))
- e. Then, the analogy of a building is introduced and will be “built upon” in the upcoming verses - Paul’s usage here, though, is that the Corinthian Christians are all individual parts of a whole (as in the bricks and other parts of a building) - this picture was also used by Peter in I Peter 2:4-8 and the believers there are called “living stones” (in contrast to the inanimate stones of the temple (or any other religious building))

IX. Building on the Foundation of Jesus Christ - 3:10-17

A. Having clarified the “team” mentality (they are all “one” in the ministry of the Lord), Paul now builds on this illustration of the church at Corinth being God’s “building” - vs. 10-11

1. Having already acknowledged the fact that all are “nothing” apart from God, Paul references his part in starting the church “according to the grace of God” - only by God’s enablement

We will pursue the most what we realize ourselves to depend on (need) the most - if not God’s grace then something else

see I Pet. 4:11

No church, no believer should see themselves as just sustaining but always as building (constructing)

“There is no room for individual caprice in the super-structure.” RWP

- a. This is no false humility just the fact that anything substantive is of God
- b. At every point he is directing any attention and focus away from the wisdom and ingenuity of man
- c. Paul does not exalt himself when he compares himself to a “wise mast builder” - he simply makes the point he did what any sensible builder/contractor would do - he started with a foundation (one that was solid, dependable and could sustain all that would be built upon it)
- d. The foundation must exist else it is like building directly on sand - compare to Mt. 7:24-27
- e. “...another is building on it...” - this would be in reference to whoever was now teaching and leading the church in Corinth (still watering and cultivating)
- f. There is a sobering warning - each must show great caution and care how they build on it - don’t take it for granted (by first never being distracted from its purpose) - “...that he builds by line, evenly, according to the analogy of faith; that he builds in proportion to the foundation; and lays such things upon it as are becoming it, and suitable to it.” Gill

2. Christ is the only foundation of the church - any other foundation would not be the church - many ministries have been built claiming to be “Christian” but they are more humanitarian in nature and not replacements for the Church - many para-church organizations have been raised upon other (well-meaning) foundations, but should not be replacements for the local church - vs. 11

The foundation of the church will always be Jesus Christ and Him crucified (focus on His work, His grace, His salvation thus His purposes)

- a. No “man” can lay another foundation than what has already been established since God is the only one that could - though “man” has been laying seemingly endless “foundations” in the name of Christ that are not real (thus, unstable) - see Gal. 1:6-12 and Eph. 2:19-22
- b. This would be in contrast to the “wisdom” that had so grabbed their attention and would have seemed like an almost worthy replacement as being foundational to even their “Christian” pursuits

B. Consider not just constructing for construction sake, but the materials and the ultimate purpose of the structure

1. Even though there are six elements listed, there are really only two categories being considered - vs. 12

This is not an analogy of motive and sincerity (though both “participate”) but is one of content and quality - it’s not just the “stuff” we find conveniently laying around but is more like treasures sought out and “dug-up”

These materials will seem more “practical” to the temporally-minded person

- a. Gold, silver and precious stones are first - they are of high value as far as construction materials go, but their significance here is the ability to stand the test of “fire”
- b. These are materials designed to last and are not easy to come by (they’re not “cheap”) - keeping with the overall context, this analogy would be in-line with the “wisdom of God” in His word (what had been given by the Apostles) and what was of eternal value (spiritual versus earthly)
 - “precious stones” being more like marble and granite (costly stones)
- c. The contrasting materials being “wood, hay and stubble/straw” - these being common and perishable when faced with fire and represents most what is earthly, temporal and is not of lasting value - it is “cheap” in its quality of enduring, though seen as convenient in the immediate

2. No matter the facades that may be constructed, each one’s work will “become evident” - vs. 13

Having been given the foundation of Christ in our lives and in His Church, what did we build upon it with the time we received?

Sadly much if not most of what is purported to be true works for God will be reduced to ashes before the Judgment Seat of Christ - a life’s work truly worthless of eternal value

- a. “the Day” will show each one’s work for what it really was - the context of these verses deals with primarily the Church, though it is applicable to each one of us as we “build” within the Church, being a part of the Church - though church leaders should be most “pressed” by this
- c. The “Day” ultimately being our accounting before the Lord (II Cor. 5:10) when our works are judged before the Lord whether they are “good” or “bad” (worthless)
- d. There are several key words in this verse that make the concept clear - “evident” (φανερὸν) clarifying each one’s work will be brought to light (thus made apparent), for the day “will show it” (δηλώσει) making it plain and obvious for what it really is because it is to be “revealed” (ἀποκαλύπτεται) having any cover removed from it by the fire which will truly “test the quality” (δοκιμάσει) if it found “approved” or not (by holding it up to the light)
- e. **Now** is the time to be evaluating the “building materials” we are using and whether or not we are truly constructing anything of lasting value upon the foundation we have been given
- f. Now is the time to be considering if we are searching out and “buying” cheap models of “real works” yet are only a “show” and would not hold up under real “fire” (testing)
- g. God graciously allows us to face smaller “fires” that test some of our materials and works now allowing us to see what holds-up and what is of no real, lasting value

compare to I Pet. 4:12-17

C. The motivation of our life to pursue the “reward” - vs. 14-15

1. In the great “Day”, whatever remains of our works as “tried” in the revealing “fire” of God, will receive a reward (as in a “wage” and the same idea as in verse 8, what is received in the labor)

We are not sure exactly what this “reward” (wage) is but we can be certain it is far greater than what we could ever anticipate - God is no typical employer and His rewards are forever!

- a. This is a major qualifier on I Cor. 3:8, seeing as not all “labor” is truly labor - the “workman is worthy of his hire” but he must labor for and with what he is given - if the field hand plants the wrong seeds (“weed seed”), and harvests weeds, he will not receive his pay
- b. If one tasked to build using “gold, silver and costly stones” seeks to save time and effort by using cheaper materials, he will not receive his wage when the Master Inspector comes

2. Based on this text, there will be those who stand before the Lord and have their works “burned-up” and they truly suffer loss - Paul is quick to make it clear this is not a judgement of one’s eternal soul seeing their loss is not their soul

This is a motivator for us to be picky in what we work with in God’s ministry and who we are really working for. The concept of Purgatory communicates that Christ’s work was not truly sufficient in making us righteous before God

- a. If his work is consumed he is still saved, as it were, out of the fire - no doubt many who have sought to minister for God will enter eternity empty-handed as to any lasting fruit in their labor for God because they sought to follow fads, current wisdom and such, over the Word of God
- b. The Roman Catholic church has tried to point to his text as a basis for Purgatory but this cannot possibly be right since they promote Purgatory as one benefitting from the fire while this text demonstrates those suffering by the fire (that were not diligent in their “building”)
- c. The analogy to being “saved through the fire” could be expressed in our day as being saved “by the skin of their teeth” - these verses should not only cause us to carefully examine our faith in regards to salvation, but our scrutiny as to the quality of what we seek to do for God in preparation to stand before Him and his revealing judgment of our works for Him

see Rev. 3:14-22; II John 1:7-11

3. “If his doctrines have not been true; if he has had mistaken views of piety; if he has nourished feelings which he thought were those of religion; and inculcated practices which, however well meant, are not such as the gospel produces; if he has fallen into error of opinion, feeling, practice, however conscientious, yet he shall suffer loss.” Barnes

D. The inevitable doom of Temple destroyers - vs. 16-17

1. Up to this point, the topic has been on those building upon the foundation of God (primarily the church leaders) but now we reach a far more serious subject - vs. 16

In I Cor. 6:19 he deals with them individually (their bodies) being the Temple of the Holy Spirit

One (of many) reasons local churches need to remember this is our need to be distinct (holy) from our own cities and towns - if we blend in too well, we lose our key uniqueness (essentially our testimony)

- a. To make this sobering point, Paul reminds the Corinthians who they are with a rhetorical question
- b. He reminds them that they are “the Temple of God” - in this context though, he is dealing with them as a group (a church (local group of believers) as being the dwelling place of God)
- c. The reason (proof of this) is that the Spirit of God “dwells” with them -just for clarification, God is “omnipresent” but the term for “dwell” is more personal - local churches often lose sight of this distinction - it would have been clear to the Corinthians since they were familiar with pagan temples all around their city and that their local “body” of believers would be the only place where God’s Spirit truly “lives” (an *exclusivity* often forgotten)
- d. Based on this fact, the church (local) needs to be dealt with cautiously and is not subject to the whims and individual fancies of its leaders - it is the Lord’s and must be treated as such!

2. So, if anyone seeks to “destroy” (defile, spoil, waste) this “temple,” God will destroy them - vs. 17

These “defilers” will no doubt see themselves as wise

This is what Paul was already seeking to counter in their church

- a. This destruction/defilement can happen a few ways, but the one most clear would be the defilement with wrong teaching (false or defiled doctrine made so by its being infected or dominated by the wisdom of the age) - this usually leads to either a “cultish” type movement (where the leaders are essentially idolized) or, as is more common, the church is lead to become more like the world in its beliefs, priorities and practices (morals)
- b. The phrase “God will destroy him” should be frightening to any considering such - some have tried to lessen this by saying it just refers to their destruction/ruin in this life but, in its most plain idea, it is more to be associated with the eternal destruction of the person
- c. This most serious of judgments is expected realizing “the Temple of God is holy” - it is sacred (all that is associated with it - its teaching (God’s Word), its people (God’s children), its purpose and calling (God’s work) - see I Pet. 2:9

This is no stretch of the context - this is exactly what Paul was dealing with in Corinth as they were tempted to leave the fundamentals (the foundation) for some form of relevancy (compatibility with its age)

- d. This reality seems to have escaped a good deal of professing Christianity when we see churches becoming as unique as its “charismatic” (gifted in the worldly sense) leaders and as the churches are being led to become more in-tune with the world and its ideologies with the proclaimed purpose to become relevant

X. Don't Settle For Less than What is Really Yours - 3:18-23

A. Some were self-deluded - they (the Christians in the Corinthian church) were not so much deceived by some outsider coming in and persuading them as much as those within the church were doing so - vs. 18

1. The command (Let no man...) includes some self-introspection - each needs to evaluate if they truly do see themselves as "wise in this age" - this begs the question as to what this "wisdom" involves
 - a. If any seeks the approval of their age for following Christ or for striving to follow and obey Him
 - b. If any seeks out the priorities of their age as primary over what is provided in God's Word
 - c. If any expects to find what the world seeks the same way "the world" (the age) seeks it - the "world" seeks success by excess and promotion in this life - the "world" seeks joy and contentment by cooperation with the establishments and priorities of the age in which they live
 - d. The danger is self-deception (tricking one's self into believing what isn't real) - see James 1:19-27
2. The solution seems contradictory at first glance - if one desires to be wise they must become "foolish"
 - a. The danger dealt with here is not so much that of others esteeming someone to be wise, but when any estimates *themselves* to be wise, and that "in this age"
 - b. If they discover this is the source (the dependence) of their wisdom, they are to become (as it were) foolish in the eyes of their age (and possibly even to themselves at times)
 - c. The problem, if not dealt with, culminates in a church seeking out the wisdom of their age, its objectives, its way of thinking and incorporating it - worldly wisdom (temporal thought and priorities) then become the pursuits of the church, thus its goals follow suit
 - d. He must become ("cause to be" in the middle voice thus he himself seeks to do this) a fool by the standards of his age (it is interesting to note that one of the ideas associated with this word is being considered "dull or stupid" because one is "heedless" (not "heeding" what their passing age recommends))

These vary with each age and are all focused upon the temporal (though each age seems to think its values are eternal)

This would involve a shift in who one seeks to impress and what their greatest life goals consist

One must be resolved to follow Christ as belonging to Him and living for His objectives - if done properly, we will look absurd to our age, so we must not be driven to impress it

B. The motive for doing this is God's perspective (which is absolute truth) - vs. 19-20

1. Before, Paul demonstrated that the wisdom of God is foolish to the world and now makes it plainly clear that "wisdom of the world is foolishness before God" (dull, stupid, heedless)

As demonstrated in the first chapter, the wisdom of the world is most foolish in its opposition to "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" - this counters the *core* of all their religious and philosophical thought

- a. They (the world) are the ones living in denial (of reality and ultimately their mortality)
- b. They are the ones, stupidly "suppressing the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18)
- c. "...for as folly consists in spending time, strength, and pains to no purpose, so these may be fitly termed fools who acquire no saving knowledge by their speculations." Gill

2. As proof, Paul appeals to the Scripture reminding them that this was how it always has been

With God not being central to their thinking, they work out point by point answers to life and meaning (apart from God) which is at the very heart of what it is to be a "fool" - Ps. 14:1

- a. This quote is from Job 5:13, "He is the one who catches the wise in their craftiness" (or "He captures the wise by their own shrewdness") - the Hebrew meaning for craftiness is *strategem*
- b. The word picture being God "grasping hold of them" when they think they are most clever and they are ultimately ensnared (trapped and entangled) in their own thoughts and thought processes - their genius (seen as such for its ability to leave out God in its thinking (*which is their "craft"*)) is proven, sooner or later, to be truly lacking

3. Then, adding a Scripture that "tells it like it is" Paul quotes from Psalm 94:11 - why is God unimpressed with the "reasonings of man" (the men called "wise") because they are, in reality, **useless**

He who knows all things see them for what they really are - see also Rom. 1:21 and Col. 2:8

- a. They are futile because they do not and cannot deal with the eternal
- b. They are without ability because they cannot answer to true purpose in life (which, one way or another, burns within the hearts of each person to know and understand)
- c. They are disheartening because they cannot bring lasting contentment/satisfaction

C. Seeing this is reality, don't "boast in men" - vs. 21-23

1. Don't seek your glory (or glorying) in men or boast in who (what person) you follow

Many, because of impatience or a temporal lack in good judgment settle for something at the cost of the best

- a. Don't be "men-pleasers" or in any way idolize them (as is to be pointed out, don't set your "sights" too low (what you're aiming at)
- b. Have a higher estimate for who you really are and what you really have

2. Paul, striving to convince them not to "settle, lets them know what they really have in Christ

All these teachers are ours - this does not assume tough that we would seek out false teachers since this is countered elsewhere - see Rom. 16:17-18

- a. When he states that "all things belong to you" it is not in a selfish or self-gratifying usage, but in that they are truly all at our use (God's ministers, the world itself (for we inherit the earth and not the ungodly)), and even life and death (both of which "conspire" for the good for us (Rom. 8:28-29)) and the "things" (of substance and happenings) now and later
- b. To limit ourselves to people followers, or to the "now" is to rob ourselves of the vast resources God has for us to grow and properly prepare us

These are ours now and forever, but not in the sense of dominating them but that they are for our use - things present and things to come

Just considering what is at our disposal now, the options seem limitless as to what can ultimately be done (used) with all that we have truly been given

- c. "It is as if this multitude of servants surrounded us and on bended knees held out their precious offerings to us. Some of these servants like pain, injury, sickness, grief, and death may at first have a strange look to us who do not know our own royalty sufficiently. It is God who commissions them all and makes each one bring us some blessing so that as kings unto God we shall lack nothing." Lenski
- d. We are most often guilty of limiting ourselves with a "possession mentality" (that just what I have "legally" of this earth is mine) and this often lends to either the mentality that I must come to control (possess) more to be satisfied (which then comes to dominate a life focus and goals) or out of envy I seek to find fault in what I do not see as mine and seek to find some satisfaction in that approach - to then "glory in men" is to severely limit our glorying!
- e. This is all true and genuine seeing we are Christ's, and with Him then, fellow heirs - Rom. 8:17
- f. And then, of course, Christ is God's (in His sonship He is subordinate, yet in the fullest sense Christ "belongs" to the Godhead (as God)) - when His deity is questioned or discounted altogether, so then is our inheritance in Him

XI. The Proper Judgement of God's Servants - 4:1-5

A. Paul asked that the Corinthians "regard" (take into account the reality) them as servants and stewards - vs. 1-2

1. The term for "regard" is λογίζεσθω an accounting term - the request (in dealing with their competitions and their judging by worldly wisdom) was to be recognized for who they truly were

The ultimate point needing to be considered is that when we deal with the Lord's servants we are to realize we are dealing then with the Lord in how we treat His servants (attendants) and stewards

- a. They were "attendants" (the word picture being an "under-oarsman") there to do the bidding of their master as well as being a "steward" (one entrusted with specific property)
- b. Paul had already made it clear that they were servants (Paul, Apollos, Cephas) but now is about to stress Who the master is (in contrast to the Corinthians)
- c. As stewards, they were given responsibility of the "mysteries of God" (what He revealed)
- d. As is actually the case with all of us, they exist to do God's will and must not be distracted with the wills and concerns of others since they will not give account to them

2. The weight of responsibility on a steward is that they be faithful (trustworthy) - vs. 2

As in our use of "high fidelity" in sound that truly represent the original presentation

- a. One of the synonyms associated with the word for faithful is "fidelity" (carrying the idea that it is true to its intent, properly representing the "real thing" (these "secrets" (truths) revealed))
- b. They are required by their master to be faithful (regardless of the pressures or inconveniences they face) and cannot see themselves as free to do their own will or the will of another
- c. This reality and illustration are presented to deal with the pressure being brought on by the Corinthians - they, having succumbed to the wisdom of their age, were looking to "judge" these servants of Christ by the standards of the world
- d. It is not in the best interest of those "under the stewardship" to distract these stewards from their purpose to dispense these "mysteries" faithfully and as unadulterated as possible
- e. ***This is crucial realizing that then, for all of us, how are we to be faithful with what God has given if we don't know what was given and what it is to be faithful?***

As is often seen today where "ministers" are judged by the criteria of our age (e.g. appearance, eloquence, charisma, managerial skills with the physical)

see Heb. 13:17

B. Paul contrasts his true accountability with the judgement of the Corinthians, human courts or even himself - vs. 3-4

1. Essentially he is saying it is a very small matter what the world thinks of him

These illustrate why all of us must not be driven to please people, human systems and even ourselves - none of these has the omniscient perspective of God though each will vie for our subservience

- a. The judgments of those faced in life were not totally discounted, but were very small in comparison to the judgement yet to be faced before the Lord
- b. He was being scrutinized by the church at Corinth (as some were not "of Paul") but having given it the little consideration, he saw it for what it was (worldly wisdom)
- c. He had and would be brought before human courts, but those also could not be a determining factor of the focus of his faithfulness to his God-given purpose
- d. And he even could not give much weight to his own self-scrutinization - our judgement (especially regarding ourselves) is so often flawed, misinformed and too close (too biased for and against the object of scrutiny!)

2. This, of course, did not mean he did not examine himself seeing he was "conscious of nothing" against himself in whatever the Corinthians were finding fault

This is not proper but is often encouraged to maintain a semblance of peace - but true peace is not found in pretense

- a. He had given it consideration but could not agree with their assessments - often we are tempted to agree with the points of accusations others have against us to avoid further conflict or to put on a false sense of humility

A clear conscience in regards to our service to God is good to pursue, but we must not regard it as definitive - over confidence in self's opinion of self leads to complacency where urgency should be

- b. Yet, even though he did not find fault with himself (as to whatever he was being accused) this did not "acquit" him - for neither others nor ourselves are the final judge
- c. The one who "examines" is the Lord - "Perhaps there is here a gentle and tender reproof of the Corinthians, who were so confident in their own integrity; and a gentle admonition to them to be more cautious, as it was possible that the Lord would detect faults in them where they perceived none." Barnes

C. Do not pass ultimate judgement on the "merits" of the works of each other and even yourselves - vs. 5

- 1. It is far too easy (and human) to reach (and declare) final decisions on the success or value of the works/ministry of another (in Christ) or of one's self (forgetting our tendency to flawed assessments)

The benefit with this understanding is in keeping us alert to our need for improvement as so led by God's Word and keeps us poised to learn

Even those we see as "way off course" we cannot truly "write them off" since God is the judge "of the living and the dead"

- a. Interestingly, this does seem to place some value on questioning ourselves and the value of what we are doing (or seeking to do) for God - we don't want to be come defeatists, but neither should we be too sure of ourselves - comfortable habits become overemphasized traditions
- b. The command to "wait" is intimidating - we are never certain of the quality of our work which then should prompt us to seek reliable "sources" outside ourselves for scrutiny
- c. The issue at hand, though, was their "passing judgment" when it was not theirs to do - this is not describing discerning between right and wrong, but is essentially "passing sentence"

- 2. Instead, leave this to the Lord - if any warning is needed, it is the one given here - that when the Lord comes, He will "bring to light the things hidden"

Note that it is ministering for the Lord that is being discussed and not other issues - discerning judgment is still required amongst us

No doubt will even use those that serve Him out of selfish or proud motives, but they themselves will suffer loss

- a. We, as these Corinthians, can become too focused on the apparent failings of others (in their ministering for God) and fail to miss our own issues - we must remember, other believers are as it were, another man's servants - see Rom. 14:4, 10-13
- b. This enlightening judgement will expose who and what we really are - again, the focus is on "ministers" and teachers though this will be true of us all - this judgement will reveal how truly engaged our hearts were in our service for God - many will come upon works that seem to involve more sacrifice but are actually not very costly - these works are often popular because they have all the *appearance* without much effort or cost
- c. At the Judgement Seat of Christ, there will then be had what is truly praiseworthy - this is to be the drive of us all! - see II Cor. 5:6-10 (the source of our ambition) - anyone who is "driven" to some degree has ambition, but what that ambition is aiming at and motivated by is pivotal

XII. Dealing With The Spiritual Pride of The Corinthians - 4:6-13

A. "Do not exceed what is written" - vs. 6-7 (stay focused on the instruction that was given)

- 1. Paul now clarifies that he used himself and Apollos as examples for them (ultimately to follow)

Good examples are not just to be admired; they are to be followed

When people are ranked too high in our estimations, we will tend to admire and rely upon their thinking and reasoning over God's Word - we see much of this today

There is no eternal reward form God in "beating out" a fellow Christian in anything - in this case, competitors always lose!

- a. Just as they were fellow laborers in God, so should the Corinthians be - in other words, don't just look to your spiritual leaders to do and think what is right, you must also
- b. The phrase "not to exceed what is written" has incurred much discussion over the years as to what "what is written" is referencing - its basic idea is that they learn from Paul and Apollos not to "think" above (going beyond) what is written (the Scriptures and mainly the ones that have been referenced) - don't think yourselves so "smart" that you feel the freedom to venture past what the Scripture says and find more confidence in these extra -Biblical musings
- c. Fully in this context, they should not go beyond in their pride because of what has been taught and illustrated in the example of Paul and Apollos (neither looking for followers of themselves)
- d. For if they don't heed this, they will assuredly become "arrogant" and compete with each other - an atmosphere of competition should not be fostered or encouraged in Churches

- 2. Now, the piercing questions begin! - vs. 7

The humanist influence in us would have us figure that we, by our own excellence made us "better"

compare with John 3:25-30

With pride naturally comes ungratefulness and an unappreciative outlook in life

- a. Who exactly is it that "regards you as superior"? - no doubt other people did (and will), but in the true scheme of things, this is nothing to "bank on" before God - literally the question is "who makes you stand out from everyone else?"
- b. In case they figure they have this answered, he asks them to consider all they have and where it truly came from - all was received - they had nothing but what was given to them by God - their possessions, their abilities, their minds, education and overall life influence and even life itself are from God - all is borrowed and nothing is ours of ourselves (as stewards)
- c. So, if all they had was received (given/graced to them), why do they act as though they did not receive it (and as if they earned it or created what they had on their own) - the cause of bragging

B. A sarcastic comparison between the Corinthian church and the Apostles - vs. 8-13

1. Many try to claim that sarcasm is unwarranted and not right to use, but here we have a shining example of Paul using sarcasm to not only make his point, but to add emphasis to it - vs. 8

This is a good example that there are some arguments or positions we really don't want to win, but because of our pride, have failed to consider where it would lead us

- a. Biblical sarcasm often takes it that the supposed position of the opponent is correct and what the ramifications are - in this case, Paul "runs" with their proud stance against him and acts as though it is *real* to help them see their folly (not to "shame them" as he says in verse 14)
- b. Sometimes, the best way to help someone see their error (or potential error), it helps to "yield the point" of debate to them and see where it will lead - in this case, the Corinthians' position of taking stances against each other, using their spiritual leaders/teachers, was essentially saying that they were wiser than these teachers (they had become the authorities pronouncing sentence)

2. First he points out their independence from the Apostles (essentially in what they had been taught)

as with Laodicea - Rev. 3:17

I know enough on my own

I have enough of my own

I am enough on my own

Or, I am the final judge of all these

see II Tim. 2:12 where it must be recognized what comes before reigning with Him

"I seek not yours, but you" II Cor. 12:14

- a. "You are **already** filled" - first, illustrating that they had a posture that they already had learned enough and were now ready to sit in final judgement of each other (believers) - see Rom. 12:16
 - The "already" indicating amazement that they had reached this level so quickly - also , one already full usually finds "more food" nauseating

b. Another by-product of pride is a false sense of satisfaction in what one *thinks* they know - these become unteachable and no longer seek to learn, believing they "know enough" already

c. "You are rich" - pointing out their actual posture towards God's gifts (graces) - this does not mean they would not know they had physical needs (or even emotional), but that they "had arrived" when it came to their spiritual maturity (as if no more grace was needed)

d. "You have become kings" - literally you "reign without us" - they were no longer under any authority and accountability - They were now on their own (confident in their own authority) - this can become the state of any church that presses "autonomy" too strong and fails to see their required submission to God (thus to His revealed Word)

e. And dropping the sarcasm for a moment, Paul adds, "I wish you had become kings that we might reign with you" (at your side) - as if saying, "Indeed, I truly wish this was true for you" (not in the proud sense of reigning, but in their reigning with the Lord) - Rev. 5:6-10 - but even in wishing this for them, he was trying to correct their distracted presumptions

3. Paul then demonstrates the actual "conditions" of the Apostles in contrast them - vs. 9-10

a. "In my estimation" Paul states that **God Himself** has setup the Apostles differently

b. The Apostles, in contrast have been (in this world) exhibited "last of all" as those condemned to death - this being a picture of a conquering people parading all they had taken before their people and those taken captive who were slated to die were then paraded last to be jeered and mocked and then publicly killed

Evil angels laughing and celebrating, God's angels in amazement at the sight

c. Following this picture, the Apostles are also a "spectacle" to the world (both before men and angels in the world) - the underlying word "θέατρον" (where we get "theatre") refers to the amphitheaters where the conquered were brought to be killed in front of the crowds (who were at a safe distance from any harm but still came to watch the spectacle)

These were places where the masses would come to watch those who were seen as opponents to society (criminals) mercilessly put to death - it was their entertainment

d. All this in contrast to the pursuits and goals of the Corinthian church who sought the admiration and applause of the masses as their *means*, and distance themselves from anything that might make them appear "criminal" to the popular philosophies

These would not face embarrassment at all, not even for Christ

e. The Apostles were counted "fools" because of their association with Christ and yet, somehow, the Corinthians found a way to still be associated with Christ but still considered intelligent (clever in making the two concepts work - this "Christ" having been compromised)

f. Again, in contrast, the Apostles were, as it were, "weak" (without strength) because they would not use the messages, methods and means the world adored - the Corinthians, on the other hand, came across as strong (able, with apparent outward force) to any worldly onlooker

The goal of the true Church has never been to "look good" to the world - it requires too much yielding of what is most precious

g. "You" because of compromise are "distinguished" (as if shining in glory) while the Apostles were seen as despised - they had somehow allowed themselves to think of themselves as significant in their society (though as Paul already described, they were not the "elite" of their age)

4. The unenviable position of the true Apostles over against the Corinthian ministers - vs. 11-13

a. Paul is about to provide specific details to "fill-in" the categories he had just described of the Apostles - the Apostles were living "in the present hour" and somehow the Corinthians had come to see themselves as living (or supposed to be living) in the earthly Kingdom of Christ now

These are characteristic of those listed at the end of Hebrews 11 who live by faith - Heb. 11:33-38

Paul could have taken some pay from the Corinthians but did not - I Cor. 9:1-18 - It may be that he did not want it because their motive would have been to elevate his status so as not to be "ashamed" of him

His not taking support was apparently offensive to them - II Cor. 11:7

The proud Corinthians would have admired more the retaliatory posture (as we see today, those who do not return in like are considered weak)

As the Holy Spirit "confronts" and works with us in our need for our better, so we also should of with those who speak ill of us

As in what the world would continually be trying to "scrub or scrape off" itself

- b. Paul described in greater detail his own conditions in II Cor. 11:21-33 (read)
- c. Here, he describes the Apostles as hungering and thirsting (they travelled a great deal and did not have luxuries and conveniences, being poor), poorly clothed, roughly treated (not just in reference to official scourgings, but to being physically bullied and beaten-up by mobs (as in Acts 14:19) and they truly were "homeless" (always on the move and no place where they were truly settled on this earth)
- d. "We toil, working with our own hands" - This is in reference to earning support by a trade (in Paul's case it was leather working (tent making)) which would have been grueling, and tedious work - the wording of this phrase in Greek indicates working to exhaustion (he and his companions were not characterized as if living a life of ease) - he had a right to be supported but chose not to as he also did in Thessalonica (I Thes. 2:9-12; II Thes. 3:6-13)
- Paul also referenced this concept in I Thes. 4:9-12, challenging them also to "work with their hands" so as to be a good example to the scrutiny of those "outside the church" - as stressed in the II Thes. 3 text above, laziness should not be supported (Acts 20:33-35)
- e. Along the same lines (of doing the right thing though it costs much) he points out "when reviled" (spoken unkindly to) they returned with gracious speech/responses (not being given to self-avenging) - this is doable by God's grace and by considering first the true need of the offender over their offense - Peter used the same wording of Christ - I Pet. 2:23
- f. When "persecuted" (pursued and "pressed-in") they endure it (quitting was never an option because troubles of this sort were expected) and they knew the value of it as if in an investment for their future (see Mat. 5:11-12)
- g. When "slandered" (defamed, lied about with intent to injure/ruin his reputation or credibility) they would "conciliate" - this is the same underlying word for the name "Comforter" of the Holy Spirit, carrying the picture of calling someone "along side" - they would try to personally deal with them rather than slander them in return before others
- h. Then, to top it all off, he summarizes their overall reputation with the world (those seeing themselves as wise) - they (the Apostles) had become as it were the "scum" and "offscouring" of the world - this pictures what is washed off something dirty or swept away - as far as the world is concerned, these were like what needed to be washed away if they were not "fit" in society
- i. All these descriptions were in stark contrast to how the Corinthians wanted to be and see themselves and had come to prioritize - thus their "judgments" of Paul were corrupted - they had become arrogant and proud of a form of spirituality (or religion) that was, in reality, neither

XIII. The Admonition of a Father to His Children - 4:14-21

A. As a father must be "harsh" with his children at times (out of sincere love and care for them) so was Paul - vs. 14

1. The intent was not to embarrass them in his comparison to them - this was not a competition of pride

An unloving father would try to shame his children out of spite (self-love), brow-beating them to surrender, rebellion and not to needed motivation

The intent is to convince with truth to change the mind/thinking, resulting in a change of life

- a. A direct and forceful response (versus a reaction) is evidence of true love (the opposite, as seen often between fathers and children would be apathy (just letting them do whatever they desire to avoid conflict) and never addressing their actual needs)
- b. They no doubt would have felt shame (and rightfully so), but that was not what was needed - shame by itself is just wounded pride, thus the need for "admonition" - the sarcasm he had used was meant to make them think (which is the core idea for "admonish")
- c. The word $\nuουθετῶν$ (admonish) means to warn or exhort by "getting it" into the mind (this is where we get the term "nouthetic counselling" which refers to counselling that is supposed to be based solely upon what is in the Bible)
- d. His urgent care seen in his direct confrontation, stemmed from his realization of them being his "beloved children" (those he deeply cared for) - as in I Thes. 2:11
- e. "We should aim to distinguish between them and their sins, and take care not to discover any spite against them ourselves, nor expose them to contempt and reproach in the world. Re-proofs that expose commonly do but exasperate, when those that kindly and affectionately warn are likely to reform." MH

2. The multitude of leaders and guides does not guarantee a right direction - vs. 15

- a. Paul begins with a comparison of number and relationship - even if (or though) they have countless "slave guardians" - these were those with the responsibility (under the father of the

He had been used of God to found (birth) the church in Corinth and now multitudes (as it seemed) were coming in and adding to and adulterating what they had been taught

The point of this verse is to demonstrate the difference between genuine care and that of proud, popularity and “numbers-seeking” opportunists

Timothy was Paul’s “be-loved child” in the Lord who was “faithful” - consistent because he was “full of faith” and would be what they would need to refocus

Paul stressing his consistency so they realize he was not just “picking on them”

Many who stand in opposition to the Truth fear its exposing their error motivated by trying to justify or cover wrongs or even immoralities they would like to maintain

“The predominant feature of Grecian character, a love for power of discourse, rather than that of godliness, showed itself at Corinth.” JFB

The Gospel, in its entirety is the “power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16) - this reference to “power” is not to be taken as “supernatural happenings” (which the Corinthians seemed to subscribe to)

Often we make, as it were, the chastening of God more harsh and difficult for us when we resist rather than repent

household) to conduct the children to their training (also translated school master) - so these were essentially educational guides

- b. Either way (good or negative influences) they did not have the close (fatherly) relationship Paul had with them, essentially “fathering” the church “through the Gospel” - and this is the key - it was not so much jealousy for their respect as much as it was for their not being distracted from the Gospel of Jesus Christ
 - c. This is the known fear of a parent or a spiritual parent when various philosophical and religious influences begin to sway their “children” - there is a desperate attempt to regain their respect for their good (again, not as a point of competition - this is often missed by the naive)
3. The bold, transparent admonition - compare me - vs. 16-17 (see also I Cor. 11:1)
- a. False teachers and influences will easily encourage their potential followers to do what they say but downplay following what they themselves **actually do**
 - b. Paul’s example was in harmony with what he had taught and had continued to teach, thus the usage of the word “exhort” (call along side) to mimic what he does
 - c. Since Paul could not be there at this point, he sent Timothy to “remind you of my ways” - this is done two ways; in teaching and by example - quite often, a living example of the Truth is what is needed to encourage its implementation - compare to Php. 3:17-4:1
 - d. Many will “preach” what should be done but few actually practice what they preach - as mentioned Prov. 20:6, “Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness, but a faithful man who can find?”
 - e. They, in having Timothy, would be reminded of Paul’s “ways” “which are in Christ” (truly in Christ and not ways of the world that have condescended to include Christ!) - and these ways, this teaching, is what was being taught in all the churches - no one group had exclusive truth

B. “How do you want me to come; with a rod or with gentleness?” - vs. 18-21

1. Some in the Corinthian church arrogantly claimed that Paul would not come - vs. 18
 - a. The gist of their claims carries the tone as if to say “He would not dare come now and face us!”
 - b. These had become “puffed-up” with pride having them superimpose their overconfident “read” of others on the situation in Corinth - this news had reached Paul and Paul was clarifying that sending Timothy was not a “cop-out” on his part and that he would assuredly come (if the Lord so willed it) - there are those who will seek to justify their wrongs also by presuming upon the unfaithfulness of another
 - c. These “arrogant assumers” most likely also feared the coming of Paul, realizing he would expose them for what they really were with the Truth, also illuminating some of their underlying motives (as seen in I Cor. 5:2 where they were not dealing with sin in the Church)
2. Paul would come to see for himself the “power” of those in opposition to him - vs. 19-20
 - a. He planned to come, but as seen in I Cor. 16:5-11 he had opportunity and opposition to deal with while still in Ephesus (he also gave instruction for how Timothy was to be treated)
 - b. In his forthrightness, Paul states that when he comes he will not be looking to discover the “words” of these arrogant opponents, but will “find out” their “power” - he was not interested in their eloquent philosophies of worldly wisdom, but of their true underlying power (if there was any to be had) - essentially seeking whether it was of the Holy Spirit or not
 - c. For the “kingdom of God” is not made up of words (rhetoric, philosophy) - it is not defined and dictated to by the reasonings (which ever happen to be popular in any age) of man, but does consist of “power” (seen in the effected change in the lives of those it is implanted) - the wisdom of the age would intrigue and distract them, but would only make them another variation of what everyone else already was; lost and hopeless
 - d. There is also another usage of “power” to be considered - those opposing Paul were either working by means of the power of God or of the power of the world (which would include themselves (in their pride), the world/age (which includes their approval, acceptance and endorsement) - the power of God seen in authority and ordination of God

3. So, he in a sense warns them to carefully consider what he has written by asking a question - vs. 21

- a. He provides two scenarios - when he does come, will he need to come with a rod (as in the “rod of correction” a parent would use on disobedient children) or with , as it were the tender, gentle love of a parent on a repentant child

XIV. Rebuking the Church's Immoral Response to Immorality - 5:1-13

A. The "demoralized" Corinthian Christians - vs. 1-2

1. This term is appropriate for what was being dealt with in the Church - their morals had practically been debased and their posture towards it was astonishing - vs. 1

There are a couple "categories" of sins addressed in the NT, both with differing responses - most were to be dealt with privately while others, as this one, were to be dealt with openly because they were unashamedly "on display" and there was no repentance

This was incredible also realizing the immoral reputation of the citizens of Corinth (thus the term "to Corinthianize")

There were clearly some who were using the concept of the grace of God as license to sin (sinning as with impunity, that God's grace shielded them *IN* their sin)

- a. Once again Paul is dealing with an issue that they had not apparently mentioned in their letter
- b. The underlying word for "actually" carries two ideas - one, that what is being reported (heard) is real and second that it is commonly known (not only was there no attempt to keep it "under wraps" but it was common knowledge apparently without concern)
- c. The word "immorality" is a common word in the New Testament always referring to some type of sexual sin - Corinth was surrounded with sexual immorality and it was a common trait that the early churches struggled to be rid of - this was made more difficult (compounded) because promiscuities of all sorts were the norm and accepted by society
- d. This particular sin was exceptional in that it was one not even tolerated "among the Gentiles" - it wasn't that it did not exist among society, just that it was not accepted (lawful)
- e. This immorality was a case of incest (in one "having" his step-mother) - Paul was clearly astonished that this was accepted and we can only speculate how the church had come to accept and possibly excuse (and maybe even justified) it - Paul would later clarify their religious mantra that "all things are lawful for me" (I Cor. 6:12; 10:23)

2. The rebuke was not so much on the sin as to their response to it - vs. 2

"There are none more proud than they that least know themselves." GBN

The modern day open-mindedness focuses on the humanness of their tolerance, disregarding God's holiness altogether unless He yields (which many have attempted to portray God as having done)

Sin in the Church is to be grieved over, not disregarded or excused - see II Cor. 12:19-21

Arrogance is vulnerable because it is unguarded (except maybe with its reputation)

- a. They had an arrogant posture to it and/or in light of it - they already were proud of their wisdom and their factions and had neglected to deal with an issue that should have been blatantly obvious - also there was a proud positioning of themselves in their not being "uptight" and "judgemental" about it - in some ways they may have seen themselves as being more "humane" than society (just as we are seeing reasoned out in churches today in the acceptance of immoral practices as being not only permissible but to be (in some ways) admired, promoted)
- b. "An easy-going attitude to sin is always dangerous. It has been said that our one security against sin lies in our being shocked by it... It is not a question of being critical and condemnatory; it is a question of being wounded and shocked." William Barclay
- c. Instead, they were to have "mourned" as if in grieving death (and because they were to have sensed the obligation to "remove him from their midst" - this would be, in a sense, Church discipline (dealing with an open sin with which one is unrepentant))
- d. What good would we do for someone in such a state in not addressing it for what it is? - if one is infected with a deadly sickness it would be reasonable to let them know their condition and then to aid them in seeking its removal (unless of course we do not see sin as if a **deadly** infection)
- e. Pride has a way of causing us to over estimate our rightness and "wisdom," and to underestimate our weaknesses and sins and lack of true perception (blind spots) - pride is a dangerous life partner in that it brings with it a reckless overconfidence (it sees the warnings of God more as challenges to disprove than to be heeded) - see Rom. 16:17-19

B. A swift and decisive decision must be made - vs. 3-5

1. Paul, knowing their apprehension, makes known his "judgment" - vs. 3

There are forms of "guilt" even recognized by society when one is inactive when they should have acted (omission laws)

- a. It is common that when wrong is exposed that we suffer with varying forms of "analysis paralysis," attempting to put off a final decision - or some may feign humility and declare that they are not qualified to make such judgements (failing to see their obligation)
- b. Paul "on his part" (making it clear it would need to be done as a group and not just by him) had reached a decision as to what would need to be done as if he were present with them

2. As a group, gather in the name of "our Lord Jesus" (recognizing His authority and presence) - vs. 4-5

The normal "church discipline" is dealt with in verse 2 when they are removed, though this second step is not to demonstrate vindictiveness but in contrast demonstrates the hope of such an action though it cause the one much pain - truest love is most keenly seen in doing what is best for the one we love long-term - lesser "love" seeks immediate fixes because of personal impatience or discomfort

- a. Paul was also "with them in spirit" aiding in their "moral support" to do what was needed
- b. They, following Paul's lead were to "give him over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh" - many have argued that this is not excommunication, but this is clearly involved though as Albert Barnes remarked, "It may be observed here that though this was to be done by the concurrence of the church, as having a right to administer discipline, yet it was directed by apostolic authority; and there is no evidence that this was the usual form of excommunication, nor ought it now to be used."
- c. This "destruction of the flesh" is the result of being given over to Satan - the "flesh" is his specialty

Yet we don't realize the protection that comes from regular exposure and challenge from the Truth as well as from challenging, edifying fellowship - out from under this influence we become susceptible to all forms of deceit and danger - so, in our day, excommunication no longer carries the dread it used to because the church has become more worldly

It does appear this happened and that there was repentance in this individual as seen in II Cor. 2:5-11 where Paul encourages forgiveness

This seeming "harsh" treatment (with the proper motive) is one of the greatest evidences of true love because the opposite does not consider "The Judgment" to come

C. Their "boasting" (pride) had become a major distraction from more important matters - vs. 6-8

1. There were two "fronts" of their pride and both were not good! - vs. 6

The "theoretical" had come to out-weigh the "practical" (the out-working) of the religious knowledge they prided themselves in having

To be braggadocios that we are "above" something we should actually be honoring is not just arrogance, but the height of dishonoring (in this case) the moral Law giver

Charles Hodge

This "spreading influence" can be of sin (as here) and as our Lord pointed out, of false teaching as in Mt. 16:6-12

2. "Clean out the old leaven" - vs 7-8 (the old way of life they were to have left)

As in Rom. 6:12-14 we are not to have sin reign over us because it is not *who* and *what* we are - we were not feed from sin to go back to it! This is absurd!

So, in reality, they being who they actually are in Christ, are not to live permissive of sin but in contradiction to it (characterized as those "clearing it out")

It is commonly believed that the Christians celebration of the Resurrection stems from the timing and the fulfillment of the Passover celebration

- d. There is much debate over exactly what this entails - some claim it is handing them over to die (which might well be the outcome) though it does seem to carry more the idea of the "destruction of the fleshly" - this is more preferable in light of the next phrase
- e. This "judgement" of the church was to hand over, as it were, this individual to Satan by removing him from the protective surroundings and "results" of the church (this concept seems lost to us today since our churches often don't seem like places of protection)
- f. This special "handing over to Satan" would seem to be of only Apostolic authority (Paul doing it one other time in I Tim. 1:19-20 and again seems not to mean their death since Paul intended it to teach them not to blaspheme) - No mention of the woman, most likely because she was not of the Church
- g. So, the underlying motive isn't spite or vengeance, but for the good - in one sense, protecting the local body of believers; but in the sense here, that with the "ruination" of what is "fleshly" the offender's spirit might be saved by the time they stand before the Lord - this might be doable (practically speaking) as the distractions associated with the "flesh" are ruined (pride, lusts, covetousness, convenience-based living - all of which lead from the Truth)
- h. This drive and motive is to be the underlying reason we seek to practice such "discipline" - out of love for them we do what must be done hoping they will repent (the opposite being a condoning and comforting in one's sin, not lending to repentance)
- a. There was their pride in their knowledge/wisdom and their breaking into competing factions, which apparently was of such high importance they had not thought to deal with this sin (which was blatantly flaunted in their midst)
- b. Then there was the pride they seemed to have taken even in their acceptance of this sinful situation - that they were *so free* from the Law they could permit even gross sin - this type of thinking has led to all sorts of sins being excused in the thinking of many - this is an ironic pride seeing they pride themselves in being so smart that they don't distinguish (differentiate) - they "know so much" that they are purposefully blind to the differences
- c. And this boasting was not good because of the greater threat it posed - quoting an old proverb Paul reminds them that sin is like "leaven" (yeast) and a little bit grows and permeates through the rest of the loaf (a "little" become a "great big")
- d. "A single sin, however secret, when indulged, diffuses its corrupting influence over the whole soul; it depraves the conscience; it alienates from God; it strengthens all other principles of evil, while it destroys the efficacy of the means of grace and the disposition to use them. It is no less true of any community that any one tolerated evil deteriorates its whole moral sense."
- e. Once seemingly condoned, sin will spread its influence quickly catering to "fleshly desires" that we are normally committed to restraining (for conscience sake), but when church leaders and other "mature" believers seem to think it's acceptable, so begins the flood of all sorts of depravity - only now with a thwarted conscience (sense of wrongness and guilt)
- a. With the presence of the Greek article Paul is being very specific - the "old leaven" (old sins that used to characterize their living) should be removed (cleaned-out)
- b. "...just as you are *in fact* unleavened..." - "leaven" (sin) is no longer "you" and this realization is needed so that they might "be" the "new lump" (loaf) without leaven - live "who you actually are"
- c. Paul is appealing to the practice of the Passover Feast where they would search the house to get rid of any leaven before the feast began (leaven being a picture of sin) - purge out (clean house) of what is no longer you - there must not be any sentimentality with it, seeing it is counterproductive (so they not only should remove this person, but evaluate themselves as well)
- d. The "sinner" in this case was clearly not a believer (though a part of the church) reminding us that churches are supposed to be for the edifying of true believers and are not to become places of pseudo-religious justification that downplay accountability before God
- e. To make the point irrefutable, he reminds them "Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed" - This truth is pointed out because "you are in fact unleavened" (the "new lump") - see I Cor. 6:11
- f. In keeping with this, "let us celebrate the feast" (in our case, the fulfillment of it) not with any notion that it would be inclusive of accepted sin

“...holiness is not the goal of the conduct, but its presupposition.”
Conzelmann

As with Israel, when they celebrated Passover they did so celebrating the covering of the blood and the soon to come freedom from bondage - freedom to do what they were meant to do as God's people

- g. Sin and the allowances for sin are compared to “leaven” because it is not just symbolic of sin but also of the predictability of it growing and spreading (as if infectious)
- h. We, being who we actually are, should not think of coming before God with “malice and wickedness” (evil thinking and immoral actions) but instead, should clearly sense the obligation to stand and live before Him in “sincerity and truth” (open and clean thinking and rightness)
- i. “Hence, here, **purity and truth** means the living out of a Christian life in actions which reflect the identity and reality of the new creation, as against that which is tainted by the self-interest and moral degeneracy, which must be **cleaned out.**” Thiselton
- j. The idea of “purity and truth” also demonstrates the goal of being rid of these adulterating influences (which is “impurity”) which will affect ability to know/understand truth correctly and to not be one who tolerates/accepts personal hypocrisy

D. Clarity regarding associations with “immoral people” - vs, 9-13

- 1. It seems clear that something Paul had written to this church in an earlier letter had been taken wrongly when it came to their dealings with “fornicators” - vs. 9-10

So, to keep them “balanced” he says they must associate with some immoral people but those associations are limited (within proper bounds) also - typically business-like acquaintances but not intimate friendships that could influence wrongly

We will have acquaintances with those “of this world” but they will not be (must not be) our close friends - see II Cor. 6:14-7:1)

- a. Taken strictly (which it appears they did, thus making it impossible and then using that as a basis to disregard it completely) it was wrongly handled and probably **deliberately** misused
- b. The usage of the word “altogether” (KJV) at the beginning of verse 10 is important to understand - the idea being that there are certain “immoral people” that they would have to have dealings with, but not “entirely” (“not across the board”) - with many who are seeking “loopholes” in their obligations, often use instruction **wrongly** to “draw lines” **wrongly** and blame the “law giver” in an attempt to justify their actions (or lack of them)
- c. He already gives them an idea of his true meaning with the usage “people of this world” in contrast to those in the church - he also adds to his list the covetous (greedy), swindlers, and idolators - many of these will be interacted with throughout any given day of business
- d. So we will associate with these types of people in the world but “**not entirely**” associate with them

- 2. “Actually, I wrote you not to associate...” - vs. 11

It is interesting to note that the aversion to these people is not so much their sin as it is their response (or lack thereof) to their sin - throughout church history it is because of the acceptance of such people that many have been distracted and veered off-course in their walk, focus and purpose

Also Rom. 16:17; II Thes. 3:6, 14-15; I Tim. 6:3-5

So, avoid those who were/are in the church that are openly (or defensive of) immoral, greedy, idolizes things or people, bullies, drunkards and cheaters

- a. His intention was that they avoid all associations with those with these same qualities (and more) if they call themselves (or are called) “**brothers**” - this now carries the idea to “not have dealings with” entirely, not even to eat with them (literally and with the idea of socializing)
- b. This may seem extreme if we forget what was just discussed in the previous verses - one bearing the name “Christian” (a brother) that is openly (flagrantly) living in sins such as these, is a perversion and contradiction of what they claim to be
- c. Their danger also is their lack of distinction (not “salt” not “light” - Mt. 5:13-16) - light cannot be darkness even when called “light” - this would be a fundamental contradiction!
- d. These would be the same as described in II Peter 2:1-22 (false teachers “among you”) - many “teach” not behind a podium, but by their life and speech - thus they are like the leaven that spreads quickly and thoroughly to “ferment” (a change in the make-up of something through agitation) - it must not be allowed to start because its affects are not intended to stop
- e. It should be noticed also that he adds two more “types” of people to avoid when dealing with those who call themselves “brother” - disassociate also with a “reviler” (one who is abusive, typically with their speech) and a “drunkard” (given over to substances that cloud the senses)

- 3. So, deal with those in your congregation! - vs. 12-13

Paul's question should be a directive to us - “What have I to do with judging the world?” - salt and light affect and reveal but not “judge”

- a. It is not our place to (in a disciplinary way) judge the world (those outside the Church) - far too many Christians in the past and now have turned their attentions too strongly to the societies in which they find themselves, attempting to moralize them all at the expense of their own internal moral and character issues - God is the judge of society/the world
- b. He asks a pointed question (which also leads to the topic of the next chapter) - “Do you not judge those who are within?” - this is pointed as if to say, “Isn't it obvious that you should be?”
- c. We “keep on” each other for the sake of the local body and its protective purity as well as for the sake of the offending “brother” - the intent for restoration but not at the cost of safety
- d. This concept was not new nor was it original with Paul - the Lord, early on, clarified the response a local group of believers is to have with a “brother who sins” - approach privately, if no response, bring one or two more (to sway or to serve as witnesses) and finally if there is still no change, bring it before the Church and avoid them

Matthew 18

XV. Rebuking the Church's Sense of Litigation Over Forbearance - 6:1-8

A. Would you "dare" to take a fellow believer to a civil court to resolve your issues? - vs. 1

1. It is a glaring sign that something is dreadfully wrong when a family takes itself to court

The motivations could have been numerous - possibly for spite (out of vengeful hatred of another), pride (to outwardly demonstrate personal "rightness") or maybe even greed (to get some type of "pay-out")

- a. It is supposed to be expected that families resolve their issues as a point of responsibility
- b. The idea behind "has a case" is a legal idea that if you can "make your case" then "take them to court" - though it has often been counseled in such circumstances to "not take matters into your own hands," there should be, at the very least, a sense of obligation to try to resolve the issue - especially when the issue is with someone in the Church (a fellow believer - a "brother")
- c. The Church is a true fraternal group (we are "brothers") - "It is not a difference between men that is in itself wrong, but it is the spirit with which the difference is adhered to, and the unwillingness to have justice done, that is so often wrong." Barnes

2. The first word in this sentence in the Greek is τολμᾶ ("dare") as in asking, "You really aren't so brash as to take your "neighbor" to court to settle your "case" are you?"

If you're going to demonstrate courage and determination don't do it in areas of sin or of attacking a brother before unbelievers

- a. He tells it like it is by clarifying the difference in where they were prone to take their issues versus where they should - the distinction is between the "unrighteous" and the "saints"
- b. This was not down playing judicial magistrates remembering that Paul also encouraged being submissive to the powers that be (Rom. 13:1-7), but that in comparison (which will be made more stark soon) they were not "saints" (τῶν ἁγίων "those set apart from the world")
- c. And, it was clear in their day that their "judges" were "pagan" (idol worshippers, **Godless**)

B. Understand why you should take such issues before the Church (leaders) - vs. 2-4

1. First, "Do you not know" that "saints will judge the world" - this is the first of six such questions - this was a group that prided themselves in their "wisdom" and yet became so "lofty" in their mental pursuits, they missed glaring wrongs in their midst (see II Tim. 3:1-7 for the end results of such pursuits)

Noah, though not the judge of the world did by his trust and obedience participate in its "condemnation: as we will also be proved by proving the rightness of God and the wrongness of the age in which we live by our faith in Him

- a. This judgement (in contrast to I Cor. 5:12) is eschatological (it has yet to come) but it will most assuredly happen, which is partly seen in our "reigning with Him" (II Tim. 2:12) and also (as far as judging) like Noah when by his faith he "condemned the world" (Heb. 11:7)
- b. And, seeing as we will also (in one way or another) also "judge angels," how is it that the "saints" are not qualified enough to judge much lesser matters - since the very standards by which we live (God's Word, the Holy Spirit) will be used to judge these magistrates also, why would they be looking to them to judge these disputes between the "saints"?

We find ourselves also in an era that looks down upon Biblical faith and expects very little of it as far as true, relevant wisdom is concerned

- c. It was clear that because they were enamored with the supposed wisdom of their society that they did not even consider that what they had been learning under Paul and the other Apostles was superior even in these areas
- d. Yet we also see in our time that it is common for Christians to bring other Christians to court, contradicting the "by their love for one another" quality that is to characterize us (Jn. 13:35) - and we see that even **our** court systems originally founded on Biblical law and principles are now leaving them for a moral base without absolute authority

There is also a true sense in which, by our living now (as in Christ) we "judge" the world (in the distinguishing sense)

- e. So, the overall point Paul is making is one of "from the greater to the lesser" - if one is on a supreme court that should not make them incapable of handling "cases of a lower court"

2. The key distinguishing difference is clarified - "judges who are of no account in the church" - vs. 4

As with the church in Corinth, the Church today seems to think these judges and others as of great account at the cost of reverence and reliance upon Scripture and the ageless wisdom it contains

- a. Again, this phrasing does not disrespect the judges of the "courts of the land" but should make us consider if they "...should hold a place of significance in the lives of those who belong to a different age." Fee - just as we should consider all areas of our age's wisdoms in psychiatry/psychology (medical, physical, philosophical and pharmaceutical answers to mental issues), modern philosophers ("thinkers") and others, understanding their foundation (starting point and presuppositions) and their scope of "treatment" options (versus what ours is supposed to be)
- b. Even if a judge in a civil court is a Christian, they are still bound to the laws of the land (which at their best are a watered-down version of Biblical content, and which are becoming less "just" and "righteous" as our society and its leaders de-moralize)
- c. So, if you must handle "judicial cases" amongst yourselves, don't take them to the courts of the land; handle them yourselves - with this approach becoming the norm, this would make those in the church needing to be more responsible in their own preparedness for when they are called upon to make "righteous judgements" with their "brethren"
- d. When we act as though we must solve the basic challenges of life somewhere other than God's Word, we demonstrate it as deficient and irrelevant

Some translations have this verse saying they should appoint the "least esteemed among them" over these matters (as in the imperative) but this does not fit the context and the subject properly and would be, if taken literally, a furtherance of the problem

C. Now is the time to feel shame - "Isn't there one wise man among you?" - vs. 5-6

1. Back in 4:14, Paul stated that he did not write (in his sarcasm) to "shame you," yet now he does - vs. 5

Our issues that are not dealt with properly become "traction" for the arguments of those who oppose God

a. They should be embarrassed that they have taken their issues outside the church - they were "airing their 'dirty laundry' before unbelievers" - when this is allowed, those "without" use it to discredit "the Faith" altogether in their own eyes

b. They should be embarrassed that they have refused to have anyone willing to "draw a line" - it is not uncommon between family and friends to fear making a "judgement call"

And, as is so often the case, when impressed with the world's system we tend to rely on it more than God's "system"

c. They should be ashamed that they were distracted away from more important matters to truly lesser matters because of their pride - their pursuits to be impressive with their society they neglected to care for their own (possibly because the other pursuits were more "prestigious")

2. Then, using the concept they were most taken with (*wisdom*) he asks (accusingly) whether or not they have "even one" who can handle these *basic* issues of discernment - vs. 5-6

a. They were so busy grouping themselves into "camps" (of competition, which would likely have involved theological issues), that they could not handle debates between "brothers"

It is supposed to be absurd to consider that believers would take another believer before an unbeliever to decide between their disputes

b. The word used for "decide between" is in contrast to "judge" - here they are not to act as formal judges in formal courts, but as family - This is why Paul asks astonished, "brother goes to law with a brother, and that before unbelievers?" - these secular judges are not people of faith

c. When fellow believers deal with each other we are to decide, conclude and exhort based on faith and THE Faith (and prodding one another to respond in faith)

3. Churches should have a solid and wise leadership established with the purpose to provide well-founded spiritual direction and counsel, who not only are able to handle issues between members, but who also are ready and willing to do so (and members ready to abide by/under it)

As churches have drifted from the authority of the Bible and have drifted the cleverness of popular church personalities and trends we have been robbed of a basis to properly judge what is without and within

a. It appears as though many churches have become so sensitive to the "feelings" and "self-esteem" of each other that no one dares conclude between factions, or if they do it is often not based upon Scripture as the guiding authority

b. We are called people of faith because of "the Faith" and we must expect to live under its authority as *from* God Himself

c. And what if they go to court and win? What have they really won? In their pursuits to win, they were actually losing even when "winning"

D. This whole approach (of Paul) demonstrates a flaw in their character - vs. 7-8

1. The greater issue (than going to court) was their having these types of problems with each other to begin with

see Pr. 20:22, Rom. 12:17-19, I Thes. 5:15, I Pet. 2:19-23 and I Pet. 3:9

a. Just in getting to the point of such severity of disputes that one would need to have it officially settled is already a loss (even if they "win" the decision, they have still lost in a greater sense)

b. Paul's counsel to them would seem absurd to most - "Why not rather be wronged and allow yourself to be defrauded?" - allowing a brother to harm you without retaliation is actually one of the greatest exhibitions of what "Christian love" is supposed to be

Our battlegrounds are not "carnal" (fleshly) but are truly spiritual (philosophical, ideological)

c. This is doable (conceivable), first by considering the wrong-doer (seeing beyond their spite and pride) and looking to love them in spite of it and, secondly, consider the all-seeing eyes of God and leaving it all to Him "Who judges righteously" (I Pet. 2:23) as our Lord did

2. There was actually "wrong" (acting unrighteously and unjustly) and "defrauding" (robbing, depriving) each other going on in their church - both opposite to what they should have been doing

This is why forgiveness is not to be seen as optional and exceptional but as required and to be the expected norm for ourselves

a. These types of wrongs were being done on both sides - those perpetrating them and those retaliating (getting "even" does not level the circumstances, it profoundly compounds them)

b. Many "innocent parties" become offenders themselves out of a retaliatory and bitter spirit yet Paul is literally saying "let yourself be deprived of your rights" seeking to be the opposite; un-offendable! (if my rights are already yielded and my expectations are in-line with this, I will not be a "rights-seeker" and will not give another a "handle" with which to "grab me" and stir up bitterness (leading to severely misdirected purpose and overall life focus)

Paul emphasizes that they even do these things to "brothers" - true love decreases as sin (self-will) increases

c. Also, defrauding a "brother" can be done legally, in a court - just because one wins a case in a "court of law" does not guarantee they are in the right - it appears that some in Corinth had been able to deprive others of their rights and essentially rob them also by using the courts

3. In all this, as wrong as it was on its own, they were also losing their distinction from the world

a. These cheatings and injustices were common in their society (accepted norms) yet were certainly not supposed to be so in the Church

b. These were qualities of the "ungodly" and, as is about to be discussed, were dangerous on an eternal scale!

XVI. As Citizens of the Kingdom of God, Your Bodies are the Temple of the Holy Spirit - 6:9-20

A. Do not be deceived about the unrighteous - vs. 9-10

1. The word for “deceived” pictures one being led astray (off the correct course)

The societal or moral “good” in one does not excuse their evil - to believe so is to warp the conscience robbing it of its fundamental force to properly affect

This type of thinking is prevalent in our “churches” today where it is even considered “Christian” to be accepting of sinful lifestyles

a. Even in the first century Church there were those who believed no matter how they lived, they were still guaranteed “Heaven” - many “unrighteousness” will practice other forms of righteous acts to appease their consciences and to outwardly try to justify their wrong (as though good works can blot out the sin of their other works)

— b. One must not be lulled into thinking their sinful lifestyle is compatible with being a true inheritor of the Kingdom, and the rest should not be “**guilted**” into compromising so as to make practical allowances for those who call themselves “brothers” and yet live in contradiction to it

2. The opening question in this verse is rhetorical - they should know that the “unrighteous” will not be inheritors of God’s kingdom - see Rom. 8:17 for one description of such true inheritors

a. In conjunction with the previous verses, Paul is pointing out that such activity as they had been doing (allowing, promoting and justifying) is wrong and evidential of a lost “state of being” versus one who has been “saved” - true sons of God (made so to actually be inheritors) not only don’t live sinfully, but actively pursue living as “suits” (fits) their regenerated purpose

Just as so many church attendees constantly appeal to the “court of public opinion” to make their case against practical righteousness

— b. These had not only been practicing such, but going to “heathen courts” to justify it

3. There may be some doubt regarding some professing Christians, but there are some groups we can be assured are not going to inherit God’s Kingdom no matter what other “good” they seem to do

a. Be assured, “fornicators” will not inherit the kingdom of God - these are those indulging in (giving themselves over to (selling themselves)) sexual immorality with anyone

Literally picturing one rendering consistent service that would normally be given to a deity (service of honor, trust and submission) to a thing

— b. Be assured, “idolators” will not inherit the kingdom of God - the underlying word εἰδωλολάτραι comes from two words; the first half is an image (that which can be seen (εἶδω) and touched, versus the unseen) and the second is a typical word for religious service

There is a push to avoid marriage altogether and just “live together” - this would also be “fornication” but can also be an “adulteration” of what marriage is for

— c. Be assured, “adulterers” will not inherit the kingdom of God - typically used of one being sexually associated with another who is married, but also entails those “messing with” marriage altogether

• Though this not the usage here, it has been noted that when someone is sexually active with another out of wedlock, they are committing adultery against the one the person they might someday marry (though with today’s idea of marriage this is hardly a thought)

Often these would be young men and would fall into the category of pedophilia (which is finding inroads again in our society)

d. Be assured, the “effeminate” will not inherit the kingdom of God - the word μαλακοὶ is used to also describe soft material though in the context of these verses (dealing with sexual sins) it describes a man, effeminate by perversion and used of one who submits himself to prostitution to be “used” by other men (these are the “submissives” and the next the “aggressors”)

Though many Christians will stress this one because “fornication” and “adultery” have both been common for so long they will avoid the inclusion of them

e. Be assured, the “homosexuals” will not inherit the kingdom of God - a word used to describe “same sex” physical relationships (used of men with men) - there are many in “religious” circles trying to justify this form of perversion by trying to make this word and the one previous reference other things; though in this context and others (as in Rom. 1) it refers to exactly what we see today in homosexual movement

f. Be assured, “thieves” will not inherit the kingdom of God - κλέπται - those who steal (usually deceitfully, secretly) - this is opposite to the generosity Christians are to have

They are characterized as those that truly “live for” things, possessions and money (and all that money can conceivably bring them)

— g. Be assured, the “covetous” will not inherit the kingdom of God - “One eager to have more, especially what belongs to others” Thayer - these are driven by greed - in a society familiar with “hoarders” and living in a “keep buying” society not only makes this a “norm” but has even been marketed to be a patriotic virtue (e.g. “stimulate the economy”) - to be covetous one need not have the power to purchase, just an imagination given over to purchasing!

These are those seeking varying means to escape and disarm normals faculties God gave us to sense wrong (such as guilt or the sense of responsibility)

h. Be assured, “drunkards” will not inherit the kingdom of God - this word describes those “intoxicated” (a state in which a person’s normal capacity to act or reason is inhibited by alcohol or drugs) often brought on and lived-for to avoid aspects of reality - one can be “drunk” (intoxicated) with more than just drugs and alcohol - it is not so much the means as it is the pursued result of having the senses dulled to “escape” some responsibility

“who are free with other men’s characters, load them with reproaches, and take away their good names; either openly or secretly, either by tale bearing, whispering, and backbiting, or by raising and spreading scandalous reports in a public manner.” Gill

— i. Be assured, “revilers” will not inherit the kingdom of God - those who are abusive, openly vicious to others - these are extreme “bullies” finding some type of fulfillment in injuring others physically, socially (reputation) or mentally

j. Be assured, “swindlers” will not inherit the kingdom of God - to take what is another’s by force either by some form of blackmail or using one’s station or position of power

B. "And such *were* some of you; but..." - vs. 11

1. "The proof of Christianity lay in its power. It could take the dregs of humanity and make them into men. It could take men lost to shame and make them sons of God. There were in Corinth, and all over the world, men who were living proofs of the re- creating power of Christ." - Barclay

It has been mentioned that if reality be truly known, sin and rebellion are actually "boring" and righteousness and obedience are actually exciting (being rare - the majority follow after sin while the rarities follow after God)

- a. Not all of them were so characterized, but some were and the past tense is part of the emphasis
- b. The first point is that they are no longer to be characterized as such - they were saved from such living to *true* living - the Roman culture of their day was filled with such sins that were considered normal life-styles - but societal norms do not change or dictate God's norms!

2. On a side note, there does seem to be greater concern for those going the "opposite" direction" - those who proclaim to be Christian, redeemed from their sin that either go back to it or, in the case of those "saved" at a younger age, go into a life of sin without *retreat* (a realization quickly that this was wrong), *regret* (longing to undue) or *repentance* (a definitive change back to what they really are)

3. Making his "case" solid, he reminds them (in the positive) what happened to them with three key words

see also Col. 3:5-7; Eph. 4:17-22; 5:8

- a. The first is interesting in the middle voice (not passive as the next two) so it could be read more accurately as "you had yourselves washed," demonstrating their initial desire and willingness to be washed-off from such filth - as the church at Ephesus (Eph. 2:1-3)

Being now set out of the "norm" and in association with God we do not expect nor set out to be "conformed to" the age in which we live. Many end up mimicking the very actions and lines of thinking the are set apart to live against

- b. You were "sanctified" (passive voice) - they were set apart for God's purpose and not for the purposes of the world or for their own purposes (to live as they ought) - this being *set apart* as by association (in this case with Christ) (as will also be the case in I Cor. 7:14 where the unbelieving spouse is "sanctified" by the believer - not in salvation but in *association* which is assumed to have a direct impact on "environment" and behavior) - we, because of this, don't take our behavioral or moral "queues" from society (we being "not" of this world")

- c. You were "justified" (judicially made righteous before God in and by Christ) so why would you think you should or could live out your life opposite to your standing?

C. Consider your "freedom" in light of your "ownership" - vs. 12-20

1. The Corinthians push for personal liberty at the cost of personal, social and spiritual responsibility - vs. 12

Many become "legalists" in a far different way living by the "letter" and against the "spirit" (the entire intent)

- a. It is fairly certain that the Corinthians had come up with a slogan that they lived by, and it may have been a distortion of Paul's teachings - "All things are lawful for me" - taking concepts such as the freedom to eat any type of food was interpreted to mean they could then use any "thing" as they desired (not considering the *usage* being the wrong and not the "amorality" of the "thing")

Another way of translating "expedient" is "helpful" - it may not be forbidden or restricted by law, but is it constructive, useful?

- b. The thinking (as might be worded today) is along the lines of "If there's no law specifically against it, it is permissible and if it's permissible, of course we should exercise our freedoms"

We need a people focused on not what is OK for me but what is the best I should do - not "what's wrong with it?" but "what's right with it?"

- c. This same type of thinking is prevalent even in or churches today, with a misinformed and misdirected view of "Christian liberty" (using the concepts of God's grace as varying forms of "license" to sensuality (*permitted* feelings more than accountable thinking))

Though I'm allowed to eat anything I should not think it wise to eat everything

- d. To counter the "all things are lawful" Paul clarifies that not "all things" are "profitable" (they are not worthwhile for ourselves or others) - "all things" must be considered in how they are **used** not just in light of self, but must take into account affects and costs to others (as will be considered in chapter 8 when not using *liberties* to be harmful to others)

There is an often misunderstood fear that comes with freedoms (as one on a vacation that wears themselves in seeing all the sights and feeling obligated to take every opportunity

- e. And though something one might be looking to do is not "against the law," each must beware of being controlled by what they are considering allowing or experimenting with

- f. "Note, There is a liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, in which we must stand fast. But surely he would never carry this liberty so far as to put himself into the power of any bodily appetite. Though all meats were supposed lawful, he would not become a glutton nor a drunkard." MH

- g. All sorts of addictions come from seemingly simple indulgences into experimentations with "freedom"

- h. There is an ironic sense of this last phrase in which one might actually be addicted to, enslaved to their freedom - this is where one calculates that since they can do all things, they must do all things (as if under the compulsion to exercise *all* their perceived rights and privileges)

If truly "all things are lawful for me" then chaos would be the "rule" of the day

Thiselton

- i. "**Liberty to do anything" - but I will not let anything take liberties with me** seems to capture all the appropriate nuances, combining Corinthian triumphalism and sloganizing with Paul's related theology of redefined freedom. It is a well-known paradox that if *everyone* claims unqualified autonomy, *no one* can be free, for everyone is threatened by the freedoms of the other."

- j. The objective is to strive after what is best realizing (as will soon be discussed) that we have been "bought with a price" and do not belong to ourselves

2. Don't use pseudo-religious philosophies and reasonings to justify sinning - vs. 13-17

This is another method many use to deal with their consciences and some are so clever, they get followers to their various philosophies to make various sins acceptable

As the stomach has an appetite for food (which is a sensing of need) so then must be the appetite for the sexual (they reason) - similar reasoning is used today appealing to genetics when many claim certain ones are "predisposed" to homosexuality

The resurrection (to be covered in detail in chapter 15) is intended to keep our focus beyond this life and the usage of our bodies now in light of it

It was common to so compartmentalize one's life that areas and "parts" were broken out into categories of secular/carnal (for this world only) and the spiritual belonging only to the next "world" missing the point that we are eternal citizens of Christ now!

The phrase in vs. 15 "May it never be!" is in the optative in Greek essentially expressing "Oh please let this thought never be!"

Actions have consequences no matter the denials of costs others may "sell" us - once certain "investments" are made there are no "I didn't mean it's" to repeal the consequences

In light of verses 9-10 of this chapter the prostitute is not assumed as being in Christ and since the man's actions are so drastic in light of these questions he is most likely not either

- a. This activity of trying to come up with "spiritual" (and even Biblical) truths and working with them a bit to spin them into not just an excuse, but a moral justification for all sorts of sin, is always with us, historically and in our day now (and in churches)
- b. The next "slogan" that Paul deals with is "Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them" - was being used to justify patronizing prostitutes
- c. Their reasoning was as such - since what we eat has been proven to have no moral significance (the dietary laws being no longer "in force") and this is emphasized realizing God will destroy both of them (both being transient and only for this life) so since this was true with food (and the digestive processes) then the same reasoning can apply to all other uses of the body (even in the participation of sexual sins) - so, whatever God will destroy (they say) has an indiscriminate purpose in this life
- d. Yet, contrary to their usage of popular wisdom (made popular because it catered to lusts) the **body** (now not just referencing a part/member of the body but the whole) is not intended for (was not made for) "fornication" (sexual immorality) - then, utilizing the purposeful "**for**" Paul states the fact that the body is "**for** the Lord" (to obey, honor and used for His purposes) and "the Lord **for** the body" to redeem it in useful purpose, and ultimately resurrect it as He did with Christ (in raising His body, so He will with us - vs. 14) - with His power as in Eph. 1:18-23
- e. Many not only try to justify immorality but even try to blame it on God, that since He made us with these "appetites" we can't help it (though **any** unrestrained appetite becomes wrong - freedom is not the absence of restrictions but the privilege to do what we are able and ought within boundaries (made so for protection - *unrestrained freedoms become dangers*) - see Rom. 6:18 - many seek out "endorsement" of themselves and actions from Scripture not instruction and correction
- f. Then, going back to the usage of the idea of body parts ("members") our bodies (and all their parts) are "members of Christ" - so many focus on their supposed "liberties" that they do not think of their calling and purpose in Christ and how these should dictate the usage of all their resources (including the body with all its parts, appetites and inclinations)
- g. Paul asks two more probing questions - the first, realizing they are members of Christ's body, would they take these members and unite them with a prostitute? (uniting with her) - the next question (rhetorical) asks if they know that in sexually uniting with a prostitute they are essentially "one flesh" as was clarified from the beginning in Genesis 2:24 - this joining with a harlot is in the middle voice clearly identifying this as a deliberate act/choice and in so doing, a man yields essentially all his members (including his mind) to her (all other "parts" needing to participate in the lead-up to the act and the act itself)
- h. Though societies throughout history (including ours) have cheapened and perverted the physical union between a man and woman, Paul's emphasis on its severity is undeniable - there is no such thing as an "innocent little tryst" - it carries a far more committed impact
- i. The sexual union between this man and prostitute makes them "one body" (Biblically) and he fails to realize his body is not his to do whatever he desires, seeing he is one with another "body" (that being Christ and not his wife in this context (he need not be married to commit spiritual adultery being of the "bride of Christ" himself - Eph. 5:25-27)) - for "The one that joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him" - to the Christian, married or unmarried there is already a commitment and that must not be seen as compromisable at any point
- j. When standards of true identifying holiness are removed from churches it becomes *intolerable* by its members to distinguish who actually are in Christ! "Salvation" is made to be a point-in-time decision that does not actually need to have an impact of behavior (which is dead wrong!)

3. Being the "Temple of the Holy Spirit" we "are not your own" - vs. 18-20

"Sin is a monster of such awful mein that to be hated needs but to be seen but seen to oft familiar of face we first endure, then pity, then embrace" Alexander Pope ("mein" - appearance)

- a. **Run** from sexual immorality! - don't stand to reason with it, compromise or come to terms with it realizing it's flammable nature (for a vivid picture read Pro. 6:20-29; 7:6-27) - Joseph, though a Godly man and a man of obvious commitment before God ran from Potiphar's wife when she solicited him (Gen. 39:12) - see also II Tim. 2:22 and I Pet. 2:11 (wages war against the soul)
- b. Sexual immorality is unique from all others sins in that, following the uniqueness of the purpose of the physical union, when a man professing to be a Christian unites with a prostitute he is, as it were, under her authority which is uniquely against his body which is not even his!

Some have claimed that Paul is discounting another Corinthian slogan that all sins are done "outside one's body" and Paul is countering this idea also using sexual immorality as an example that defies their thinking - there does seem to be some merit to this line of thinking

A Temple was a place to show honor and worship by service

see also Acts 20:28; I Pet. 2:9

We are to master our bodies and not to have our bodies master us - we must not lose sight of what our bodies are for - we are not driven by "if it feels good" as much as we are "if it **IS** good"

- c. What does it mean, that "...every other sin that a man commits is outside the body..."? - many have asked if there aren't other sins against the "body" also, such as drunkenness and suicide - these are obviously also "against one's body" but not in the same sense as sexual immorality; not to the same degree and in the same sense as noted earlier
- d. Again Paul asks, "Do you not know?" regarding their body (now individually and not as a group) is the "Temple of the Holy Spirit" and as the temples in Corinth had their "deities" prominently (and larger than life) displayed, so they also should realize the Spirit of God prominent in their focus, daily plans and purposes - if it could be seen, many would have "images" to their physical lusts (of varying degrees) as the "indwellers" of their temple, being more what they see as defining/controlling them rather than the Holy Spirit
- e. Some have thought to see a contradiction in these verses when the phrase "your own body" is used and then "you are not your own" - this is no contradiction, but is more a statement of "levels" - our bodies are "ours" but we (body, soul and spirit) belong to God - thus we are stewards, realizing our bodies are ours as **entrusted** to us in the service of our master
- f. We have been purchased at a price (and that a high one) so "by all means" glorify God in your body! "God" and not "our body" is the ultimate consideration" - Lenski - We have been given by God the Holy Spirit (for His directive purposes) and our bodies (for the outworking of His purposes while in the world) - compare to I Peter 1:17-21

XVII. Specific Instructions and Counsel to Christians Regarding Marriage and Being Unmarried - 7:1-16

A. This chapter begins with Paul finally addressing items they had written him - with the phrase, "Now concerning the things about which you wrote..." and in verse 25, "Now concerning virgins..." he appears to be answering their questions/issues point by point

B. These topics deal with marriage in general, the physical aspect as well as the "commitment" - vs. 1-7

1. This first phrase is not without much controversy now and over the ages, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman" - what is meant by "touch" and in what way is it "good"?

It is obviously true that for a man to avoid stirring up lustful passions he should not touch a woman (not his wife) in the majority of situations but this is not the text to use to support this stance

compare to Gen. 20:6; Pro. 6:29

Over the centuries many have attempted to use these verses (in chapter 7) to make a case for the moral superiority of asceticism (the avoidance of all "indulgences") and that remaining single demonstrated a greater commitment to Christ

- a. It would seem not only impractical, but also impossible to take this to mean "touching" of any kind, realizing if a woman had fallen or was unable to get up, a man might need to "touch" her
- b. "The idiom 'to touch a woman' occurs nine times in Greek antiquity, ranging across six centuries and a variety of writers, and in every other instance, without ambiguity it refers to having sexual intercourse." Fee - many take it to mean "not to marry" though this seems to be a "stretch" of the meaning, and a result of an external influence/idea **on** the text and not **from** it
- c. It is also strongly asserted by some that the statement "it is good for a man not to touch a woman" is a quote from their letter to Paul and that they were drawing the conclusion that physical relationships between a man and a woman should be avoided altogether - that this actually might be such is believable (even likely)
- d. The basic meaning is not unclear either way: it is "good" for a man not to have a physical relationship with a woman in the sense that it is also good - just as it is good and proper **to practice** in marriage - not that the avoidance of these unions is morally better than all others
- e. We also have some who tend to so emphasize marriage that they create the idea (and atmosphere) that all must or should be married, overemphasizing its significance for **everyone** - being single (as will be discussed further) has its advantages as well and should be recognized (we never, in the church, want to foster an environment of a frenzied match-making focus!)

2. "Because of immoralities..." each should be married and meeting their "physical" obligations - vs. 2-4

Part of the reason for their initial question was whether or not sexual relations should be avoided altogether which may have lent to some men trying to justify their immoral behavior (claiming it was OK since their needs were not met)

- a. This verse is not a "proof text" that the **main** reason to marry is to gratify sexual desires!
- b. The topic of marriage is covered in many other texts, but this one is dealing with a prominent issue that had arisen in the Corinthian church in dealing with a growing acceptance (as seen in the previous chapter) of utilizing prostitution to "meet needs"
- c. One of the reasons (**not all**) for marriage was to meet these God-given inclinations in a "holy" way (Marriage being the "holy" (set apart) setting that makes these unions sacred) - see Heb. 13:4 (the sexual union is only defiling when outside of marriage)
- d. Each (as needed) is to have their own spouse - notice a man has a wife and a wife a husband (no same-sex unions implied here) - each is to fulfill their responsibility (physically) to each other (though this will involve other considerations such as sensitivity and emotions overall)

Celibacy is the exception, not the rule

One of the greatest causes of tension in a marriage is when each (or one) turns their focus self ward expecting the other to fulfill their "obligations" - when approached in this fashion it makes the union "forced" and not the continual spontaneity of giving

- e. Many unnecessary "sexual tensions" have been made because of various "forbidding to marry" rules or because total abstinence (avoiding marriage) throughout life is made a virtue in itself - if someone is not "wired" for a celibate life, they will be naturally inclined to look for a mate
- f. In marriage, each partner should be driven to meet the needs of the other - as stressed in verse 4, each is to see their bodies as belonging to the other (in other words, each is not to be driven to have their own "needs" met but to be truly thrilled to please the other)
- g. The physical union between a husband and wife is to be a **result** and not the **goal** - it is the natural by-product of a truly loving relationship between them and will not need to be "forced"
- h. Neither has "exclusive authority" in the marriage over their own body which also entails that neither can offer it (their body) to another outside the marriage - each has their "own" which communicates exclusivity to each other (in mind and in body)
- i. Each **must** fulfil their responsibility to the other - it is motivated in selflessness

3. Husbands and wives should not deprive one another of these times together - vs. 5

Because mankind has cheapened the sexual union it has become associated with "unholiness" but just because a holy practice is defiled by others does not make the God-ordained practice unholy based on current circumstances

- a. Since there had been some misunderstanding regarding the physical union, many had come to believe it was "more spiritual" to refrain altogether, leading to married couples ceasing what they had come to believe was unclean or somehow not of God
- b. The only exception given is for an agreed time by both (the underlying word for "agreement" (συμφώνου) is where we get our word for "symphony" - they need to be "in harmony") - this time is phrased as a time literally "devote yourselves to **the** prayer" which may have been reference to a designated time and practice of the Church, like a time of fasting and praying
- c. The emphasis though is not on the "religious separation," but on the "coming together again" to again aid in "fighting off Satan" and the temptations likely to grow because of "your inability to control yourselves" - this was not a criticism in this context, as some might take it, but was a recognition of the natural course of things - this is needed for those not "graced" particularly with celibacy
- d. The emphasis also should not be, for instance, a husband "threatening" his wife that he will be "weaker." but is more that the wife recognizes this as well as the husband; **each for the other**

One of the "benefits" of marriage is that each looks out for the other and strives to strengthen and build each other up in their individual as well as their combined walk of life in faith

4. Each is to live in light of their God-given "condition" - vs. 6-7

This can be the case both ways - those forcing all into marriage or those trying to force all into life-long abstinence

- a. Individual and societal standards have their place and are often challenging and protective, but often someone's personal standard becomes popular and showcased before "the masses" and is put forward as what should be a "norm" for everyone - again, this is excellent and proper when it is truly Biblically based, but when it's not it can become an unnecessary, profoundly discouraging distraction - such as in the case of "forced" celibacy
- b. When Paul wrote that all he had been saying (so far) on this topic was "by way of concession" he is not indicating that it is just his opinion - the underlying word for "concession" (συγγνώμην) indicates he was "conceding" the fact of their inclinations (natural) so when he states in verse 7 that he wished all "were even as I myself am", he is not making a case (here) for being unmarried, but a "wish" that they (in light of their present circumstances and the prevailing immorality of their society) could be free from these "drives"
- c. The lacking of need for this type of relationship is a good "gift" as are other gifts of God - this is a special gifting of God and as Paul acknowledges, it would have made these particular challenges easier - yet consider the good that God brings out of the marriage relationship - the ultimate picturing of the relationship of Christ and His church, close companionship through life, children and more
- d. Also, when Paul mentions that this was not "by command" (verse 6) he is referencing the fact that what he is writing was not in the Lord's particular teachings (while on Earth) and not that what he is saying is his opinion and thus need not be adhered to strictly - in verse 10 he references the Lord's instructions and then in verse 12, when he writes, "But the rest I say, not of the Lord..." he is giving his instruction, but not devaluing what he was writing
- e. Each is gifted by God who not only created each and knows each, but only gives gifts as they are needed in the outworking of His sovereign plan - one will be gifted one way and another, another way - this is why we are not to "compare ourselves among ourselves" but instead to our Lord and His submissive posture before the Father (as so we should be in all things, at all times)
- f. As will be covered more later, it is implied here and stressed more later in this chapter that each is to be content with their "lot in life" from God, realizing it was masterfully planned as such!

There is nothing wrong with this wish of Paul's but it should not be taken as being against marriage - Paul writes highly of marriage in Eph. 5 and the initial indication by God that it is not good "for man to be alone" demonstrates God's reason for marriage

It is interesting to realize that the gift of celibacy is not popularly sought after in the charismatic circles though this is truly a "charismatic" gift (a gracing of special ability)

All of Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable - we err when we take words colored in red in our Bibles as of greater significance than all else written - ultimately they are all from God and should be treated as such

C. Special instruction to those unmarried and those unmarried because they are widowed - vs. 8-9

1. Just as he used the word for “good” in verse one, so it is used again - to be unmarried, or to remain unmarried is ALSO good - he does not say it is better for them to “remain as I am” but that it is good

This is believed because Paul was known to be on the Sanhedrin and it was required that a man be married to be a part of this council

- a. Some try to work in a reference to what is described in verse 26 as “the present distress” as to why it is good to remain unmarried, but this is getting ahead of what Paul is describing
- b. He is simply reiterating what he began with, that it is good to remain unmarried seeing he also is unmarried (it is believed he had been married and then his wife died though this is not certain)

2. Again, if they “do not have self control” they should marry rather than “burn” (with a “passion”)

So remaining single for some might be too difficult, not necessarily because of physical passions but because of a need for this type of close, intimate companionship - it need not be equated with the burning of “lust”

- a. This is not a criticism, but simply stating a fact of life though this should not be used by younger people to try to justify physical relationships outside of marriage since this entire context is dealing with marriage
- b. Though the word for “burn” (πυροῦσθαι) was also used by Paul of himself in II Cor. 11:29 when referencing his “intense concern” (or pain) when another was “led into sin” - to say that Paul is essentially saying “marry rather than lust” would seem to imply the beginnings of justified lust... **which is absurd** - this is a **principle** and should consider that some might not find a spouse or it might take a while - we would not ever counsel someone to marry someone because a “potential mate” were “convenient” to meet a physical drive

And, on the flip-side, it still is better to get married so that one does not need to live an extended length of time as if celibate when they are not “wired” that way

D. Special instructions to those already married (both as believers) - vs. 10-11

1. This instruction Paul wrote as being “of the Lord” because the Lord had already given clear teachings regarding remaining married (in Mat. 5, 19 and especially in Mark 10:11-12)

The general, overriding instruction is for the wife not to leave her husband just as Christ stressed in Mt. 19 that God had established marriage to be permanent

- a. There are two things to consider with this point - first of all, Christ gave this direction (especially in light of Mat. 19) because “putting away a wife” had become common for all sorts of reasons, and His instruction was (and is) still binding
- b. Second, Paul is not belittling his own instruction, but is simply stating the Lord had already given direction, and then when Paul wrote that he instructed “not of the Lord” (vs. 12) he was not discounting what he himself was saying, just that he was no longer quoting, as it were, the Lord
- c. It is likely this was addressed because some of the Corinthians were debating whether or not they should leave an unbelieving spouse to avoid a “mixed marriage”

2. What is to be for those that have left their spouse? (in this case, the wife leaving her husband)

These verses are dealing with believers seeing the following verses deal with those married to unbelievers

- a. It may be that the wife is addressed here because Christ already dealt with the husband and Paul is making it clear the commands apply to both
- b. If she leaves her husband (presumably in divorce) she is not to be remarried, but is to stay single or, the only other option, be reconciled to her husband
- c. The reason for leaving the husband is not clarified, though many would appeal to the “exception clause” (as so-known in Matthew 19) to legitimize the leaving; but his does not “legitimize” remarriage as so many presume to say today - in dealing with this very thought in this verse Augustine wrote, “But I do not see how a man could be allowed to marry another when he has left his adulterous wife since a woman is not allowed to marry another man if she leaves an adulterous husband”

Marriage is to be binding and is the core reason vows are made (before God) in the marriage ceremony - these are to acknowledge the permanence and their wilfully and openly obligating themselves as such before a company of witnesses

3. Other thoughts to consider with separations in marriages

Excused and even encouraged divorce has become an obstacle to facing challenges we should face (for our growth and improvement) but are avoided because we are temporarily overwhelmed in our thoughts by our feelings

- a. It is not a new problem that is faced realizing the number of divorces that we see in our day and even in Christian circles - divorce will quickly become a norm when marriage is not so much seen as God’s institution as much as it is defined by the perceived “happiness” of the couple - if it is first and primarily recognized as God’s institution upon all mankind (not just Christians), we would be apt to find a good deal of our contentment (and even happiness) in our submission (in faith) to God in the times of difficulty in our marriages
- b. It is easy to forget that quite often, the closeness that is formed in a marriage is formed by going through difficult times together (not just difficulties as a team but even with each other)- **restored bonds** are often the strongest of bonds formed in this life
- c. “Short accounts” need to be the norm in a marriage when it comes to hurts and other offenses- never losing sight of the sanctity of the marriage union brings with it an alertness to dealing with even the smallest of problems recognizing each one as the birth of a potential major problem (made so because it was allowed to grow) - of course, so much of this is prepared for effectively if honestly dealt with **BEFORE** the marriage

Even when just considering self it is best to maintain closeness with the partner in marriage realizing the comfort and companionship there is to be had when the marriage is seen as an investment - any relationship that is to become close will require both “parties” to be alert to potentially divisive intruders

E. What about a believer that is married to an unbeliever? - vs. 12-16

1. It must be clearly noted at the outset of this topic that this is dealing with a situation that would have been discouraged beforehand - a **believer *should not marry an unbeliever***, but often this does happen (or it may be that both were unbelievers at the start and one was converted)

a. There will be exceptional challenges in a “mixed marriage” because each will have “polar-opposite” core philosophies of life (affecting individual priorities)

Those making cases for remarriage state that death, adultery and abandonment are releases to remarry - death is but the other two are not

b. Also, in verse 12 where Paul writes, “...the rest I say, not the Lord...” he is just clarifying that what he is about to say is not taken from the commands from the Lord’s teachings

-c. And, this section of verses does not add what some have called the “third” marriage dissolver that then frees the “innocent party” to remarry - the text and context do not support this

2. The core thought - if a believer is married to an unbeliever and the unbeliever “consents” to live with them, then they **must not divorce** - vs. 12-13

This emphasis should be clear in light of the fact that even if their spouse is not in agreement with the faith they are still to honor the marriage covenant

a. To keep these verses in line with the context, we must keep in focus the stressed emphasis that is placed on marriage and remaining in it, or staying out of it altogether if one must or is so “wired” by God to be single

b. These statements were not written with the idea of lessening the concept of divorce and thus providing legitimate means of marrying another (this was not at all the intent nor the topic at hand)

3. The normal train of thought would be to consider the believing partner somehow “tainted” with the unholiness of the unbeliever when, in fact, the **opposite** is true (in marriage) - vs. 14

Close, intimate friendships with unbelievers is not endorsed but there does seem to be a special situation in a marriage that is unlike all others

a. “In a partnership between a believer and an unbeliever, it is not so much that the believer is brought into contact with the realm of sin, as that the unbeliever is brought into contact with the realm of grace.” Barclay

This, of course, does not mean they were “sanctified” in a salvation sense, but it does lend them a unique advantage that others do not have - so it is with the unbeliever who has a believing spouse

b. There is an interesting analogy Paul used in Romans 11:16 that is similar to what is being discussed here - there, the “first fruits” or the “piece of dough” (the produce of the harvest) was offered to God and thus “sanctified” (consecrated to God) - and though it was just a part that was holy or the “root” that was holy, it “set apart” the entire harvest for God - so it was with Israel (in Paul’s day) that though so many were unbelievers, there was (and still is) a special sense in which they are consecrated to God and His purposes, simply by their “connections” - it cannot mean they are thus “saved” seeing most were/are still “**unbelievers**”

There will be a tendency for some well-meaning onlookers to write off the unbelieving spouse and seek to do all they can to ostracize them seeing no hope for change (essentially disqualifying the Holy Spirit in their faithlessness)

c. If it were so that this was now an “unholy union” then the children of that union would also then be considered unholy, but this is not the case; “they are holy” - such a privilege given to a child should stress to them the importance of what they do with it (it is not a benefit to provide safety in sin, but an advantage to be **invested** toward their coming to Christ)

The importance of the character of the believing spouse cannot be overemphasized

d. The goal though of the believer in this situation, is to be a shining example of true Christianity while also being patient to be looking to work in harmony with the working of the Holy Spirit - as described in I Peter 3 (where Peter deals with a wife who has a husband “disobedient to the word”) a wife is to seek to be an influence by her behavior - the focus is on **keeping** the marriage (first of all because it is God’s institution - we are not to be pursuing a “way out”)

4. If the unbelieving spouse desires to leave the marriage the believer is not bound to “fight” them - vs. 15

This does not take away from the Lord’s commands about divorce - the believing spouse still honors it and remains unmarried as instructed in verse 11)

a. In these cases where the unbelieving spouse is not content to live with the believer and they pursue a divorce, the believing spouse is “not under bondage” - this does not refer to the marriage as being bondage but the “being bound” to follow (at all costs) the commands of the Lord against divorce - the “being bound” as seen in Romans 7:1-2 is “bondage” to the law not the marriage as such - **we don’t want to look on marriage as “bondage”!**

for “God has called us to peace”

b. “..therefore the believer should not ordinarily depart from the unbelieving consort (1Co 7:12-14), on the one hand; and on the other, in the exceptional case of the unbeliever desiring to depart, the believer is not bound to force the other party to stay in a state of continual discord.” JFB

In marriage, each the believer is responsible to “make” themselves obey God and do what is right and it must not excuse wrong on their part because of the other

c. Marriage is a unique situation when it comes to obeying God’s commands - the believer is “bound” to follow them, but the unbeliever will not sense such an obligation - the believer does all they can to obey but they cannot force their unbelieving spouse to follow God - in this case the unbelieving spouse **initiates** the divorce (not the believer)

5. The underlying hope of being used to “save” the unbelieving spouse - vs. 16

a. There are two popular handlings of this verse labeled the “optimistic” view and the “pessimistic” view - one stating that this verse stresses the potential of being used as a witness to the unbeliever (optimistic) and the other that this is clarifying that no one can tell if their efforts will be so used (pessimistic)

There have been many commentators trying to make a case for the believer to go ahead and leave the unbeliever - Paul was clear on what to do in both situations if they should stay or not and verse 16 is a summary statement

Compare to James 5:19-20 for a similar idea and motivation

- b. Rather than being “forced” to take either position, there really is no problem with considering both as equally true - We need not take the position that Paul is encouraging the believer to “not worry” whether or not the unbelieving spouse comes to Christ, just that it does not pivot on them - those that take a strong stance that Paul is doing this, downplay the real possibility of the believer aiding in the “saving” of their unbelieving spouse
- c. In either case, the believer should be partly driven with the realization of their possible participation in the “witness” to the unbeliever, as with the wife of a disobedient husband that Peter dealt with in I Peter 3:1-6 - we must see the need for the maturity (in faith) that can and does see beyond its difficult circumstances to the *potentials* of God’s *possible* workings in them for His sovereign purposes

XVIII. Contentment With God’s Life Assignments - 7:17-24

A. Contentment finds its source in **Faith**, and that in the right “object” (all faith has an object)

- 1. Having just dealt with various marital questions and situations, Paul now clarifies the importance of “remaining in the condition in which he was called” - stressed in vs. 17, 20 and 24

This is another shining example of the importance a proper Theology and the impact it can have

- a. Many accept the sovereignty of God in their salvation, but struggle with the concept in their life situation and in difficult circumstances (God is either seen as absent, uncaring or weak)

as those in the “prosperity gospel”—their social standing, their marital status, jobs and other life categories)

- b. Some had come to “religionize” aspects of their lives that were never intended to be so (such as

- 2. It must be understood that God can and does work in all life settings and conditions, and His working does not depend upon the “setting” and “standing” - it becomes a distraction when we come to a point where we believe that God will not work (or cannot work) in and through us until we change our life’s status somehow - it’s the train of thought that begins with something like, “If this would change then I could finally be able to be doing what I ought to do”

Discontent drives us wrongly while contentment frees us from unnecessary distractive life pursuits and wasted time and energies

- a. This not only affects our perspective of our social standing but other areas such as our time, finances, perceived skills and abilities and any other *temporal limitation* we place on God’s ability
- b. The point being put forward is the acceptance of God’s placement of us and, as has been mentioned by others dealing with this text, Paul is essentially saying “*Bloom where you’re planted*”

B. The example of one’s ethnicity and its significance in light of God’s calling - vs. 17-20

- 1. There is a tendency to see other settings as being ideal (or at least better) for our “walk with God” - vs. 17

Many believers spend a great deal of their lives preparing the serve the Lord failing to realize they are to be serving Him “right now” - we are not guaranteed more time than the moments in which we are living - thus the need to seize the moment - much of this submissive service will involve learning and preparation

- a. Watch the three verbs in this verse: as God has *assigned* each, as God has *called* each, then let them (us) *walk* in it (stay in it not setting as our goal to change our life standing)
- b. This, of course, is not making a case to stay in a life of sin or sinful settings, just in the general “life setting” in which God has placed us - compare to Php. 4:11
- c. As God has given us our “allotment” (in His omniscience) for all needed for “life and Godliness” (II Peter 1:3), and realizing God’s call to us for salvation came where we were at in life, then why would we expect to change these circumstances since He called us at the perfect time in the perfect circumstance to fulfill His purpose? (not just in our salvation but in our obedient walk in His service from that time and place on out to the end of our earthly life)

- d. Paul stressed that this is not a unique doctrine for them but this was taught in all the churches

- 2. For instance, was any “circumcised” (Jew) or “uncircumcised” (Gentile), don’t seek to change it - vs. 18

There apparently were some procedures where Jews would seek to become “uncircumcised” - whether or not this was in Paul’s mind, the point of their wishing to change their ethnic origins was unwarranted

- a. Many Jews who became Christians could have made a case to be more “Gentile” to better fit-in to society and possibly have more opportunities to be a “witness” - at least so they might reason
- b. It would have been likely that some Gentiles would have seen it more beneficial to be a Jew (of the chosen nation) just as some still try to do today (in varying ways)
- c. Regret over our ethnicity, our social standing, skills and even our time in history are in reality a questioning (doubting) of God - attempts to “improve” (by our standards) where we believe God should have done better will be truly the exercise of futility

- 3. For, in reality, circumcision (in and of itself) is nothing as is being uncircumcised - vs. 19-20

We still see symbols more strongly emphasized in churches than what they are representing - mostly because we naturally love all the appearance without requiring the actuality

- a. What had originally been give to the Jews as a covenant sign had become so emphasized (the symbolism being deemed more important then the substance) that it was one of the “hot items” the Judaizers were pushing on Gentile Christians
- b. Yet, in reality the circumcision was of no value of itself - the new covenant having made it obsolete now that the Holy Spirit Himself is its covenant sign - see also Gal. 5:6; 6:15

A truly submissive posture before God is most valuable to God as David alluded to in Psa. 51:16-17

These verses do seem to indicate that even our professions and social standings are providential and should be seen as such - this is crucial to maintaining a contented outlook in life

If God knows we must be free of some of these seeming "obstacles" then He will free us - if He does not, we should assume He will make use of them - despair over such things is wrong!

As Paul instructed Timothy in II Tim. 2 not to be "entangled with the affairs of this life" so we also should not seek out unnecessary earthly obligations that would restrict our service of God

We must remember that the original sin of Satan was the pursuit of "God-likeness" which is essentially independence - God is pleased with faith because faith is, at its core, dependence

It is difficult for both "classes" to be focused - those "slaves" resenting their lack of freedoms and those masters (or freemen) placing too much stock in their perceived independence

We must not allow ourselves to become slaves to our vocations (which is sadly normal since it is seen as a provider more than God)

History demonstrates the tendency of "the masses" to be ruled by man rather than God

- c. What actually matters is **obedience** (submission) to what God commands (the underlying word τήρησις picturing a safe-keeping (as it was also used of a prison)) - circumcision had been a part of obeying God, but many that had the symbol were not those "reverent" (watching over) the commands/instructions of God
- d. Being circumcised or uncircumcised made no difference in their walk with God, and we are not to seek to integrate traditions just for the sake of elevating ourselves in some way before others
- e. So, in context, if you are married to an unbeliever when coming to Christ, stay that way - or if unmarried when "saved" stay that way - not (as will be discussed more) that each is "locked-in" to this position, but that their position does not dictate their "station" in Christ in any way - we are to see our service for God as unconditional (not dependent on circumstances)

C. Contented in slavery - vs. 21-24

1. Taking now another social "stigma" (the first being ethnicity, or as some call it "race") of slavery - this was the lowest social standing of their day and a much more restrictive life - vs. 21

- a. We do not have a direct parallel in our day, but could certainly think on restrictive life circumstances from which we would like to be free - many are in varying "bondages" (financial, unchangeable responsibilities (work, family and other legitimate obligations), governmental (such as socialism, communism) that many would deem so restrictive, that they should spend their lives seeking to be rid of them and changing their life situation)
- b. The first "posture" they are to take with this is "**don't worry about it**" - it's not worthy of fretting or becoming an object of anxiety (thus a core focus in life) - but, if the opportunity to gain freedom from it arises, take it and make use of the new advantage - but if the opportunity does not come, do not assume our "best" for God will never be reached - we must not be those who "limit" God by our lack of faith (seeing God's sovereign hand at work in the best and worst of circumstances just as the Psalmist in Psa. 139:7-12)

c. Many Christians today bind themselves unnecessarily with "masters" of their own making - the endless "what-ifs" that are "drummed-up" maintain a spirit of discontent and are ultimately used as excuses as to why they cannot serve God as they ought (or had originally hoped)

2. All "in Christ" find their contentment and perspective realizing they are all "**free slaves**" - vs. 22-23

- a. The concept of slavery is often looked down upon because of what has taken place throughout history (and looked down upon rightfully so), but it was common in Paul's day and a social norm - but no matter how it is looked upon, Paul clarifies (in Rom. 6) we are all slaves to some-one or something - truest freedom is found in **slavery** to God!
- b. Notice the setting of both social standings - the one "called" while a slave is the "Lord's freed-man" seeing that though he is bound on earth he now has limitless freedoms and privileges those not "in Christ" will never have - those who are called while "free" are now (in their call) "Christ's slave" having a master they never had and with that, obligations just as Philemon discovered when his slave Onesimus escaped and was then dealt with by Paul (Phil. 1:15-16)
- c. One of the core reasons we obey our earthly "bosses" is because we are commanded so by our true master - we serve them because they are so placed over us by Him - this not only affects our attitude in our work but our reason for doing it (and its quality)
- d. Don't forget that you are "bought with a price" (that being the blood of Christ) - this "trumps" all other "ownership" of us - so, in our service to our earthly authorities, we must realize we are actually slaves to Christ and are to live and serve in light of that - not being subject then to earthly authorities when they oppose God, but in all else in subjection to them as God's "ministers" (Rom. 13:4) - so, don't forget **Who** owns you! (not ourselves, the world or people)

e. No doubt, many would prefer to be the "slave" of someone else, or something they can trust in more than God (for some temporal values reason)

3. Now, not only "remain in the condition" they were in when called, but knowing what they know, do so "with God" (knowing their ongoing service to Him (now and forever)) - vs. 24

- a. "It is very likely that some of the slaves at Corinth, who had been converted to Christianity, had been led to think that their Christian privileges absolved them from the necessity of continuing slaves; or, at least, brought them on a level with their Christian masters. A spirit of this kind might have soon led to confusion and insubordination, and brought scandals into the Church" Clarke
- b. Don't be driven with any form of covetousness but by contentment (founded in trust)

see Heb. 13:5

XIX. The Concept of Marriage in Light of This Life and the Life to Come - 7:25-40

A. Paul, in addressing the questions that had been sent to him regarding marriage, helps the Corinthians keep in focus the temporality of this life, thus setting the greater standard (and focus) of living for the “life to come” over even the greatest of life situations we may or may not find here

1. The concerns over several marriage issues demonstrated their giving too much weight to something (marriage) that was **not** the pivotal point they had made it
2. We find this in our day as well, where we can become so transfixed on life decisions that we disqualify, not only the sovereign hand of God in our lives (and in the world overall), but we diminish God’s usage of our obedience in all possible life settings (each bringing with it seemingly endless opportunities when viewed (as we should) through the “eyes of faith”)

This was the point that Paul had just been making about the necessity of contentment (based in confidence that God knows what is best and directs our “paths”)

It is the rebel at heart that pushes on against God-given, instructive (and directional) pain since they refuse to yield and only grow in bitterness at them not seeing God’s graciousness in them

B. Instruction and opinion regarding “virgins” and the potential for marriage - vs. 25-31

1. No small amount of controversy has surrounded the determination of who these “virgins” are - vs. 25-27

This text was also historically misused to make a case for co-habitation of unmarried people for some spiritual purpose - many odd pseudo religious practices and customs came out of a portion of this text

Life will be full of decisions where more than one direction are good and acceptable and we must not suffer analysis paralysis in always being absolutely sure - often, we cannot be certain but should always be as informed as possible

This is, essentially, good counsel always in the sense that when one contemplates marriage they are not to be seeking it until a true “prospect” is brought their way - many have made themselves emotionally “sick” wanting to be married (though the spouse is “faceless” or the “potential” is uninterested)

- a. This, of course, should not cause us to be flippant with the institution of marriage, but neither should we come to the point that we believe it can make or break our life purpose and opportunities of obedience to God (quite often, the majority of true obedience comes when we find life overwhelming and are most apt to reason around (seeking excuses from) obedience)
- b. Too many fall prey to the notion that some decision they made ruined them for the rest of their lives (especially in marriages) - this discounts God’s power to usurp all life settings and conditions for His purposes (we don’t then justify careless decisions as fatalists mainly because, God in His wisdom, brings varying pains with these poor decisions, teaching and guiding us)
- c. His initial counsel is “safe” - he thinks it “good” for “a man to remain as he is” - if married, stay married, and if not married, “don’t seek a wife” - but this perspective was influenced by what he called the “present distress” - the current circumstances (and that which was looming) were going to be “ἀνάγκη” (constraints, pressures, trials) - there have been many times in history where not marrying (or at least putting it off) and starting a family would have been easier (less stressful) - though this does not forbid marriage (as is about to be discussed)
- d. So, if “bound” (we might say bonded) to a wife (or husband), don’t pursue to be “loosed” from them because it will be easier - the underlying wording picturing someone seeking a way out of being married (and many do this now when the trouble is in the marriage and not from without) - no doubt, many marriages are strengthened when the couple must face pressure together and if “loosed” don’t strive to get married - again, this is advice, not a command

2. If one marries when times are difficult, there is not sin in it, but expect the challenges to come - vs. 28

There were those Paul warned Timothy of that would forbid marriage (following “deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons” - 1 Tim. 4:1-3)

Paul demonstrated compassion, though we all have troubles ahead of us (that must come) and some we will have been warned about - yet overall, marriage is a good thing and should not be opposed

- a. This reiterates that what Paul was giving was advice based on opinion (to spare them from some of the trouble that was coming) - the trouble coming was, no doubt, persecutions of all types and would be far more difficult with a family to care for and grieve for
- b. Many will counsel potential couples (as Paul was doing) not to marry (at the moment) because of conditions and circumstances (personally and in the world) so this is not foreign to us - in this case, Paul spoke of “θλίψιν” which was trouble resulting from pressures (also a common word for “persecution”) and Paul wished to spare them from such

3. Paul then uses this situation as a means to stress the importance of living with the reality of the shortness of time and the impact it should have on our time here - vs. 29-31

This phrase may also be making the point that the time ahead of us (as far as the world is concerned) is now less than the time behind us - History is now further off than the end of the world ahead

- a. At first glance, these verses may seem confusing, but because of the irony of the language, it is clear Paul is stressing, not just a reality, but a basis for prioritizing these realities
- b. The meaning of the phrase, “the time has been shortened” has two popular handlings - one, that it references the soon (imminent) return of Christ and the second, it was a reference to the actual shortness of time that we have on this Earth

It was also used of drawing together the sails of a boat (as it was preparing to dock)

The phrase does not say that the "time is short" just "shortened" - this also reminds us that there is an end to time (either our own time or the time the world and this age has)

The objective of these phrases is to stress the importance of not allowing the temporal to trump the eternal - the physical is not to be ranked more important than the spiritual - the physical is important here, but the "here and now" is not what we live for!

The "good" has been allowed to usurp the "best"

If we live for the changeable, we will be changeable in not only our life focus, but our life's resolves - we are anchored (in our souls) to the unchangeable (eternal) giving us steadiness against the waves of change throughout our lifetime

see II Cor. 4:17, Heb. 12:1, II Tim. 4:7-8 and Rev. 3:21

see Mt. 6:19-20

The "world" is "used" but, as is described here, it is used sparingly - many who would own many possessions become owned by their possessions

What is predicted in Revelation shows us the final system will only last, at the most, seven years

- c. The underlying word for "shortened" (συνεσταλμένος) was only used one other time (in Acts 5:6) describing the wrapping of Annanias' body (constricting) - the shortness of time is a reality even if we live a seemingly long time on this earth (as is so often realized by those growing older and sensing the time has past quickly)
- d. Because, then, of the fleeting nature of this life and our time here, our attitude and overall outlook on this life is to be dictated to by this fact - so, those that are married (as has been the context of this chapter) are to live in a sense as though they are not married - those who grieve are to live as those who do not grieve and those rejoicing (celebrating) as those that have not celebrated - those who purchased are to live as though they have never truly purchased anything
- e. Clearly, Paul is not encouraging the married to no longer live as those married (in light of his instructions at the start of this chapter), but is using a method of comparison - we are to be committed to our marriages, but never so much as to let them distract us from our full (eternal) purpose - as excellent as marriage is, it must not be what defines us - ***with so much focus on families these days, "family" has become the goal even more so than the focus that is to be on the "family" relationship with our God (and even our "family" of those in Christ) - our Lord stressed such an example in Luke 14:25-33***
- f. No grief on this Earth is to be so significant that it comes to control our lives - we will weep but are never given over to utter despair since we realize this is temporal - far too often Christians will look to stop serving God (in all sorts of capacities) excusing themselves because of their seemingly unbearable grief - this often leads to forms of bitterness directed ultimately at God
- g. On the flip side, no joy on this Earth is to be so cherished that it becomes the focal point of our living (and not just the present joys, but we are sometimes guilty of living for the past "glories" and finding satisfaction in our memories alone) - we are to live (when circumstances are exceptional) as though they are not - all is subject to change **and will change**
- h. It has become too common to allow past "scars" or past "successes" to become life definers - as long as we live on this Earth, our ***future*** must be what we realize defines our purpose/practice
- i. Possessions are also included - realizing the "shortened" time, as we purchase we are to live as though we did not (emotionally) - we must not allow ourselves to become "married" to our property - being citizens of Heaven, we see what we buy as not really being ours (this frees our resources for use, and our hearts from bondage to what can be stolen or is subject to decay)
- j. And finally, in a summary thought, "and they that use the world, as not disposing of it as their own; for the fashion of this world passes." (Darby) - the idea behind "make full use of it" is to abuse by overuse (often picturing greed in the pursuit of "more than enough" and abusing what is in this world by esteeming its worth higher than its creator)
- k. All of this is key to know and live, realizing the system of this world is passing away (it is decaying and falling apart) - it has been interesting to watch how this world's organizational structures appear to be changing faster and faster as time progresses (as if starting to topple)

C. Dealing with the struggles of divided interests - vs. 32-35

1. The point of these few verses is seen at the end of verse 35 where Paul seeks to "promote undistracted devotion to the Lord" - even those that are single will struggle with the possible distractions of other "cares" of this life (as some were just discussed)
2. Revisiting an earlier topic (the "goodness" of singleness), Paul stresses the advantages to being single versus being married - His motivation was not to pit marriage against singleness, but to free them from as much "anxiety" as possible - as Barnes described it, "Without anxiety, solicitude, care; without such a necessary attention to the things of this life as to take off your thoughts and affections from heavenly objects."

These advantages still need to be promoted - even if one who is single aspires to be married, they should avail themselves of their unique opportunity while they have it

- a. The unmarried have a more unique opportunity to devote themselves to various services of the Lord since they do not need to be concerned with meeting the needs of a family - there are, of course, exceptions to this (for instance, singles taking care of parents) and some singles are distracted with other "anxieties"
- b. Also, part of Paul's motive was to relieve them of the added stress that would come on those that suffered persecution with families - historically, shortly after this time a great deal of trouble came to the Church as well as all the world (associated with the political troubles of Rome at the time - Nero was about to come on the scene)

Earthly priorities need to be scrutinized constantly to ensure they are subservient to their eternal ones

c. Those that are married and have families should also take from these verses a realization of their need to **not** lose focus on what is most important - in doing this, they then see these earthly priorities as “fitting” their objective to “please the Lord” and can become advantages to this end - yet, as Paul was dealing with categorically, many (if not most) typically have a greater focus on their earthly “connections” and responsibilities than they do their “heavenly”

3. There is some difficulty, at first glance, with the handling of these verses - it appears as though Paul is promoting singleness over the married state, though this is not true - the main reason this cannot be the case is in light of how he began the discussion in verse 32, indicating his not wanting them to have “concern” (or anxiety) - one is not **above** the other - they are distinct

These need to see their advantages so as not to be distracted and unnecessarily anxious

a. The negativity is read-into these verses - Paul seeks to comfort and encourage both - of course there are earthly concerns that some “singles” don’t have, but this is not better - many unmarried folks are profoundly distracted because of their desires to be married

Each has their responsibilities and each, in their responsibilities, is to be doing all for “the glory of the Lord” (see Col. 3:18-25) - in devoting themselves to their God-given focus (or focuses), they are to not be anxious (given to worry) about their life situation (as has been the topic) - the married worried that their earthly cares will be too distracting and the unmarried worried that they cannot perform their spiritual duties without a spouse - be faithful with what you have been given

b. So, at a basic level, what is being stated? (1). Paul does not want them to be unduly “anxious” (ἀμερίμνου) which stems from being filled or driven by misdirected or purposeless (baseless) “fears” (2). Based on this motive, the unmarried must be “concerned” (same word without the “alpha privative” (μεριμνᾶ)) about the things of the Lord, in striving to live to be pleasing Him - this is good and to be his goal (3). The married man is/must be “concerned” about the “things of this world” (specifically in the pleasing of his wife) - this is also a good thing (Eph. 5:25-33) (4). But the married person must divide their focus (not a bad thing in this context having at least two important focuses) (5). The single women and unmarried women (widows) are to be concerned for the things of the Lord in striving to be “holy in body and spirit” (set apart for God in her inner-most being) (6). The married women are then (as they should be) concerned “for the things of the world” in the pleasing of her husband (which is right and pleasing before the Lord (Eph. 5:22-24))

c. So, in summary, these verses do not “pit” one against the other (married versus unmarried) - both are good before God and each is to be faithful in their life “station” - these verses have been used (historically) to declare that being unmarried is a far more “spiritual” state of living - yet this was not the case (especially in light of verse 35)

4. All that has been written was for their “benefit” (including the advice) - vs. 35

And part of this “benefit” was to spare them from unnecessary trouble in all areas (as singles and married)

a. It is easy in any area of Christianity to be “pulled into” a logistics trap (entanglement of rules and regulations that are truly unnecessary) and Paul is aiding them in keeping focus

This was an entirely different area than that faced by the Galatians - the Corinthians were, at this point, struggling over the marriage issue and its overall role in service to God - there is a tendency to this even today in Christianity

b. It would have been a relief (and release) to them to come to realize God’s non-dependence on their life circumstances being changed for them to be “useful”

In contrast to many interpreters of these verses still making a case just for celibacy, Paul uses the word “ἐὔσχημον” (“appropriate” in NASB) essentially indicating what is “well-suited” for the situation

c. Paul’s choice of words for “restraint” was very picturesque - the word “βρόχον” is a noose or net used to entrap animals in hunting - he did not want to entangle them (entrap them) in non-essentials as far as their being used of God - there, of course, are essential standards we are to have in seeking to serve God, but innumerable others have been concocted over the centuries that are not necessary (well-intended as they might be, they still trip-up the recipients and entangle them) - *note also, there are many who believe this is Paul’s reference to his own preferences that he has mentioned to the single life, and that they not be a snare to them*

d. Paul did not want them distracted in their “devotion” to the Lord - to apply this only to his preference to singleness (as being then free from the distraction of a family) is far too narrow an interpretation and discounts the context to the married and unmarried - both groups need to be focused and undistracted in their commitment to God - a distracted focus is an indicator that one is looking to someone or something else for direction or purpose (to be pleasing)

D. Dealing with daughters (young ladies) who are unmarried - vs. 36-38

1. This appears also to be a direct issue that had been placed before Paul - what should fathers of unmarried daughters do in regard to “marrying them off?”

Yet, when fathers are not directly involved (in a protective, loving sense) with his daughter’s “suitors” there is often marital issues (distractions) - fathers of daughters ought to feel this weight of responsibility if they truly love their daughters

a. There is debate whether the “him/his” in this verse is the father or the betrothed man though it has been (historically) commonly accepted that this is a father with his daughter

b. The situation deals with whether or not a father is dealing with his daughter “unbecomingly” (inappropriately) in letting her marry or not letting her marry - this concept, in its initial premise (the authority of the father over his daughter), seems lost to our generation with the commonness of daughters deciding for themselves and the father’s permission no longer sought or required

2. Something to consider (as a side-issue) - Paul is going to great lengths to give clear, concise answers regarding marriage so that it does not become a distraction from their eternal purpose (in light of the "shortened time") - yet even in Christian marriages today, marriage seem to be a distraction

Sadly, many believers are distracted throughout most of their married life dealing with their marriage trying to make it something "ideal" not realizing their initial "ideal" was misdirected to begin with - companionship and love are secondary to our eternal calling

This idea also seems lost "popular Christianity" today which seems affixed to the notions of earthly prosperity

- a. There are several texts that deal fundamentally with the husband-wife relationship, but considering the whole of Scripture, marriage is not the major focus it has become
- b. The drive for a "good marriage" is not primarily to be a "happy and contented life" - we are to pursue to have a marriage be an enhancement to our life focus on our *eternal* purpose
- c. If the "struggling couple" are both believers, the first and primary topic to address should really be their "devotion" to God and how their marriage should lead to this - marriage conflicts arise (one way or another) from some form of selfishness (on one part or both)
- d. So, to pull this back to our present context, a father ought to be considering his daughter's eternal purpose first and her earthly significance second (as Paul is stressing throughout) - an earthly beneficial "match" may not be best for her living for the Lord (spiritual match)

3. So, if a father believes he is doing his daughter wrong in not letting her marry and she has (or is close to) passing the "flower of her age" (her "femininity prime of life" in her looks and including her "reproductive prime"), then let her marry

The father must not allow his protective position over his daughter to become a "power-trip"

The relationship between fathers and daughters should be special and cherished - fathers have an essential and privileged role of being their protectors, guides and sustainers (practically and emotionally)

- a. The phrase "and if it must be so" (she is so inclined and the opportunity is ready) then move ahead - if her emotions and desires are for it, then to deny it could also fall under the idea of acting "unbecomingly" toward her - this, of course, does not include her desires toward a non-believer or an "inappropriate match" deemed so (conscientiously by the father)
- b. The goal is not marriage as much as it is a well-formed (discerned) marriage - the motive should never be to just get her out of the house to save money or to make some beneficial familial connection - marriages have been used this way, but this is not its purpose *nor sanctioned in Scripture*

c. If this father lets her marry, he does not sin (he "does well" as in vs. 38)

4. But, the father that is resolved (having no overriding obligation such as a pre-set engagement of his daughter) and has seen his daughter is suited for it, should "keep his own virgin *daughter*" he "does well"

Parenthood should not be looked upon as a temporary calling - it may be (can be) life-long in the fullest sense - a father, in particular, should be pleased to do so and not resent the life-long commitment

- a. This stands opposed to the notion that it is always best for a father to seek to have his daughters marry (which has been a common societal pressure throughout the ages)
- b. He should be sensitive to her feelings and her "bent" in life as to marriage (keeping her focused if she wants to be married when there are no "prospects" or if there are several) - but if she is not so inclined (permanently or at the moment) he should determine to "keep" her (to literally "guard" her just as the term "guardian" is used) - this is not wrong!
- c. Note also the phrase, "has decided in his own heart" - he needs to have worked this out thoroughly and be certain (this is not to be taken lightly)
- d. Daughters would do well to keep a close relationship with their fathers (or a guardian) in this area of decision making (it is not to their benefit to "push" to do this alone)

5. So both "do well" but, in light of the difficult circumstances (verse 26), the one who does not have his daughter marry does "better" (has an advantage which has been discussed) - vs. 38

It may also be considered "better" because the daughter would seem to be, in this context, either gifted to "celibacy" or committed herself (for the best) to singleness

- a. The advantage of the unmarried daughter is one of singular focus (the married are to strive have a singular focus, though with the inclusion of another "heart" this will present a "divided front" (not a bad thing, just a greater challenge))
- b. He does "excellently" because he is not acting on societal pressure but in his well thought-through decision considered, at length, in his heart

E. One more case for an "ideal" singleness, and instruction for remarriage - vs. 39-40

It seems like some marry to have a "life accessory" and not for a sense of that which would enhance their life focus towards its eternal purpose

1. Singleness has been stigmatized by our society as being less than best, yet Paul makes a good case for it

- a. Our purpose is not to ever be "wrapped-up" in our "marital state" (married or unmarried)
- b. Our significance and "personhood" should never be tied to anyone else but God - to marry because it's the "thing to do" is to welcome life-long pressures and troubles

2. A woman is "tied" to her husband (in marriage) as long as he lives, thus should remain so (married)

- a. This being "bound" is not a negative idea, but a committed idea (as before God in His institution)
- b. If her husband dies, then she is free to remarry whoever she desires (now, not under the jurisdiction of her father), though the restriction of her choice is to be clear - he needs to be "in the Lord" - this is true with all Christians marrying and is stressed here again

Even at the cost of having to be alone because there is no truly suitable match

c. The marrying “in the Lord” demonstrates her higher priority - the “normal” priorities of our day (companionship in fighting loneliness, financial support or even social acceptance) must not be allowed to usurp the importance of “marrying in the Lord”

3. In their present situation Paul thought it better for the widow to remain unmarried - vs. 40

Quite often, many seek to re-marry because they see it lending to their “happiness” though the advantages of singleness (and the potential joys) should also be considered

a. His wording indicating more that she would be more content staying single, though later he would instruct Timothy to have the younger widows marry - I Tim. 5:14
b. Paul attributed even his opinion (thoughts on the practical matter) to the Spirit of God in regards to their “happiness” (their feelings) - it should be noted also, that the majority of our contentment (in reality) is not based in circumstances as much as it is in perspective

XX. Responsible Use of Christian Liberty - 8:1-13

A. One of the results of Christians living in a “pagan” society was the questions and issues that would arise from the varying traditions and societal practices (the struggle of the conscience over right and wrong) - vs. 1-3

Just because one may “win” a debate does not prove their conclusions or their concluding actions will be proven right

1. The Corinthians had (clearly) written Paul regarding this (seeing his beginning, “now concerning...”)

Note that this is not the same as the “contamination by idols” referenced in Acts 15:20 (different word altogether) Infatuation (which is a self-love) is blinded by its own desires over others needs

a. The question was in regards to whether or not they should eat meats offered to idols
b. The issue of idols and their pretense is dealt with, but concluding this matter would be more than just a matter of their “knowledge” of certain facts - as will be discussed, with any knowledge must come some responsibility in its usage and an ongoing awareness they do not have complete knowledge and must be open to correction
c. Their knowledge was to be tempered and directed by their **true love** (it’s not a loveless knowledge and neither is it an ignorant, uninformed love) - true love is not blind!

2. Knowledge alone “puffs-up” yet while governed by true love it “edifies” (builds-up, is constructive)

A good teacher recognizes this - they must deal with students in light of several personal factors and not just straight impartation of knowledge

a. It appears that Paul was quoting from their letter when he stated “we know we all have knowledge” - knowledge being the higher priority in Corinth (just knowing the right answer (or believing you do) is not enough to deal with situations) - it was very common in Corinth to have meats and other items readily available, and offered by others, that was offered to an idol of some sort - and for some to partake was troubling to their conscience
b. Just knowing “knowledge” regarding the right answer (that idols are not real and cannot have true power over anyone) made them conceited and proud - many find contentment in knowing more than someone else - these just want to “know” and don’t see the need to discern
c. This same concept is dealt with in II Peter 1:5 in the order the qualities Peter is stressing - to “faith” is to be added “virtue” and then to virtue “knowledge” - many skip passed the “virtue” (the love of right because of the love of God) and go straight to “knowledge”

Knowledge requires good judgment as well

compare to Rom. 12:16

The knowing of something is not where “rightness” is found - one way or another, if it is not “housed” in love it is just pride

d. ***This is not advocating, as alluded just above, love without knowledge but to knowledge without love*** (“love” is not the assumption that there is not right and wrong, but is focused on properly implementing the knowledge lovingly, graciously and patiently) - ***knowledge controlled by love strives to bring others along and not to rest in its own comparative*** rightness

3. If anyone thinks they have “arrived” at full knowledge, they definitely have not arrived - vs. 2-3

This is the beginning of all that is leading up to the significance of true love as described in chapter 13

a. Paul will address the food offered to idols situation, but first deals with the greater issues (their handling of the differences) - those who figured they knew the answer were flaunting their liberty by seeking to not only openly practice what was offensive to some, but were encouraging the same practice (trying to get others to go against their consciences)

Thus we cannot say we truly know anything without **true love** (to which knowledge of true needs is motivated to effective action)

b. Paul then, in verse 3, uses the greatest example of love coupled with true knowledge - anyone who truly loves God does so because they are “known by Him” - God’s “knowledge” is always coupled with love, thus our loving Him is because He first loved us and His loving us is evidenced in His (truly) knowing us - this we are to emulate with others! (get to know them)

B. Now, the facts regarding idols - vs. 4-6

1. The basis of love having been set, now the “theological” can be worked out and set into proper action

Though the power of lies is real in that they affect the actions and priorities of so many that “buy into it”

a. So, as far as eating something sacrificed to an idol, “we know” that the reality of idols, as so much of their church recognized, did not truly exist - they were not truly “gods”
b. Just because a good majority of any society ascribes deity-like powers to something does not mean that “thing” actually has powers - just as so many attribute power and truth to lies, yet these do not actually mean they have power nor are they truth
c. So, they might ask, what harm can come from pretend? - not directly, but as is about to be discussed, damage can occur **indirectly** (by power of association)

2. The earth (societies) are full of all forms of idolatry - they worship things in the “heavens” and on the “earth” - idolatry is seen more in the “worship” than in the object, since the greatest issues with any idol was its replacement of God in the life of the individual

It might be disturbing to us to try to calculate how many parallels we could come up with that would be like our sacrificing to idols (God-replacements)

- a. This understanding helps us see the forms of idolatry still alive today in the forms of our own intellects, the “genius” of others, the security sought for in society over God, the love of family or friends sought more than the love of God and the dependence upon income and bank accounts over the acknowledged dependence upon God in faith
- b. So, as with the Corinthians, these things do not truly have power in and of themselves but only what is entrusted to them by people

3. There is only one true God and Lord - “the Father” and “Jesus Christ” - vs. 6

This is indisputable - so realizing His position, all must be looked at for His purposes; even our counter-ing error in others - for instance, why would God have us know something and another not know it? Is it for our glorification!? - of course not!

- a. The “one true God, the Father” is identified as from Whom (authoritatively) all things come and for Whom we exist - these two prepositions are essential to grasp in our worship! EVERYTHING comes **from** Him so to honor or trust anything above Him is idolatry and to live for anything above Him is idolatrous - He alone deserves this reverence (see Ex. 20:3-6)
- b. So, the issue of there being no other God is settled (and without doubt) and to be considered undebatable - the Church does not wrestle with the existence of God!
- c. As to authority, there is one Lord, and that Jesus Christ (the Anointed One of God) **through** Whom all things exist (as so well clarified in John 1:3 and Col. 1:16) - we have what we have (especially our purpose) **from** and **because** of Him - this is essential to remember since it is then to impact our handling of others since they too are His

This is another of many “proof-texts” for the deity of Christ

C. Consider the importance of the condition of another’s conscience - vs. 7-13

1. In verse 7 there seems to be a contradiction with verse 1 where Paul begins “we know that we have all knowledge” and now states, “not all men have this knowledge” - there are at least two explanations

We see a great deal of this in our day where many Christians are seeking to express their freedoms based solely on their “well-researched” conclusions on whether or not some standard is right or wrong, failing to consider all “angles”

- a. Verse 1 very likely contains a quote from the Corinthian letter and now Paul is demonstrating that they were at least partially wrong in this assumption; “Well everyone knows...” they assumed
- b. Second, it could also be that only some of the Corinthians knew this (the ones writing) but that many others did not - many assume others know or should know things they do not, and then proceed to hold it against them or hurt them by flaunting their “freedom”
- c. Clearly, there were some who may have known the truth of the one and only true God, but because of their backgrounds, were susceptible to older (strong) influences - we must remember that many standards have been established, not just strictly on clearly taught Scripture, but based on things and circumstances that lend themselves to profound distractions away from true mental and spiritual sobriety
- d. It must be realized also that Paul is not declaring eating foods offered to idols as good - in 10:19 and on he will associate it with demons and the problems that come with that association

Paul was agreeing with part of their case (the fact that idols are not true entities/gods) but is walking them through their wrongness of their use of this knowledge in that they failed to consider the varying levels of growth in their congregation

2. So, back to the text, not all men know these truths or have not fully “come to grips” with them - vs. 7-9

Some may be able to handle certain questionable things in moderation but must be aware that many cannot and this should dictate their action and limit their “freedoms”

- a. Some, because of their former associations with idolatry, cannot separate their conscience from the thoughts and feelings of what they had before (just as we would expect from a former drug addict or an alcoholic) - the conscience is the part of us that senses right and wrong and can be misinformed, but it is never wise to defy it - better to have a “moral compass” somewhat misaligned than to not have one at all (or to disregard it)
- b. The eating of foods will not in any way make us closer to God neither will it separate us from Him - we are not the better or the worse because of the food itself - see Heb. 13:9, Col. 2:20-23
- c. Just make sure “this liberty of yours” is not used to trip someone up in their spiritual growth - Paul goes to great lengths in Rom. 14:1-18 to demonstrate the importance of our “brother” and our accountability to the Lord over and above our liberties
- d. We must also realize that the “weak” here doesn’t necessarily refer to someone mentally or spiritually weak, but more to one more vulnerable (even if it is just they are uninformed)

Sadly many Christians have been talked into a “freedom” they are not comfortable exercising - a “gray area” justified can easily become a black area accepted - “conservative” is safer, not that it makes us closer with God but in that it is more protective from distractions

3. The sensitivity and alertness of love must reign-in our usage of our knowledge - vs. 10-13

see also Rom. 15:1-3

- a. As discussed in these verses, we must never see our “foods” or other privileges as being of the same value/weight as our brothers and sisters in Christ
- b. Paul illustrates someone “weak” observing one “with knowledge” eating in an “idols’ temple” and being then encouraged to practice the same even though, for them, it will be devastating
- c. True love will most certainly be called upon to yield its rights for the protection and betterment of another

Many a religious expert has talked less experienced believers into practices (freedoms) they were uncomfortable with only for it to lead to a practical, mental or even spiritual demise

This ties back to 8:1 when Paul makes it clear that it is the underlying motivator and "driver" of love that edifies (build-up)

This may also have been why so many were fighting for their "freedoms"

This "ruin" mentioned in vs. 11 is not that of losing salvation for John 10:27-29 and other texts such as Rom. 8:29-30 make it clear it cannot be lost - but these are truly "brothers" and the potential of their "ruin" is real (as the type of ruin seen in I Cor. 3 where they are "saved yet so as by fire")

When Christians are seen to be honoring (or even worshipping) any of the gods of any age it will have a negative impact - we are here to be distinct in our purposes and priorities (as salt and light Mat. 5:13-16)

Loveless knowledge (love of God and then others) is made impotent in its truest usage - knowledge for self's sake causes a cancer of pride and becomes useless to its possessor

- d. The wording in these verses (10-13) is very specific either in answering a specific question or in dealing with an actual event (or several events) - the "someone" in verse 10 is the "weak" in verse 9 that may "stumble" at the use of the "knowings" (gnostic?) liberties
- e. There seems to be sarcasm in Paul's use of terms when writing "...be strengthened to eat things offered to idols." - the word for "**strengthened**" means to "build-up" or "edify," which are most likely words the Corinthians leaders were using to justify their practices of eating at pagan festivals in pagan temples - Paul is revealing more of the full situation here - it was more than just eating food that had been sacrificed to an idol; it apparently had led to actual attendance in temples, before these idols, to participate in the feasts - no doubt the meat was the best to be had
- f. The result then of their "knowledge" (spiritual "smarts") was the "ruin" of a brother - for the self-described "mature" it was harmless, knowing idols aren't gods anyway; yet to the "weak" it was a lure back to their former life-style (or into it as a new temptation)
- g. Many Christians have lost sight of **why** many "standards" and guidelines were created so long ago by our Christian brothers who came before us - many believe that it was to somehow measure spirituality and "holiness," yet many were put in place for the protection of the "weaker"
- h. Our caution is to be prodded on with the realization of who this "brother" is and their worth - they (and we) have no innate worth, but their worth is most profoundly seen in the realization that Christ died for them - **would we let our "food" destroy them!?**
- i. There have been and still are trends in Christianity where the knowledgeable like to demonstrate their "wisdom" by presenting strong arguments for their "Christian liberties" and often become aggressive in these pursuits by actively encouraging others to follow their lead (even though consciences are defiled in/by using these "liberties")
- j. This "loose Christianity" is a sin (not necessarily in its absence of some standards) because it "wounds" the conscience of the weak, and in their being lured into various forms of "paganism" **the sin is against Christ** - if His love of these weaker ones is not in our focus, we are apt (in self-love) to despise them and not be truly concerned for their spiritual and mental well-being
- k. On Paul's part, he exemplifies how they should be when he tells them that he would go so far as to "never eat meat again" if it causes a brother to "stumble" (to fall morally and spiritually) - thus, as this chapter began, why **love** must be a "director" of knowledge - knowing what is right is important, but knowing **how** to use what we know is even more important - our supposed freedoms must not be more important to us than the welfare of others - this is why we should feel obligated to be cautious with others so as not to lead them into temptations

XXI. Paul's Personal Example of Yielding His Rights for the Benefit of Others - 9:1-27

A. Having just made a statement that he would be willing to sacrifice eating meat for the protection of a brother, he now goes on to demonstrate his own sacrifice of his own rights to be supported - vs. 1-7

1. Paul's unquestionable freedoms and his authority to claim them (especially his right to be supported)- vs. 1-2

With all his privileges, he would yield them for eternal purposes because his focus was on his responsibility before God more than on his comforts and pride

see Acts 9:3-5 for his call by the Lord

Could he not make a moral appeal to receive special attention from them?

- a. "Am I not free?" - in other words, "Can't I do as I please?" - As a person, as a Roman citizen and especially as an Apostle, was he not free to occupy his time as he would choose?
- b. As an Apostle, could he not be able to establish and, to some degree, enforce certain rules? - yet he would choose not to, and would act more as a servant than as a "boss" to them
- c. Among his other credentials (as an Apostle) he had seen the risen Lord (which was one of the requirements in being an Apostle) - see Gal. 1:11-17 for more on his beginning and call
- d. Then, to the Corinthians specifically he asks "Are you not my work in the Lord?" - as if to remind them that their hearing of the Gospel and their coming to Christ was through him (in the Lord and not by the genius of himself or strength of his person) - even if others did not recognize his apostleship, they should, being his "seal" (proof... by their very existence)

2. In case there are those questioning his practicing what he was stressing to them... - vs. 3-7

For most of these "white-collar" vocations it would have been looked down upon to do manual labor - it is believed that some in the Corinthian church were ashamed of Paul for not taking their support and for his manual labor

- a. Paul was not running from scrutiny but was welcoming it and then defending himself
- b. When asking, "Do we not have a right to eat and drink?" - this was a way of saying "Don't we have a right to be supported in our work?" - in Corinth (and most other great cities of there day) teachers and philosophers (and other vocations) provided that they not need "work with their hands" (not have to do physical labor to support themselves)
- c. He also had the right ("work benefit") of having a wife and family and to their support,

Paul is not making a case for ministers of the Lord to not be supported but is illustrating his exceptional case with the Corinthians (as he also did in I Thes. 2:9) - more will be explained in 9:12

Yet he was seeking nothing from them except compliance with what was being taught

Many are more "patriotic" towards their earthly homeland than their heavenly one and is evidenced in their lack of interest in investing in their own spiritual growth

Either way, Paul was being looked down upon by many - he apparently did not "compete" with the celebrities of their day - people, so often, are driven to seek the prestigious over the best

B. The case (Scripturally) for the remuneration of those performing spiritual service - vs. 8-14

1. Having made a "human" case for being financially and practically cared for, Paul now makes a case for it (in verse 8) using the instructions and examples under the Law - vs. 8-10

Trying to make a case that true leadership is not focused on self

A case can certainly be made for being "thrifty" but the pursuit of saving money can quickly turn into cheating those who serve us out of their proper due and, in getting used to it, we expect it - better to err on the side of being too generous

One of the longings of a pastor is to see the growth period - that alone is often a reward that is forgotten

In reality, we owe far more to our spiritual teachers (sowers) than we will ever realize - as will be covered in chapter 12, these are gifts to the Church

For "valuing" ministers, see I Thes. 5:12-13

This is an excellent example of how it should be with us all - WE must never become the point to the dissemination of the Truth - we must expect to be outshined and overlooked in comparison and never seek to be more noticed than the Gospel itself - testimonies can be a great support but often become replacement to the Gospel itself - this is regrettable

- yet he did not have a wife and thus did not require support for a family - he alludes to the other Apostles and ministering "brothers" doing so and even Peter - it would have then been "normal" and expected for Paul to do the same (but he yielded this right for a reason)
- d. He references then he and Barnabas "working" (and that they had a right to refrain from it (so as to be focused upon the ministry completely as seen in the situation in Acts 6))
- e. Paul was not bringing these specifics up for special recognition, but to serve as an example of his sense of obligation in this case for the Gospel, and it not be hindered in the least by himself- this then was to be emulated by them as well with each other - Paul was acting truly as a "leader," as one who leads by going out first so others will follow (not barking out orders from the rear as many "bosses" and "managers" do in our day)
- f. If this is not enough, he further illustrates with the example of a soldier - is it expected a soldier support himself in his soldiering? - Paul was most certainly a soldier on their behalf, protecting and defending them in their spiritual growth and walk - this is supposed to be one of the "job descriptions" of any spiritual leader (pastors, elders, teachers, parents, counsellors)
- g. One who plants and keeps a vineyard (farmer) would be expected to partake of the harvest - Paul was one "tilling the ground" and "planting seed" (the Word of God - see Mt. 13)
- h. One "tending the flock" would be expected to use the milk - with each of these it would be recognized as normal to receive payment for their labors - the Corinthians may have struggled with considering Paul and Barnabas' work as legitimate work, or (more likely) they belittled him for not demanding it (as would be expected from other philosophical and educational positions)

2. Paul, in verse 11, illustrates his work in them and the expectation he could have - vs. 11-12

- a. He "sowed in them" spiritual things - these are easy "things" to miss when a society is driven more by the material things of life and underestimate the significance of the spiritual (even mental) - it's easy to become used to what we've learned and even our growth, and fail to value it as we should - this is a difficult category to measure (though maybe we should try by attempting to recollect the difference in our lives that has come from learning the Truth)
- b. When Paul references others "sharing the right," he is likely referring to others that ministered to them and received some material benefit - it should be noted that the objective is not that ministers seek to become "rich" off the flock (for this is against one of their qualifications (I Tim. 3:3))

3. Paul did not use this right so as not to hinder the Gospel - vs. 12

- a. How his taking payment of some type for his ministerial labors would hinder the Gospel is not described by Paul - it could be because of how he was called to be an Apostle (not voluntarily but by "compulsion as he mentions in vs. 16) - he would have seemed suspicious from the start
- b. Somehow, at the start, Paul realized he would become the object of attention more so than the Gospel itself (if he took remuneration), so he gave up this legitimate right
- c. He did not want to slow-up or deter in any way the preaching of the Gospel - here he gives a supreme example of his doing what he mentioned in 8:13 - he would avoid all he could (at his own expense) the causing of another brother (or, on our part, *potential* brother) to stumble and fall away from the Truth - Paul exemplified what he challenged the Philippians to do in Phil. 2:3, "...regard one another as more important than yourselves..."

This was not easy seeing he “*endured all things*” for this end

- d. This example of Paul is should be a challenge to us as well to always be on the lookout for when we might be a hindrance to the proclaiming of the Gospel - when self-interests become our focus we are likely to put “self” ahead of Christ and His reputation

4. The ministerial “right” to be supported - vs. 13-14

Even in our day, to be a “professional” typically means you are paid to do what you do and if you are not paid for it, you are not a “professional” - as might be said today, Paul was not considered “professional” enough

Paul goes on to explain his reasons which surround his debt to the Lord - following his example, none of us should ever come to “need” support to minister (money or “moral” support) - it is not a job/vocation... it is a calling

- a. Having made the case from the Law, Paul now appeals to the Old Testament standard of the ministering priests - these had “their share” in the sacrifices and were to be supported (practically) in their service - again, he is making a final point toward his right to be supported, seeing he was apparently disregarded because he did not take support (was not “paid”)
- b. When the Lord sent out “Gospel proclaimers” (Mt. 10:5-14; Lu. 1:3-9) He instructed how they would have their needs met (by the generosity (sharing) of those they served stating “The workman is worthy of his hire”) - so his right to support was legitimate
- c. Paul’s explanations are not given to provide oversight of supporting a minister, but he does reveal that it was proper and expected - Paul is and would have to “defend” his authority, since so much of Corinth was influenced by “modern” ideas of professionalism - Paul was looked down upon because he did not receive support and was thus discredited in their eyes since all other authoritative teachers not only received payment of some sort, but demanding it
- d. Sadly, it is not uncommon to find those who criticize ministerial support (often based on bad examples of those who serve(ed) out of greed)

C. Free from all men yet slave to all men for the sake of the Gospel - vs. 15-23

1. Paul’s “boasting” and his pursuit of reward - vs. 15-18

When a pastor is supposed to be free from greed it does not indicate he does not seek support, just that his service is not supposed to pivot on it

This “boast” of Paul’s in giving out the Gospel was not braggadocios since it was before God, not enviable by others of his day and he had another motive for it as he is about to reveal

Paul illustrates in his won life/ thinking the debt and obligation one feels that lived in direct, flagrant opposition to Christ before coming to Christ - this “debt-sense” is directed toward God and not men

“Woe to that man who runs when God has not sent him; and woe to him who refuses to run, or who ceases to run, when God has sent him.” Clarke

There are many types of “pay” - that of money, praise or power or comfort

Genuineness of heart drives one to learn of God as much as possible and to live right, be right and not pursue just “looking” right

- a. Paul did not use “any of these things,” and was not writing to have it start (as though he used a tactic to gain support or more support)
- b. He would not want his motive taken this way, as it would look as though somehow he was in service for support or practical gain (vocational) - this would truly take away from his “boasting” (his glorying) which was in Christ and the Gospel, *freely given!*
- c. “Rights yielding” is difficult when we can make a solid case for them, or they are clearly “lawful” and right - but quite often, if not regularly, they will need to be yielded for a greater good and if we are not focused on looking for the “greater good,” we are apt to fight for them against the supposed intruder - “rights-claimers” are typically angry people
- d. Paul would “rather die” than to be found hypocritical in this - this was in contrast to the insincere play-acting that was common and expected (one would put on a “good show” acting as though they were people of integrity, but were not inwardly and in their ultimate drive/goals
- e. The other Apostles who were preaching the Gospel, essentially did it of their will, while Paul did so by “compulsion” (he had to, ultimately, as a result of his call - Acts 9:1-16; Gal. 1:13-17)
- f. Those who surrendered “on their own” had a “glory” in preaching (as Paul explains it) the Gospel, and their receiving payment would not detract from it; but in his case, he was pursuing “*reward*” in doing so without pay (because of how he was called)
- g. Not only this, but he would be a “miserable wretch” if he did not proclaim the Gospel seeing he had been given so much - our circumstances are different than Paul’s, but our attitude ought to be the same - the presenting (talking of, bearing witness, living-out) of the entirety of the Good News should drive us - it is a strange Christian that can live and not feel compelled to share their hope! (and yet it has become an acceptable norm to do so - “stealth Christianity”
- h. “If I do this voluntarily, without pay” he shows he prefers it above all else and would do it no matter what - again, woe to the one who will not do as they ought because they see no profit in it now (this type of temporal living demonstrates a loss of integrity (or that it never existed)
- i. So, making it clear as to what his “boasting” was (his “proof” of sincerity) he “offers the Gospel without charge” and does not exercise his right to support - vs. 18 - he was the “real-deal” before God and it was for God he did what he did (in contrast to the majority of those in Corinth who did what they did for some type of payoff now)

2. Paul, being “free from all men” freely makes himself a slave “to all” - vs. 19-23

- a. Paul was a “freeman” and could have invoked his freedoms and rights, but chose to yield them “to all” with the purpose to “win more” - he demonstrates that his inward focus was not on himself and “looking out for number one,” but that he voluntarily sees himself as a slave
- b. This is in contrast to those (the majority) who enforce their own “me-zone” and only permit welcoming access to those who comply with their life view

These days it seems that the pursuit to truly win someone is lost so when we have a convert, it is so hurried they are easily swayed away from the truth because there was little to no investment

Mt. 20:28 is a key example

Sadly, many see opportunity in showcasing their standards rather than the Gospel

he would honor their ceremonies and other religious practices and standards while living among them - in his teaching of those he **won** an audience he would then teach of the grace of God

Our Lord was known as the "friend of sinners" not because he participated in their sins but because He was not offended by them and lived among them to "win them"

This by no means resembles "door-to-door" evangelism - this one takes time and effort to gain friends

Because of the more modern approaches to "evangelism" many are too quick to give-up because they do not have fast enough responses (and they are driven by numbers), or they lose their "hope distinctives" becoming too much like the world

An evangelizer is never to be characterized as selfish in any way - they are "good-newsers" because they want as many as possible to share in it - all the way from the morally depraved to the blinded self-righteous persons

D. Don't "run" aimlessly, run to win - vs. 24-27

1. Wrapping-up what was started in chapter 8 (not allowing liberties to trip others up), Paul uses athletic competitions as an illustration of living with disciplined focus - vs. 24-25

Sadly, many in the Church see life more as a struggle for survival and the accumulations of comforts and aids in that pursuit and not as living for the eternal purposes of God and striving in them for His eyes

Like a runner forgetting he's in a race would be absurd, so it should seem absurd to us to live a life forgetting we run the race of life before the Lord and will stand before Him to give account - Heb. 12:1-2

- c. To "win more" (gain more) carries the idea of winning/earning the privilege to be heard - he would not impose himself and his views on those he met so he could win their friendship
- d. As described in Proverbs 11:30, "...he that wins souls is wise" clarifying that the one who is truly wise seeks to befriend so as to influence - convince rather than seek to coerce
- e. His choice of the word "slave" is very direct - a slave expects to deal with the oddities and challenging characteristics of the one they serve - if they were out for themselves they would likely be offended or bothered at every turn, and their sphere of influence would lessen - the opportunity to influence is one to be valued - we are often too quick to "write others off" because they offend some of our scruples, thus losing unforeseen opportunity
- f. So, for example, to the Jews he became AS a Jew - he did not infer any type of conversion back to Judaism or placing himself back under the Law (as we see many in Christianity striving to do, and that for the wrong reasons) - these being "under the Law" he then also lived AS under the Law (the Mosaic Law), though he acknowledges he was not "under" the Law - his purpose was to "win" those under the Law, win them to the Truth ultimately, but this took time and sacrifice and, no doubt, sacrifice of his comfort as he yielded his freedoms for their good
- g. Then, when among those "without the Law" (Gentiles, never having had the Law of Moses) he lived as one who did not have it, though he himself did not discard the Law of God seeing he, in grace, lived under the "Law of Christ" (Christ having been the supreme example of living among the Jews and Gentiles, winning and influencing many while never tainted Himself with either of their vices (of spiritual pride or of immorality (lawlessness)))
- f. Then, dealing with what he had just been writing about, to the "weak" he became weak, meeting them where they were at, with all their weaknesses, and not pushing or flaunting his "freedoms" to go against their consciences or to belittle them in their own eyes
- g. In summary, he "became all things to all people" to "win some" - he purposed to be their friend by serving them with the underlying purpose to gain a hearing - to have the high privilege of aiding in the salvation (which is to be, out of true love, our core aim in our dealings with others) - we are to always be looking for "ins" to share the Gospel if those we call friends are those we are truly friends with: it will take time!
- h. Notice his use of the word "some" - even Paul could not "win" all; even with this posture he would be hated by the Jews and Gentiles alike for varying reasons, yet he did not want to be, unnecessarily, a hindrance to the Gospel (thus his use of the wording "by all means win some")
- i. It should be noted also, these verses are not making a case to altering the Gospel to the cultures and lifestyles of others, but simply describe how one lives among them - we do not want the Gospel distorted to become some form of Universalism, nor do we want to win others to "Christianity" (its morals and practices) but not to Christ
- j. Paul's driving motive (as it should be for us) was to "do all things for the sake of the Gospel", live for its proclamation, desiring to share in its benefits with as many as possible - vs. 23 - some have taken this verse to carry the idea he did what he did, in part, to win and secure his own part in salvation, but this discounts the usage of "fellow partaker" (συνκοινωνός)

- a. Far too many then (and now) lived unfocused and had no eternal goals - living for self and "the now" causes professing Christians to live for temporal values
- b. Using the "games" Paul asks a question with an obvious answer - "Don't you know...?" - all run a race but only one receives the prize (not that he is demonstrating that Christianity is a competition, but that we are to run as the one who wins the prize runs... to win it)
- c. One of the core characteristics of one "running to win" is self-control (discipline) and that "in all things" - they do not live in indulgence in any way so as not to be distracted or become less than their best by catering to some aspect of laziness (not "pushing" themselves for more)
- d. "Training for ten months was required under the direction of trained judges. Abstinence from wine was required and a rigid diet and regimen of habit." RWP - these would deny themselves what might be considered normal "rights" by the general public for the purpose of winning - yet many in the Corinthian church were not only undisciplined in their living, but by use of their knowledge defended it

Notice the crowns of victory in II Tim. 4:7-8, James 1:12, I Pet. 5:4 - none "earned" in ease!

One of life's most painful griefs is found in goals reached, pleasures obtained only to discover "letdownedness"

Each has some type of purpose in what they do, but rarely is it defined and even more rarely is it with an eternal focus

Yet many believers become convinced to slow-up and take in the scenery and are soon tempted to give-up or forget the "race" altogether

It is not uncommon to find professing believers exerting lots of "hot air" commitments to God and threats against the enemy, while never intending to actually land a punch!

"He who hesitates is lost"

"ὄπιπιάζω" - literally to strike under the eye

Any disciplined athlete will appear to be beating-up their body at times but are not questioned about it when their objective is clear to onlookers

see I Pet. 2:11

One of the consequences of inconsistencies on our part is the outward discredit we bring to the Gospel message since we have associated ourselves with it and stood for it as Truth

- e. These athletes would exercise profound disciplines in order to win a "perishable wreath" and quickly fleeting glory (just as we see so many Olympians spending years of their lives for a medal) - we, in contrast, are to "compete" not for a royal (kingly) crown, but for a victor's crown presented by the highest judge Himself
- f. There are seemingly endless life pursuits or other earthly goals we can be tempted to give our lives to, all temporal and bringing a fleeting contentment when finally achieved

2. Do not "run" or "fight" without purpose/direction - vs. 26

- a. Paul, because he was striving for an "imperishable crown" lived with an "aim" in life in contrast to aimlessness (just taking life as it comes, living in the moment and allowing the immediate and/or comforts to be the priorities)
- b. Paul, using still the athletic terminology, was not running (in life) haphazardly (without clearly defined goals and objectives and within set boundaries) - a runner (especially a long-distance runner) must know the course and cannot be distracted with the passing scenery or the compliments or the jesting of onlookers (they must stay focused on the goal)
- c. This is the underlying thinking that motivated his yielding his "rights" - he had an objective and it was not one of self-indulgence, but one of disciplined stamina for the "better"
- d. Then, in another boxing analogy, his "aggressive aim" was not aimless but thought-through, planned "punches" against the enemy - many can appear "tough" while shadow-boxing (hitting at the air), but Paul was not going to be one appearing to fight, instead one fully engaged in the fight (striking purposed (planned) punches)
- e. To actually go through with striking an "opponent", we must be sure of who the opponent is, expect to receive hits ourselves, and expect to give ourselves fully to the fight - many fear throwing the first punch because they fear riling the opponent and fear full commitment

3. Who/what is the opponent in this case? - the body! - vs. 27

- a. The wording of the first part of this verse is very picturesque - it literally describes one punching someone just below the eye, demonstrating a knock-out blow
- b. So Paul is essentially saying I "bruise" my body (beat it up) with the purpose to make it his slave (lead it about as a slave to do his bidding, not he its)
- c. It also carries the idea of wearing out to exhaustion (in this case from use) - we as Christians must not lose sight that our bodies are for our service to God, not our service to it - we should expect to wear them out and not be given to too much rest (seeing our rest is not here anyway)
- d. We only have a short time on this Earth and should use the strengths and energies to their fullest while we have them in the service of our Lord - we should not think it unreasonable to give the strength of our youth while we have our youthful strength
- e. "... the body of sin, the corruption of nature, and of that being laid under some restraints; of the mortifying the deeds of the body through the Spirit, of crucifying the affections with the lusts, of putting off the old man with his deeds, as concerning the former conversation, and of making no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof..." Gill
- f. His underlying reason was one of consistency and genuineness - he, heralding (preaching) the message of the Gospel and compelling others "so to run and fight," does not want to be found "disqualified" (found to not be genuine (ἄδόκιμος - found to be a counterfeit)
- e. The thought was grievous to Paul that he might be unworthy "the prize" for his efforts - each of us will expend our energies on something in life - don't we desire it to be of lasting value?

XXII. Beware Standing on a False Sense of Security Leading to Loose Living - 10:1-33

A. Paul, having just used himself as an example, including his motivation to stay disciplined so as not to be found to be "fake", now uses an example from Israel's history and their "apostasy" - vs. 1-5

1. Writing to a mostly Gentile group, Paul begins with a phrase he often uses, "I don't wish you to be uninformed" regarding an example from the Old Testament - vs. 1-2

There is a difference between knowing (of) something and truly knowing/understanding it and learning from it - many have knowledge but do not benefit from it

- a. When referencing the Israelites he calls them "fathers," in so much as they were the fathers of the "faith" as it was revealed in Israel's history (similar to when we reference the "founding fathers" of the United States (though they are not our actual fathers by blood relation))
- b. Paul is about to compare their situation in the wilderness to that of the Corinthians and their "benefits" and associations in Christ (though neither was utilized correctly by either group as a whole)

Many an immoral person will sense some form of security in their sin because of either their reasoning around it or some religious association - see Pr. 7:14 for an example

As Israel followed Moses (their leader to deliverance from bondage) through the sea onto their future and under God's Law, so we as Christians follow our Redeemer from the bondage of sin finding our identity in Christ

The significance is not to be seen in our setting but in our persons (souls/hearts) - it is what is within us that will/can defile us - Mt. 15:15-20

It is clear that they cloud (the presence of Christ) and the rock (with its symbolism also) pointed to Christ (and the "shekinah" cloud was Christ visibly present with them)

There is a common false sense of security in attending church and its ordinances while failing to live out its purposes and instructions

see Psalm 106:19-27

These died in crowds as crowds

many in the church at Corinth had religiously and intellectually justified (explained to their own satisfaction) attending the idol feasts which were popular, traditional, common and no doubt "fun"

This was one of the "heaps" of the dead

Notice Paul is not stressing any form of deliberate "worship" but just the festivities associated with it - there is a commonality that needs to be noticed by us as well that we not seek "church" as a means for the pursuits of "fun" and part of that found in avoiding uncomfortable truths

- c. It is easy and common to bank the future of one's soul on religious associations which, if not genuinely of the **heart** and **Truth**, leads to a lax outlook on life and the justifying many immoral practices (all with the tendency to ungodly associations and pursuits/goals/purposes)
- d. "All of them" (Israel) were "under the cloud" and "passed through the sea," both referencing two profound/miraculous happenings by the hand of God for Israel, and in them they were "baptized into Moses" - this phrase seems odd at first glance, but the picture is meant to be illustrative of the Corinthian situation - "Baptism signifies *being bound up with* the one in whose name, or in whose sphere of influence, a person is baptized, so that in Paul Christian baptism signifies above all else identification with Christ, especially Christ's saving death and resurrection." Thiselton
- e. Some have argued that the term "baptized" is not speaking of an actual "immersion" yet they essentially were surrounded on all sides (engulfed) by the sea and the cloud (of God's presence) above them - practically speaking, Israel, at that time, was in the most ideal situation with the visible presence of God, their needs directly met by God, hearing from God and being divinely led by God's presence - there has never been such an ideally "religious" setting since

2. These Israelites ate and drank that which came from a "spiritual" source - vs. 3-4

- a. They all ate and drank from the same "spiritual" source - Paul is not stating that the provisions were not real, just that they were not "naturally" provided
- b. There is some interesting history behind the phrase "drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ" - there was a common rabbinical tradition that told of a rock that literally followed Israel as they journey through the wilderness and it was from here they typically received their water supply; with two notable instances mentioned in Exodus 15 and Numbers 20 - Paul declares this "rock" to be Christ
- c. Some speculate that the "eating" and "drinking" here of that which was "spiritual" was being associated by Paul to the elements of the "Lord's Supper" just as he already had made reference to the other "ordinance" of Baptism - this is possible since, while stressing that all partook of these things and participated in them, they did not "save" them from the consequences of their immoral pursuits (they interpreted God's gifts to them as obligatory)

3. Yet, in all this "...with most of them God was not well-pleased..." - vs. 5

- a. Israel was displeasing to God (generally) because of their ungratefulness and disobedience and as a result, they were "strewn in heaps" in the wilderness (and this by God's hand)
- b. Even with, as Paul is about to demonstrate, all their "spiritual practices", they would not be safe from either chastisement, with some, punishment with others because of their sinful living - many today go to church, participate in the ordinances and yet try to also live some type of "idolatry" (either by living for self/things, or recognition, or for a god of their own making (a self-made, self-defined religion incorporating what they like in Christianity and leaving out the rest - this is a form of idolatry also)

B. "Look and learn" from the negative example from Israel's history - vs. 6-13

1. First, don't "lust" as they did (lit. don't crave evil as they craved it) - vs. 6

- a. We all will face wrong desires throughout our lives, and if catered to, they become truly "cravings" (ἐπιθυμητὰς - eager desires) - the "buffeting of the body" Paul exemplified at the end of chapter 9 is a part of this avoidance of catering to these desires
- b. What were these lusts? - this is in reference to Numbers 11:4-15; 31-34 where they "craved" meat instead of having just manna, which is a very fitting example to these Corinthians who did not want to give up their "sacrificial meats" - so much of lust is associated with what we call "coveting" where our focus turns to (continually) what we don't have and then the pursuit of it as a point of life (living to "get" (mammon) and living to "have")

2. Next, don't be "idolators" as they were - vs. 7

- a. This is in reference to Exodus 32 when the Israelites became impatient when Moses went into the mountain to receive the Law of God so they produced a the golden calf to legitimize (in their eyes) practices and behavior they wanted to do anyway
- b. The verse Paul quotes (Ex. 32:6), no doubt, sounded very familiar to the pagan festivals they were attending where the people sat down to eat and drink and then celebrated (had fun as unrestrained as was permitted or accepted)

compare this to Acts 7:41, "... rejoicing in the works of their hands" which is at the actual heart of idolatry (worship of self)

The goal of "fun" is often a guide to life misdirection and much wasted time

The Corinthians had thought they had found a way to "Christianize" these pagan feasts in their day, yet it was no better than what Israel had attempted and fell into

There is a discrepancy between Paul's 23,000 and the OT number of 24,000 that perished - it does not appear to be a copyist error in the Greek manuscripts but the point is clear - the consequences were grievous!

"Sexual innocence" should be defended in the Church seeing there can be no justification of being flippant with anything related to it - it's not funny!

Part of the deceitfulness of sin is its seeming ability to disguise itself in the perceptions of the naive thinking, "This isn't the same thing"

This is common with Christians who have become accustomed to God's grace and find themselves glamorizing sin making something of it (satisfaction) in their thinking it never did not ever could truly be

Our Lord referenced this in John 3:14 as an example of what He would ultimately fulfill in the fullest sense

The root word for "grumbled" is onomatopoeic (γογγύζω) depicting the popular, quiet yet widespread voicing of discontent

This is a point we can easily identify with - the "immediate" (the "now") usually is of greater importance to us (naturally) than the future - we theoretically concede to the future need to change for the better, but instinctively strive to avoid it (thus the grumbling when pushed)

As seen so often throughout Israel's history, grumbling became a group-effort and spread quickly as is its tendency today

- c. These "festivities" were characterized by "sitting down to eat and drink" (feasting/indulging) and "stood up to play" (have fun as a child) - they indulged in irresponsibility
- d. So much of the underlying "push" for this type of "worship" is driven by the pursuit to have "fun" and cater to natural inclinations, versus truly spiritual inclinations - there was a marked difference (typically) between this type of "pagan" worship and the worship of those aware they were in the presence of God

3. Following in line with idolatry, "nor let us act immorally" - vs. 8

- a. Paul references an account in Numbers 25:1-9 where Israel intermingled immorally with the Moabites, yielding to their instinctive lusts - they indulged in unrestrained drives/passions
- b. In the account in Numbers 25, it is a very appropriate illustration for what has been said and going to be said - the Israelites were eating before these Moabite gods (just like the pagan festivals)
- c. Their culture had come to accept varying forms of sexual practices as common and expected (even traditional), and Paul was demonstrating that what they were allowing and seeking to justify in their "pagan feast" participation, went hand-in-hand with sexual immorality
- d. Clearly it was a "big deal" before God seeing that so many died and it is God's perspective/conclusion that actually matters - Pr. 11:21 - "Though hand join in hand the wicked shall not be unpunished..." - though sinful people gather support and believe they have safety in their numbers, they will not get away with their sin
- e. Sexual immorality of all sorts are available today and have infiltrated the churches at all levels - what has become common and acceptable even amongst Christians would be astounding to those believers just a couple generations before us - those striving to be truly pure in mind and body are often looked on as "prudish" or "puritanical" even amongst groups of professing Christians
- f. We do not want to become permissive with sexual ("racy") materials of any sort - many who think they have "no problem" with it, fail to recognize what Paul stressed in chapter 8 where they are to consider others and their weaknesses

4. Following in line with eating/feasting, "nor let us try the Lord" - vs. 9

- a. Notice that Paul is drawing Biblical parallels to the practices of their day by comparing them directly to the examples in Israel (lest they think themselves above them or that their circumstances are different and that they were not susceptible)
- b. Paul refers back to Numbers 21:4-9 where Israel became tired of what God was supplying them in the form of "manna" saying "we loathe this miserable food" - this would be comparable to the Corinthians desiring the feasts of "pagan food" at pagan festivals and resenting any notion that they should not participate for some moral or "faith" reason
- c. Israel, here and in other examples, longed for the "richness" and variety of what they supposed themselves to have in Egypt - yet, interestingly, they would constantly discount their former bondage and remember only the variety of food offerings they had in Egypt
- d. Paul references the Lord (Christ) as the one "tried" with grumbling/complaining - dissatisfaction (discontent) is at the root of all sorts of sin!
- e. Some Israelites were killed by "fiery serpents" and others were saved when looking upon the "bronze serpent" Moses "raised in the wilderness"

5. Warning of what was coming next, "nor grumble as some of them did..." - vs. 10

- a. This is related to what we read in Numbers 14:1-29 (especially verse 29) and a similar time in Numbers 16:41-50 where Israel "grumbled" (murmured) against the Lord (and His appointed leaders) and were "destroyed by the destroyer"
- b. When "cornered" by the Truth and the right, the next step (if it's not yielding) is complaining and this is often extremely contagious since it is in our human nature to not like to be restricted in our pursuits of what we see as comforting and satisfying - we are apt to grumble when pushed out of "comfort zones" - this is what Paul was warning the Corinthians believers of, realizing they would not naturally agree with his challenges to them to restrict their perceived "rights" for what is of greater "good"
- c. "Back of all murmuring against God and against his representatives is unbelief. God is no longer trusted, in fact he is charged with leading us and treating us in a way that is wrong. Exactly that was the trouble with the Israelites, and for this reason God punished them so severely." Lenski

6. Don't place faith in self-confidence; learn from those who came before you - vs. 11-12

compare with Prov. 19:25 - disciplinary "pain" is to be instructive to those looking on and those facing it, who are wise, will learn and change accordingly

We have often heard that those who forget/neglect or don't learn history are doomed to repeat it - and since we see so much repetition of the same patterns throughout history it is apparent that most generations don't utilize history so as to learn from it - it is also very important to have an accurate account of history and not one rewritten to promote a flawed philosophy

Confidence is good and necessary, but becomes a detriment when it is founded on self-perception and not trust in God's control and Word
Many have formulated their own ideas of Biblical truth and ideas of God that are neither in reality - this is frightening because these feel so confident and genuinely believe they are certain
The difficulty in anticipating and dealing with this is that it is one who "thinks they are standing firm" - the way around this is to maintain a steady stream of solid Bible exegesis saturating our thinking - interestingly, this creates a sense of dependence while neglect of it creates a false sense of confidence (no longer being challenged)

- a. These few examples Paul shared from Israel's history were to serve as warnings to Israel at the time of their happenings and were written (recorded) to teach us
- b. This is supposed to be, to some degree, common thinking (to learn from our experiences and that of others) yet, as we often prove in our own lives, we are apt to miss the point of chastening and settle into (get used to) painful life practices that we could avoid if we would yield properly
- c. Of all people, the Corinthian Christians (and ourselves) ought to be strongly heeding these warnings, seeing we are those "upon whom the end of the ages have come" - this carries two ideas - first, and primarily, the age in which they were living was the era that all of history was pointing to (since Genesis 3:15) when the promised Messiah would come - second, it also demonstrates that each generation is to learn from those that came before them, else examples/accounts such as these are wasted and their great value uninvested in the generation that neglects them - we, living so much later in time, have so much to learn from at our disposal, and should see ourselves as having the least of "excuses" in repeating the errors of history
- d. We, as the Corinthians should have, should feel responsible, being those on the other side of history, to be responsible with what we've been given
- e. So, one thing that should be known, anyone confident in themselves and their own "wisdom" should take great care (beware) "lest you fall" - those confident in their "knowledge" as those in 8:1-3, and those confident in their uninformed "sincerity" should "look out" or they'll surely fall (lose progress, be stopped in their growth, or for the false professors, fall away altogether)
- f. There are those so sure of their own personal "read" on life and their own version of theology, that they don't realize they are setting themselves up for profound disillusionment (which is why Christian history is full of so many examples of those embittered at what they perceived to be the Christian faith, and then turn on God spending their life resources opposing God and His Word)
- g. So, keep looking (βλεπέτω active imperative), staying alert to the constant need of "course correction" in life and not expecting to settle into a life complacency based on a sense that "one has arrived" at knowing enough - many allow this to occur and stop looking to learn more, give-up on church and true Bible study, and seek out only encouraging homilies and "fluff pieces" designed to titillate the thoughts but not to genuinely strike challenging conviction in the heart (so as to affect genuine change (repentance))

7. Take comfort (when tempted) in God's faithfulness - vs. 13

Many allow themselves to feel above temptation, again thinking themselves as "standing" and not expecting the "throws" of temptation to come

able to bear-up under it, not yielding to it but forging strongly through it

This is why we are driven to build protective measures based on texts such as "...and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts" (Rom. 13:14) - the pursuit of temptation is a forfeiting of protection (as in leaving the fortress alone and bemoaning the resulting captivity)

- a. The picture of the aggressiveness of temptation to sin, is one of something quickly stalking and running after (and finally catching) its intended victim - this is a good concept to keep in mind, never sensing safety from temptation's pursuits
- b. After Paul's warning in verse 12, it is likely some would swing to the opposite extreme and begin to obsessively fear they will "fall away" - to counter this, Paul assures them that each temptation they have or will ever face (typically) is common to humanity (everyone faces them at some time or another in varying ways) - if we're human we face them
- c. Yet, with these temptations, God, Who is faithful, will make a "way of escape," though don't expect this necessarily to be **FROM** the temptation as much as **THROUGH** it - notice the next phrase, "...so that you will be able to **endure** it." - the encouragement is not found in escaping the temptation but in escaping its "captivity"
- d. The focus is on God's faithfulness and not ours! - many harbor fears thinking their consistency and ability to persevere will pivot on their own fortitude and not God's faithful grace - all victories are to be seen by us as "**God** Who is faithful" and not **we** who are faithful!
- e. One more point needs to be understood with this verse - Paul is clearly marking out temptations "common to humanity" (the ones that pursue us all our lives), while many of these Corinthians were voluntarily bringing themselves into uncommon temptations while participating in these pagan feasts/parties - they were not to expect God's special grace when disregarding His warnings and knowingly placing themselves in tempting situations - these are pursued temptations and not temptations that overtake (pursue) us
- f. As Paul is about to stress, "Therefore... flee from idolatry" - do not be those tempting yourselves and then blaming God for being unfaithful in not providing the presumed "escape"

Each excusing themselves as though their situation is unique - yet if we settled on this approach we all could find someone who endured the same, if not worse temptation we yielded under

- g. It is then important to remember that no temptation is too great to be endured - there is a dangerous (yet common) response by many to essentially blame God for their failures because they deemed the trial/temptation greater than could be borne
- h. "The way out is always there right along with (*sun*) the temptation. It is cowardly to yield to temptation and distrustful of God." RWP (don't expect the way out to be easy, though)

C. Based on what has been said and the strong examples from Israel's history, "run from" idolatry - vs. 14-22

1. Not only avoid idolatrous associations, be repelled from them knowing what they are - vs. 14

We often "fellowship" with people and situations we should not because we underestimate their associations - some become "Christianized paganism" and become part of the "church"

- a. The "therefore" ties it to what Paul has been dealing with since the start of chapter 8
- b. The Corinthian church "wise men" had come to justify their participation in the "pagan feasts" and they had apparently defended it in a letter to Paul - as was seen in these chapters, it is possible for professing Christians to justify all sorts of associations
- c. This happens as we allow other "idolatrous" influences in our lives

2. What are the idolatrous influences we face? - the following are the concepts of idols throughout Scripture

The fear of man - a snare

- a. The idol of unrighteous fear (or unrighteous reverence) - I Kings 15:13 - "idol" - (*מפלצת* *miphletseth*) a horrible (terrorizing) thing (root - "to tremble at") - often, this fear is not obvious because it is evidenced in being driven by what is popular (fear of being unpopular)
- b. The idol which falsely resembles God - II Chron. 33:7 - This is often seen in false concepts of God as in a "god" of my own making (personal ideas of who God is) - or as in formulating an unforgiving God/ cruel God/ permissive God/ or a God of favoritism
- c. The idol of self-will/ self-effort - Isa. 48:5 (iniquity) -this "idol" pursues pain & sorrow in an attempt to please or appease (as in my effort and/or sacrifice is what makes things happen) - this leads to the mentality that if "I" work hard enough, it will equate to things working out as *I* plan (my "sovereignty" over God's)

To worship God is to submit to His truth which may not align with what I *naturally* feel or think of Him

To worship God is to admit dependence versus pride in independence (self-reliance)

What does God hate? - Immorality (Eze. 22:11), direct disobedience to God (Mal. 2:11), cruelty to the needy (Ecc. 18:12), proud look, lying tongue, shedding innocent blood, an evil planning heart, love of mischief (behind the scenes trouble-making), slander, discord among the brethren (Pr. 6:16-19)

- d. The idol of misdirected trust - Hab. 2:18-20 - The word here for "idols" has the idea of "for naught" (useless, good-for-nothing) - these are replacements for God that we look to for provision of all types, but they have no ability to actually provide of themselves - this is where things or "forces" become what we personify (though they have no "personhood" as God does)
- e. The idols of "abomination" - II Chron. 15:8 - the underlying word for here "idol" describes an "abomination; something strongly hated" - in this case, what is "disgusting" to God
- f. Idol of living for the praise and admiration of people - as warned against in Matt. 6:1-18 an idol is that which takes the focus/ heart away from living for and serving (worshipping) God
- g. Idols of "excuses" - as in Israel at Sinai (justify wrongs) as in permissive authorities to do wrong - as in Israel's case, these were not real authorities, just ones deemed so (just as we would do using circumstances to "justify" (*excuse*) wrong behavior or choices - this "idolatry" is seen in overcoming the conscience with "convenient" reasonings (getting around conviction)
- h. Idol of "easily besetting sins" - Heb. 12:1-2 - historically, idols are that which "trip someone up" spiritually (as in the "high places" of Israel's past where pagan worship and its remnants were not removed) - these were allowable distractions from responsibility
- i. Idol of the power of money ("mammon") - Matt. 6:24-34 - an idol was also something that one would look to (apart from God) to meet needs - how do we tell the difference? To serve money is to **focus** on getting future provisions, yet to serve the Lord is to marvel in the abundance of what I have today!

These types of "idols" (stand-ins for God's Word) are very "contagious" and can even become traditions - my "excuse" can become popularly accepted

Also habitual sins or stall tactics to avoid reality

Practically speaking, to serve money is to love to get while serving the Lord is to love (learn to love) giving

3. This was no "power-trip" on Paul's part - he was warning them out of genuine affection - he used the term "beloved" (*ἀγαπητοί*) as someone who genuinely desires the best for them - it is easy to look on those challenging us away from danger as just looking to make us miserable, while forgetting that true contentment in life will always be associated with some form of self-discipline

4. Paul reasoned with "sensible people" regarding what was really going on - vs. 15-21 One cannot reason with a fool!

We need many times in our lives where we stop to thoroughly consider what we do and why we do it

- a. Paul, now seriously "appealing to their good sense," asks them to judge what he is saying (and about to say) and that, not as to consider whether or not it is right, but to see clearly that it is right - this is not (as we so often today) hypothesizing as much as it is a proposition of fact
- b. The key to these next verses is seen in the word "sharing" (coming from *κοινωνία* (fellowship/ participation)) - we've heard the statement "guilty by association" and that is along the lines of what Paul is getting at - not just guilty because one might "share" in what is wrong, but because we truly "share" in what is right/holy we **must not** participate in certain "associations"

We may look to "justify" (excuse) an association or practice by belittling its seriousness - but God does place a high value on our associations

They brought the popular thinking and attitudes of the day with them to the observance of the Lord's Supper

This is one of the core ideas behind holiness - we are to be distinct, but not just distinct but distinctly His - completely and thoroughly His!

The phrase "according to the flesh" is left out of the NASB - the word "nation" is fitting since it describes the ethnic people (as a nation)

Over the years, many have been guilty of ascribing supernatural powers to things/objects - while glamorizing the supposed fight against evil, they miss the greater significance of the association over the object - they remove physical objects to fix spiritual issues, skirting the real issue

This comparison to the Lord's Table (communion) is only effective if the hearers understand the significance of the Lord's table, (our identity with Him) and that of the religiousness of so much of what is truly "pagan" - not just godless in the sense of atheism, but godless in that whatever is revered, it's not **the** God

This growing (popular) stubbornness is masked under the titles of things such as liberty, free will, independence or in a perceived need to always reject what seems old or traditional

Our jealousy can be flawed in its discerning what is best for another but the Lord's discernment is flawless, thus His jealousy is also

Some do look on God as weak and figure that His forgiveness and mercy are obligatory - this comes from selective exegesis with a pre-existing bias toward man's importance over God's

D. Live by this standard with "gray areas"; whatever you set out (choose) to do, do all for God's glory - vs. 23-33

1. With the attendance of the pagan feasts dealt with, Paul finalizes the issue of whether or not the Corinthian Christians should eat food offered to idols - vs. 23

It is immature to approach life from the perspective that if there are no defined boundaries in a particular area of life that "all" is to be pursued - maturity seeks an approach to life that finds satisfaction in usefulness and investability

- c. In verses 16-17 Paul uses the "Lord's supper" as a prime example of what is being represented in "feasts" such as these - we should note that because of the societal influences, the Corinthians would need to be corrected and reminded of what this was all about in chapter 11
- d. The "cup of blessing" that they share in at these times is a sharing in the blood of Christ, and the bread a sharing in the body of Christ? - it is our identity, our most important association, the one that is to define us and thus dictate all other associations
- e. This is summed up in the reality of part of the symbolism represented at the Lord's supper - though there are many of us, we are one in Christ and must see ourselves this way - they had allowed Christ to define part of their lives but reserved a good majority for themselves to define as they pleased (losing sight of their "slave" position being defined by their master)
- f. Look back to the nation of Israel and their sacrifices - the one who offered the sacrifice partook of part of it as part of their worship - these were "sharers" in it and all of this leading to the reality of the symbolism that the partakers of the meat at these pagan feasts were "sharers" with the worship of these idolatrous feasts
- g. Could the point that these idols are not really "gods" still be used to defend their participation in these feasts - No! Paul is not (while thinking this through with "reasoning people") giving power to the idols themselves or mystical powers to the meats sacrificed to them (as though they could carry demons or evil spirits with them) - the problem is in the association or fellowship (being united with the ungodly in their ungodly causes and practices)
- h. What these "Gentiles" actually are sacrificing to (this sharing with) are demons - demons are spiritual beings (fallen angels) under the leadership of Satan - they are Satan's cohorts out to do his bidding (having joined him in his rebellion against God) - so, yes, these are not actually "gods" but they are deliberate enemies of God fully aware of His existence having once been with Him - these are rebels of the worst kind!
- i. As Paul stresses, you CANNOT "drink the cup of the Lord and that of demons" - one who truly loves and worships the Lord could not conceive (accept) participation in any practice to honor the enemies of God and the Lord Jesus Christ (in worshipping them to any degree - this involves honor, reverence, sacrifice and adoration of them)
- j. Any truly thinking (sensible) person should see that the two don't mix

5. Would we knowingly provoke the Lord to continue in our own way? - vs. 22

- a. At first glance, it would seem that all professing Christians would say "absolutely not!" but sadly this is not the case - it is becoming far too common for those in our families and churches to be directly confronted with their wrong, only to have them excuse themselves or respond in defiance (professing themselves to be wise, they become fools - Rom. 1:22)
- b. The human emotion of jealousy is ascribed to the Lord only as an example, and not in the uncontrolled or unrighteous jealousy we might face - though it is a good term since typically it depicts a displeasure with the actions or thinking of someone we love that is turning to someone/something that is not good for them
- c. Jealousy is described from the Lord's side of the situation, while presumptive arrogance is considered from our side - this is supposed to be an obvious answer, but many must determine if in some way that they are "stronger" than the Lord - this may be brought-on by a misunderstanding of the concepts of God's love, mercy and forgiveness stemming from a lack of considering them in light of His holiness, righteousness and judgment

D. Live by this standard with "gray areas"; whatever you set out (choose) to do, do all for God's glory - vs. 23-33

1. With the attendance of the pagan feasts dealt with, Paul finalizes the issue of whether or not the Corinthian Christians should eat food offered to idols - vs. 23

- a. Paul, apparently borrowing from a phrase they had used with him, limits it - "all things are lawful for me" may have some initial substance, but is absurd to make it one's life philosophy of practice **to do what they do only because there is no law against it**
- b. This fails to consider the merit (purpose/benefit) in what we choose to spend our efforts on
- c. Just because something is not against a law does not make it "profitable" to do - it's the counter to the old argument "what's wrong with it?" - what's truly right with it? - this is dealing with "gray areas" and not a text to make us list all profitability for everything we do
- d. Just because something is not against the law does not make it edifying (constructive)

The opposite being the tearing down of another for the sake of my perceived rights

- e. The underlying word for “edify” is οἰκοδομεῖ, meaning “to build” (root being οἶκος meaning “house”) - we’re to discern “gray areas” and our “liberties” by how constructive they are to others and even ourselves
- f. This is a construction of others by means of personal sacrifice - we restrict our liberties for the well-being (edifying) of another (a brother, and in this case, a “weaker” brother)

2. Do not be a “self-seeker,” but a pursuer of the best for others - vs. 24

It is easy to fear this concept wondering who will “promote” me - Success before God is never found in personal exaltation or promotion, but in serving our Lord’s agendas and His slaves/ children

- a. Few concepts contradict today’s popular thought than this (as it did in the days of these Corinthians) - life is not to be looked upon as using freedoms/opportunities as means to self-promotion and self-gratification - we are to be searching out the good for others we meet
- b. This is found, in this context, in sacrificing personal rights (freedoms) for another’s well being and promotion - we are to be looking to be promoters of others and their welfare
- c. “The sentiment of the whole is, *when a man is bound and directed by no positive law, his grand rule should be the comfort and salvation of others.*” Barnes
- d. A life spent yielding to others for their improvement and encouragement, will be fulfilling and very “successful” before the Judge that actually counts - many achieve success (by the world’s standards that are in direct opposition to these texts) and have done so by injuring others

God does not have us on this earth to live out our dreams of self glory and comfort, but for His glory (seen when we sacrifice our rights for His ways)

3. With this in mind, don’t “mind” *too much* what you eat - vs. 25-30

Again, this does not mean to be without a discerning life focus, but that we need not fill it seeking the “good and bad” in all things and situations - this is a judgement call, but most items of danger and foolhardiness will be clear - some of these will be the evidence of life experience with “easily besetting sins”

- a. Especially those who are “weak” (vulnerable in their conscience), don’t be looking to keep your conscience “on edge” (as it were) by constantly seeking out what might make you “feel bad” if you think on it enough (or can find some flaw in it) - this of course, does not mean to act without thought, forethought or some discernment, but allow for some “scrupulous” areas when it comes to life practice - this thought **cannot** stand alone so we must explain this further!
- b. Another way of looking at this would be to say something like, “don’t go out of your way to make an open-show of your sacrifices” (of rights/freedoms), or don’t sacrifice needlessly - there will be some people and situations we need not delve into too deeply, but if a point of conscience (where self or another **might** be hurt or caused to stumble) is brought to light, then avoid it
- c. Paul illustrates with meat sold in the market - having already clarified that attendance at “pagan feasts” is wrong (and why), he now deals with the meat itself - what if it’s sold in the market or served at someone’s home? - the meat itself, even if it has been sacrificed to an idol, is not tainted somehow with sinfulness - the clarification on this is “For the Earth is the Lord’s and all it contains” - Paul was quoting from Psalm 24:1 - so the meat itself (this food) is not in and of itself evil, but if directly associated with an evil (knowingly), **shun it** for “conscience sake”
- d. We need not assign moral value to an item but, instead, to its usage (or as Paul was just dealing with, its association - an object may find its being tainted with evil, more in its associations than is really to be found in its physical make-up) - realizing all is ultimately the Lord’s should not be used to say “everything is OK to use, associate with, and value” (as in “all things are lawful for me”) seeing that not all is **profitable** to our purpose and not all **builds** properly ourselves and others - **we must strive to have rules with reason**

See I Timothy 4:1-5 for a parallel text - interestingly there Paul speaks of those who have “seared their conscience” and in doing so “forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created...”

Also, just because a following generation finds use with something considered “bad” by a preceding generation, does not necessarily mean the younger are loosening standards - many of the standards of our parents and grandparents find their roots in good sense, but often become a mark of spirituality in themselves and are held **unnecessarily** as a “measuring stick” of Godliness

- e. Many have observed over the years, the infighting that has been happening in the Church over things and associations - just because something has had a stigma attached to it in a previous generation, does not mean that “thing” will or should always have it - yet neither should we disregard “stigmas by association” with a Godless society which may need to be avoided so as not to blur moral lines and become a distraction to the susceptible (weak)

There was nothing wrong with accepting the unbeliever’s invitation, but never allow the pursuit of good manners to defile conscience and good morals

- f. So, as Paul illustrates, if invited to an “unbelievers” home, eat what they place before you and ask no questions as to its origin so as not to make it an issue of conscience (it is not wise to go against conscience, even though flawed, it serves as a protection, and to get used to overriding it is to welcome hazardous influences)

Faunting our freedoms because we know we know better than another is disregarding another for self’s sake which is in defiance of what was just mentioned in verse 24

- g. So, just coming and eating is without issue, but if someone (in this example) reveals openly that the meat was offered as a sacrifice to an idol, for the sake of the conscience of the person who brought it up, **don’t partake** - for why would we desire our “freedom” to be properly judged as a hindrance/stumbling block to another? - vs. 28-29

- h. “If I partake by grace--if, by the grace and mercy of God, I have a right to partake of this--yet why should I so conduct as to expose myself to the reproaches and evil surmises of others? Why should I lay myself open to be blamed on the subject of eating, when there are so many

bounties of Providence for which I may be thankful, and which I may partake of without doing injury, or exposing myself in any manner to be blamed?" - Barnes on verse 30

This verse does seem to lend credence for the practice of a prayer of thanks before eating a meal

- i. The goal (vs. 30) is thankfulness for what is received and not the enforcement of my freedoms/rights - why force the issue of being "slandered" (literally "blasphemed") "for that which I give thanks" - this is not a reactionary verse as if saying, "How come I'm picked-on over something I am genuinely thankful for?" - this would be placing focus on self and not on others *before* myself (though there are some who take this as Paul working in a defense for his actions (partaking himself at times) - if we speculate, it may have been that some who ate at these feasts might try to justify themselves because Paul would eat the same meat in a home)

4. The ultimate standard for doing what we do - vs. 31-33

It is not the scruples of another's conscience that dictate our lives, but God's Word is supposed to dictate our lives as we find what is glorifying to Him in it

In context, this is dealing more with our apparent behavior and actions - it would be easy for those who are too introspective to try to scrutinize the smallest details of their lives while forgetting some issues are not "moral" ones before God

We should never find joy in defeating others in a battle of wits or that another could not handle a situation or temptation as well as we could (treating life as though it is somehow a competition)

The word for not giving offense is also a term used to describe being "blameless" in our behavior - we must feel the weight of duty to be wise stewards with God's "image" before others - always looking to affect their thoughts/opinions of God for the better (improvement in the right direction)

It is good to be an encouragement to others and to influence them to a better life but this should not suffice us - we want to be used for an eternal impact!

As seen in the New Testament examples, we also will be offensive (a bother) to others because of the Truth and our identity with Christ - but we should live to be blameless before God in how we represent His name

- a. The primary guide to doing what we do is not to be "because I want to do it", "I'm free/allowed to do it" nor "everyone is doing it" - none of these are safe guides of practice!
- b. Paul is clarifying two boundaries when it comes to our "freedoms" (Christian liberties) - first, as was just covered, we are not *under* the jurisdiction of another's conscience (though we must not openly "trample it), and second, we *are to limit* our freedoms by the guide, "...whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." - see also Col. 3:17 and I Pet. 4:11
- c. Summing up all that has been dealt with since chapter 8, Paul gives a maxim for living - whatever in our freedoms we choose to eat, drink or whatever we do, it is to be governed by the objective to bring glory to God - many at Corinth, in the pursuits of their independent rights to do whatever and think about anything as they choose, were disregarding altogether the impact it was having on God's reputation (image) to those they were affecting by their behavior - our goal is to always look to make others think well of God (glorify Him) - far too many, in the pursuits of their own opinions, express their freedoms in ways and words that bring dishonor to God (for Who He really is and His true/actual character)
- d. So, in this pursuit also, "Give no offense..." - vs. 32 - the word for "offense" is ἀπόσκοποι and is not, as we might view, "offenses" meaning that we *irritate* or *upset* them - it describes causing someone to stumble as if tripped-up by our actions - our caution then with others is not just our perceived "rightness" as much as it is handling situations (and those in them) with foresight, to avoid steering them wrong - see Rom. 14:12-13 and II Cor. 6:1-10
- e. Three groups are mentioned (which are all-encompassing) - the Jews (who would be those sensitive to that which relates to the Laws of God (high morals)) and the Greeks (who would be those living more for the secular) - these two are unbelievers and we are not to so misrepresent God that we participate in turning them from the Gospel altogether in the pursuits of our own rights - then, the same goes with the "Church of God"; fellow believers
- f. Starting where this verse ends (vs. 33) and working backwards - The objective; "...that they may be saved." - this is sought by purposing to be a "profit" to others (which also has a picturesque underlying word, σύμφορον, describing "circumstances coming together for another's benefit") - that others will be the better for having been with us - this is a noble goal, but not in the sense that another profits financially, or in having their "spirits" cheered with good humor or even that they are emotionally encouraged or morally challenged for the better - the profit here is the influence towards the salvation of their soul!
- g. This is begun, then, by "pleasing all men in all things" by not living for personal profit - this is verse 33 summarized, realizing that when we live for self, we are offensive to others and when we are in a group of "livers-for-sellers" we find life to be surrounded by offenses - the "pleasing" is not meeting all their expectations (since this is impossible), but is having a genuine interest in the well-being of others (with the idea of being of service to them)
- h. Another way of rendering this concept is that we are to work for the advantage of others over our advantage - this concept certainly describes a life of faith - the weak in faith (in God) or the faithless, work to position themselves in advantageous situations, while we are being challenged here to yield the advantage to others - this can only be done in as much as we genuinely trust God's oversight over all things
- i. 11:1 fits with this context also in saying something we all should hope to be able to say - follow (imitate) me as I also follow (imitate) Christ - this is only useful if we are actually following Christ

XXIII. The Underlying Purposes for Distinct Decorum Between Men and Women - 11:2-16

A. Few texts in the New Testament have so many varying views as the one we are about to cover - there are some who strive to make a case that this text does not deal with the subordination of women/wives in any way while there are some who stress not only the subordination “picture” here, but the emphasis on the symbol of it (head coverings) as well and say it (the symbol of head coverings) should be required and practiced today

1. This is a case where the overall and most current context must be kept in view to properly handle these verses - we’ve just finished covering Paul’s correction of their use of “liberties” and their reasonings, loosely and indiscriminately, to such a point as to cause harm to another’s conscience and then even another’s Christian walk/growth
2. In an attempt to not become “entangled in the weeds” (and thus become confused, misdirected or conclude that there is not definite conclusion to be had), we will take it as much as possible at face value
 - a. First, it is clear that there was an issue related to how women were or were not covering their heads while “praying or prophesying,” and that Paul was “pushing” that they should have head coverings while engaging in such ministerial or worship practices
 - b. Second, as a contrast to this “issue”, Paul also clarifies a man should not have his head covered while “praying and prophesying” - this is odd at first glance since there was (and still is) a Jewish, historical practice of covering their heads and there is no other text that stresses that women should have their heads covered while “in church” or “in worship”
 - c. Third, Paul deals with (very specifically) the concept of “headship” which, in spite of many recent commentators, does involve **subordination** (organized/structural authority)
 - d. Fourth, Paul does go on to then demonstrate the equality we have “in the Lord” (vs. 11), but this is not to be seen as countering what he just said
 - e. Finally, there needs to be some distinction seen between a woman “praying and prophesying” and doing the same in the assembled church congregation - this must be accounted for in light of 14:34-36 where the women are to “keep silent in the church”

So, with this point in particular in mind, should we stress the symbolic or should we stress more the underlying intent/meaning/ purpose for it? - the latter

It must be understood that equality does not mean “sameness”

So their “praying and prophesying” can be in many places but is not in the “church assemblies”

B. The commendation for “holding firmly” to what was handed-down to them - vs. 2

1. Paul genuinely commends them because they “remember” him in everything
 - a. That even with their differences, they were still looking to him for his authoritative input
 - b. It is easy, when one in authority counters us, to disregard them because of the differences - as we see in this epistle and in II Corinthians, they were open to counsel and correction
2. Paul genuinely commends them for being consistent in the “traditions”
 - a. These traditions (per the context) are more related to the ordinances and general practices and structures related to their public assemblies (not cultural traditions)
 - b. Granted, these were being distorted and misunderstood, but they demonstrated an obedient posture towards him and the teaching - this needs to be looked for anytime we have an issue with one’s misuse of what they have been taught - was it deliberate rebellion, or was it more their misunderstanding, unseen neglect, or results from other bad influences?

Often, the ones we benefit most from are those “hardest” on us - and those easiest on us we glean very little of true value

As we see in I Thes. 5:14, not all are “unruly” (rebels); some are “weak” and “feble-minded” and need time, encouragement and ongoing instruction to continue to grow - constant rebuke drives these away

C. The underlying meaning for “head-covering” practices and their ongoing importance - vs. 3-10

1. It’s easy in this text to overlook the meaning in a symbol/practice and just focus on the symbol/practice
 - a. Paul immediately lays the “groundwork” for why there even was a head-covering practice
 - b. “Please understand” that everyone has a “head” over them - their is a structural organization in creation that God setup for order - these authoritative structures are not in place to demonstrate the greater “quality” of one over another, but just the organization
2. Christ is the “head” of every “man” - it has been argued that this can (or does) speak of all mankind (thus women also), but this does not fit the context where differences in the sexes are being detailed
 - a. All men (of the Church) are to realize they are answerable (in subordination to) Christ
 - b. These are to find their significance in this (practically) as to why they do what they do
3. The man is the head of a woman - this very idea is one which has been attempted to “explain away” by many looking to counter it with the truth of our “equality in Christ”
 - a. Yet women (as a general rule) are to see themselves (structurally) under their husbands (if they have one) and younger women under their fathers - some try to discount this saying by pointing out that all women are not married or some may have even lost their fathers - this is a case of trying to argue away an overriding principle with exceptions “to the rule” - yet to follow this line of thinking would be to **leave us with no guiding principles at all!**

Anyone who has a boss, at some point comes to realize their boss is not necessarily “better” than them, just “over” them

This is not a novel idea in the New testament nor is it a one text teaching - see Eph. 5:22-24 and Col. 3:18, Titus 2:5 and I Pet. 3:1

There is, as a result of the fall, an ongoing hindrance in the husband/wife relationship as she will try to rule him and his rule will be flawed with the presence of sin

- b. This is a point of faith for women throughout life (and is particularly exasperated with a society that repels any authoritative structure like this) - but this is, per the creation account in the first two chapters of Genesis, the way **God** designed it
- c. Each of us is to find our significance in fulfilling responsibly and reverently what God has given us to do, and that in the stations of life He has placed us

4. "God is the head of Christ" - this phrase has given many theologians unnecessary grief - ***subordination in the Godhead does not indicate lesser qualities in the Godhead*** - actually, the realization of this structure should be "proof enough" of all of us to appreciate our lot in life, and never see ourselves demeaned because we must answer to another at any time

There will no doubt be men who stress the need for wives to honor them while belittling or altogether neglecting their role to glorify Christ in their earthly position as a man

- a. As will be discussed in verse 7, each is to see themselves bringing glory to another - we are the ones guilty (often) of thinking we should choose who we are to "bring glory to" in our earthly position, but God has His ideal structure set and one who truly reveres God will find joy, purpose, and even contentment in it
- b. Christ, by example, came to do "the will of my Father" - John 5:30

5. In their day, when a man (believer) had something on his head (his head was covered) while praying or "prophesying," it was a "disgrace" to his **head** - vs. 4

There is no value in maintaining a symbol when its purpose is no longer recognized - but if a society/culture has a "sign" of sorts that identifies a point of character (or the lack thereof) we should be sensible to it (as becoming all things to all men)

- a. As mentioned earlier, we are not sure of the details behind this practice and its origins, but we are certain that it had these "meanings" in their culture at the time - because of this verse, men are still expected to take off hats when in a church building or when praying
- b. It should be noted at this point, that we must not be looking to practice the cultural norms of their day as much as we are to be looking to live by these truths regarding the honoring our "heads"
- c. There are debates as to exactly what is meant by the "head" - is it referring to their own literal head or their figurative head (in this case, Christ)? - it can refer to both without difficulty - in doing what is outwardly shameful, he disgraces himself and the one he is to be living for
- d. In their culture, if a man was praying to or speaking of/for their deity, it was consider shameful to have the head covered (for a man) - thus, today, if a Christian man prays or is forth-telling the Word of God, he must be conscious not to disgrace the Lord in it (being driven to outwardly demonstrate respect/reverence for the Lord... which is inward)

This is certainly one of the "lessons learned" in this verse

6. Now, getting to what appears to be the purpose in writing these verses, a woman who prays and is "forth-telling" the Word of God with her head uncovered, brings shame to her head - vs. 5-6

It is easy to so focus on a spiritual truth that we neglect our earthly accountabilities (defaming the Lord we are to be representing)

- a. Why were these women not covering their heads (as was the custom)? We are not told the answer but, it is fitting to the context to speculate that it had to have something to do with the expression of their liberty in Christ and/or that in their liberty, they were looking to demonstrate the reality of their position in Christ (there being "no male or female" in Christ (see Gal. 3:28))
- b. Paul, wanting the point to be clearly illustrated, compares this same practice to a woman who has had her head shaved (which was, culturally, shameful) - if she's going to act shamefully (no matter the reason or justification she may have in her motives), why not embrace the shame completely? - this, of course, is assuming that the obvious answer would be she would not think of doing such a thing, so why act shamefully here in something of seeming less value?
- c. It should be noticed also that this is done while "praying and prophesying" - neither is wrong for a woman to do, but they can be "wronged" when failing to consider the "setting" - many are guilty of having "their good evil spoken of" because they follow **some** of the "rules" while disregarding others - ministries of any sort are **services for the Lord first** before they are ever services for those around us (we pray and give out God's Word for Him and His purposes and not for others or our own purposes under our own authority - we are stewards not masters)

So why try to make a good point at the expense of truly misrepresenting the "good point" to others and they seeing it as disgraceful? - there may be obvious exceptions to this as a general rule, but Paul is about to demonstrate that these customs had their roots in the Truth of God's design

The practice of uncovering her head in such instances would have also brought on questions regarding her character and possibly the "type of woman" she was

7. Who is to bring "glory" to whom, considering our earthly purpose/design by God? - vs. 7-9

A man keeps his head uncovered to glorify God in these "religious" practices but if his wife uncovers her head while doing the same, before others (and before God) she dishonors her husband which also then dishonors God

- a. These next verses will seem preposterous to the popular thought of our era, but these speak of God's earthly design - our significance in Christ is about to be clarified as well, but there is a distinction (as far as our time on this earth is concerned) between men and women and their roles
- b. A man should not cover his head in these circumstances because "he is the image and glory of God" while the woman is "the glory of man" - "How can this possibly be?" she may ask - but if this is part of her earthly role before God, to bring and showcase the "glory" of her husband, she would not resist if she sees this as for the Lord primarily and for her husband secondarily (because it is God's design, even in a sin infected world)

This is in keeping with her "reverencing her husband"

Each of us, in all aspects of life (not just family order/structure), is to find satisfaction in fulfilling our "lot in life" realizing it is how God made it - if we subscribe to humanistic thought we will tend to stray from God's design to man's "ideals" (which history demonstrates are not ideal)

She was made out of the man for the man as God designed it - will all women marry" We know this is not the case and there is more to her purpose than just being a wife or having a family - but if she does marry, this is God's order

As each succumbs to societal norms and pressures of the promoted moral of self-focus, neither comes to know the fulfillment in the promotion of another over self - as in Php. 2:4

It appears that most men disregard this responsibility

Though we are unsure, this seems like a feasible part of this reference - the angels of God live in uninterrupted reverence of God

We cannot afford to compromise the underlying meaning/purpose for some societal standards and practices if their meaning is in keeping with God's truth, design and purposes - we honor Him not the symbol

This does not change the family structure but it does make it one of mutual submission before God to each other, thus the wife's submission to her husband is not to be overbearing but full of purpose

Note also that ALL things are from God - not just us, but the order of things also

When it comes to submission (for all of us) it's never to be looked upon as a 'pick-and-choose' option, but as required in ALL that God has clarified

- c. Much of the resistance to these verses (and these concepts) stems from our misrepresenting the concepts of subordination and submission - following Paul's presentation closely, we see that his emphasis is ultimately on God's design/order
- d. Man brings glory to God in his "dominion" over what God has created (dominion including responsibility) thus fulfilling his God-given purpose, while the woman honors her husband being his God-given "helpmeet" (responsibility) and fulfilling her God-given purpose
- e. Paul directly appeals to the order in creation when stating that man does not "originate" from woman but woman does from man (Gen. 2:23) - it should be noted that as our age (and many in the Church) stray from the authority of the Biblical account of the creation, our age also drifts from (and many in the churches as well) God's order in the family
- f. When it states that woman was made for "man's sake", again, that is not demeaning - it goes to purpose - The Lord Jesus Christ lived and died "for our sake" and we don't see that as demeaning - see Gal. 1:4, 2:20, Titus 2:4 and then see Eph. 5:25 (where the man gives himself for his wife)
- g. Our culture, for some time now, has lost sight of such thinking as is being dealt with here - a wife finding contentment in bringing "glory" (honor) to her husband as part of her God-given purpose, brings shock and ridicule these days but some eras throughout history have handled it appropriately - these days a wife feels she must promote herself more than her husband and the **husband promotes himself and not his true Head, Christ** - interestingly, if a woman glories in her husband, she will be his glory (he will honor her and cherish her)

8. So, because of what the symbol of covering the head meant in their time, these Corinthian women should observe it and not seek their "liberty" from it - vs. 10

- a. The final reason given is stated as "because of the angels" - this is truly a difficult text because we are not told what about the angels in this is significant
- b. It does seem to have historical backing that angels do observe our worship of God and we and in Isaiah 6:1-3 we see the Seraphim covering their face and feet before God with their wings - it may be that these, being so designed specifically for God's glory, would be perplexed/disturbed, confused with a practice of such immodesty while intending to come before God or to speak His words - angels are also focused on **submission** before God
- c. "At that time in Greece only immoral women were seen with their heads uncovered. Paul was saying that Christian women could not afford to disregard social convention, as this would hurt their testimony." Archaeological Study Bible
- d. Emphasis on personal freedoms over God-given designs is never safe nor wise - today we not only see the absence of men honoring Christ openly as their heads, but wives expected to dishonor their husbands (focused more on their observations (sight) and comforts than on God's design) - we do not have such symbolism these days, but the underlying structure has not changed since the creation

D. Realizing equal standing in the Lord, "judge" for yourselves the rightness of what has been said - vs. 11-16

1. Since the issue is not one of equality (but of structure/organization), there is no need to be contentious, instead seek harmonious submission of all to their "heads" before their Creator

2. The pursuit of the "ideal" of independence from each other is unreasonable - vs. 11-12

- a. This is clear in that a man comes also from a woman in birth - all men, save Adam, have a mother and are to honor them as such in their profound purpose in their lives
- b. "In the Lord" there is a mutual honor because of our eternal relationship and our mutual elevation to being Christians (by the grace of God)
- c. We all originate from God, so realizing Him as our Creator, we submit to the roles He has, in His infinite wisdom, assigned each of us - many men resent or run from their responsibility to lead (thus serve) their families as they should before God

3. It's so clear (God's structure), "judge for yourselves" then, should a woman pray to God without regarding her position as He has given it to her? - vs. 13

- a. "... the thing was so clear, and he so certain of what he had advanced being right, that he leaves it with them, not doubting but that they would, upon a little reflection within themselves, join with him in this point" John Gill
- b. So don't cast off what represents submission when coming before God - it is hypocritical and unreasonable to come to God demanding one's own way (in opposition to His)

4. The evidences in “nature” of the distinctions between women and men - vs. 14-15

A man should have honor in being distinctly a man (male) as a woman also should in clearly being a woman (female) - each finding honor in what God made them to **distinctly** be

If there needs to be a debate over hair length, a rule of thumb based on these verses would be for the women to have longer hair than men

- a. In the usage of the word for “nature” it is in reference to the general sense of propriety (common decency and sense) - the word is φύσις carrying the idea here of instinct or normality (there may be exceptions to these norms but they are still norms)
- b. There has been much debate over verse 14 and how long is long hair for a man - the usage here though communicates more the dishonor that is brought to a man when he appears as a woman (in this case because of his hair he looks “ womanish ”)
- c. History demonstrates the distinction between the sexes is lost whenever perversion begins to infect a society - women desire to be as men and men as women
- d. For the woman, her long hair is a “glory” for her, something given to her (naturally) that distinguishes her from a man (and she “glories” in her femininity) - also, it served as a natural covering (not, in this case, in the stead of an external covering) but could serve as another reminder of the significance of the external head covering

5. Don't strive to stand out (contentiously) - vs. 16

This should lie at the heart of how we decide on how we dress , prepare our daily appearance and conduct ourselves - we never want to be those who unnecessarily draw attention to themselves

Paul does seem to mostly disregard these “lovers of contention” - too much attention to these encourages them to more contention pursuits

- a. The underlying word for “contentious” is a word picture of one loving strife (which is based in pride where they love to pit their will against others on a regular basis)
- b. If these Corinthians have some who want to stand their ground and make this an issue, Paul appeals to the common practice in the Church at that time to again demonstrate they would be alone in their stand (in the churches) - trying to stand out just to “stand out” is at the core of the definition of immodesty - it would appear that all the women of the churches at that time wore head coverings in keeping with the customs of their era/society
- c. Generally, the same inner attitude is the cause of many contentions - the drive to flaunt unnecessary freedoms or restrictions before others (especially in the Church)

XXIV. Honoring the Lord's Supper Because of What it Stands For - 11:17-34

A. A rebuke because of the **nature** of the divisions among them as a church - vs. 17-19

1. In contrast to the first part of this chapter, Paul cannot start with praise because of what was fully taking place in the church now - this rebuke likely includes content through chapter 14 - vs. 17

Just because churches or a church does something and establishes tradition does not make it right - discernment in the Church of the Church will always be a part of the Church!

- a. Their “assembling” was resulting in weakening the “body” rather than strengthening it
- b. This was a problem (categorically) that churches from there on out would face (as the primary purpose of so many aspects of the church were wrongly applied) - just because a church gets together to “worship” or “learn” does not mean that what is happening is sanctioned of God and may have more the stamp of society (their age) than that of God

2. The fact of divisions within their assembling - vs. 18-19

It's easy to overreact when learning of something because we react to the emotion/passion rather than respond to the actualities of the situation

- a. Primarily (“in the first place”) Paul had heard that there where divisions (σχίσματα) when they, ironically, came to be together - they were coming together to be separate !
- b. Paul wrote that he “partly believed it” being responsible in handling the criticisms he had been told of, but had to conclude that the core of what was being stated was true - we often must be careful to weed-out emotional bias from the facts of what is being communicated

This is the origin of our word for “heresies”

As in I Cor. 1:10 that they be “of the same mind” resulting then in their being of the same “judgment” (conclusions)

So, instead of growing weary and discouraged over church issues we are to be on the alert to see who remains faithful - of course, looking to see if we are such also (and to some degree expecting such “testing”)

Proper Biblical doctrine if truly believed (not just “known”) will lead to good behavior with others - it must in light of just understanding the grace of God

- c. Paul, using this situation to point out that some divisions are necessary and have a purpose before God, tells them that “There must be factions” (αἰρέσεις - a different word communicating a division based on groupings of ideas/beliefs) and that some of these will “reveal” those “who are approved” (literally to be tested and found to be genuine) -Paul uses both words (divisions and factions) to demonstrate why there are divisions - these stem from differing thought processes, beliefs and inner priorities resulting in practical (actual/real) separations
- d. It is interesting to see that he comes at it from the positive - that the “**approved**” would be evidenced - this places a different “take” on church issues! We are to be looking and focusing not on the bad responses (these are natural and need to be dealt with), but on the unnatural (spiritual) responses to issues, so we can see who are the “real deal,” having been “tested” (tried for proof of genuineness)
- f. In the case at hand, those proven genuine will not only believe correctly, but as is an inseparable result of truly correct doctrine (firmly and fully believed), these will be gracious to others - poor behavior in the Church usually stems from a poor belief system (faith) - not necessarily because they do not know the technical answers but because they do not actually live by them

The point is that divisions will come and not that we are striving to make them come - we are to strive to be true unifiers (around the truth)

g. It must also be considered with the statement that "factions must come," it is along the lines that they are certain to come - and in these difficult times, those who are the "real deal" will respond correctly - the ideal is not to form "parties" so as to stay separate, but to "win" to the right (truth) those straying; and an attitude of division does not cater to this

B. Personal agendas and priorities infiltrating the Church - vs. 20-22

1. In their coming together for the ordinance of the Lord's supper they lost track of who it was for - vs. 20

Just as many charities and points of service are places of self-honor more than true generosity or service (out of obedience to the Lord's calling on us)

- a. Paul directly states that when they come together it is **not** for the "Lord's Supper" as they apparently had purported it to be (all the appearance and none of the substance)
- b. This is a vivid example of what often takes place in the church of our day - just because something is called "worship" doesn't make it worship, or something labeled "Biblical teaching" does not necessarily mean it is Biblical
- c. In this case, it was not for the Lord's remembrance this was being done, but was more a social event/gathering, providing some the opportunity to show-off their wealthier life situation and for others it had become a humbling/degrading event of being "out-classed"

2. Before their observance of the Lord's supper they had a "love feast" - vs. 21

Societies "class" divisions do not belong in the Church - they are contradictory to the truth of our situation and cater only to vanity and not to genuine Christianity

- a. These feasts were common but had become anything but "loving" - the well-to-do would bring their own provisions and would eat independently of the others (each to themselves (factions)) while the poorer would be left out (neglected because they were not considered equals)
- b. Just as it was inappropriate for the women of their day to be "religious" without their heads covered, so it was inappropriate for them to have what could have been called "selfish feasts" before remembering the Lord's death afterward
- c. ***The priorities of their society (their classes) had come into the Church***
- d. "Hungry poor meeting intoxicated rich, at what was supposed to be a supper of the Lord" (Robertson and Plummer) - this is supposed to be absurd to us! - see James 2:1-7

3. The rebuke! - vs. 22

When with other believers we ought to feel the weight of responsibility to minister to each other with encouragement and never to put another down or disregard those among us!

- a. "Don't you have houses to eat and drink?" - shouldn't that be a place where you eat alone (or just as a family)? - but when together with the Church, do not segregate, and in the process humble those who had little to nothing
- b. The neglect of others in the pursuit of self honor is detestable to Paul - these assemblies were to be places of honoring and comforting (edifying) each other
- c. This type of activity (or inactivity of the right) is truly "despising the Church of God" - it is a disregard of our Father, evidenced in the disregard of our brethren - interestingly, the word for "despise" is καταφρονείτε meaning to think down upon (as if inwardly despising the Church) as if embarrassed by it - this is the opposite of Php. 2:3
- d. This is all done in "shaming" those who have nothing - ***this is anti-Christ!***
- e. In our "coming together" we must take time to truly fellowship - if we are not so inclined we should closely evaluate why we don't (either because we don't desire it or have allowed other things/times to become the greater priority) - we truly live in a time where the "coming together" as a Church is being "squeezed out" of our lives by various temporal values (or possible "choked -out" by the cares of this life - just as the "sown Word")
- f. He asks (rhetorically) if they should be praised in what they are doing - asking basically, "What should I say to you?" - the intent is to have them judge themselves having now been confronted with what they had been doing - this needed to be answered by them, followed by change

Clearly, such thinking finds its inspiration in the forgetting of the mercy and grace of God toward us in our original condition

So "when you come together to eat, wait for one another" - vs. 33

Church attendance (or the lack thereof) can be one identifier of our spiritual condition

It's easy to forget that Scripture is profitable for correction and reproof also - we don't like it but we need it!

C. Beware taking of the Lord's Supper in a way unworthy of its purpose - vs. 23-32

1. This time was instituted by the Lord - reason #1 for reverence/respect/honor - vs. 23

This was an "ordinance" to be followed and outranks any tradition - this time of remembrance is multi-faceted and should not be overshadowed with other traditions

- a. Paul cites the source as "the Lord" and that it was faithfully delivered to them - numerous traditions have been formed in the Church and have been passed down - but they are not necessarily from and of the Lord - He is the Head not His ministerial servants
- b. This was "the night in which He was betrayed..." - He instituted this during the Passover meal (now identifying Himself as the sacrifice) just before being given over by one of His own to the Romans (for the Pharisees) - He was showing selfless love as He was about to give Himself - just this first clarification should be a reminder of why these Corinthians should be selfless as well
- c. Christ was establishing this as the fulfillment of the "saving" concept reflected in the Passover meal - He was instituting a memorial from then until He returns

2. This was something for which Jesus Himself gave thanks - reason #2 - vs. 24-25

The word for giving thanks is "εὐχαριστήσας"

see Heb. 10:5-10 for the significance of His body offered for us

With these few words, all of History and all that would follow pivoted upon them - all before looked to this with anticipation/expectation and ever since, all looks back to it (in remembrance of Him and what He did to establish this new covenant)

There is nothing in this text or the other accounts that would/should lead us to not take the Lord's statements metaphorically realizing the eating of His actual body or the drinking of His actual blood would not save anyone - "Christian mysticism" is very much a part of these practices and falsely justified by these texts

- a. It would be easy to overlook the phrase, "... and when He had given thanks..." - but this was no ordinary giving of thanks for food that God had provided
- b. The bread He was dispensing was symbolic of His body and would serve as such from there on out - His breaking of it was simply to serve it up and was not symbolic of a "broken body" given for us seeing no bone was broken (as was prophesied of Him - Psalm 34:20 (He being the ultimate "righteous Man"))
- c. The bread directs our attention to His giving His body "for you" - this is in direct reference to His *vicarious* death (in our stead, taking on our rightful judgment (the full brunt of the wrath of God)) - in Luke 22:19 we read His body was "given for you" - see also I Cor. 15:3; Rom. 5:6-8, Gal. 3:13; II Cor. 5:21
- d. This is to be done "in remembrance of Me" - no longer was it a memorial of the Passover, but now was to be in remembrance of Him (His being why/how our sins would be passed over)
- e. He then, in the same way, took "the cup" (and this was after supper, at the end) and stated something infinitely profound - "This cup is the new covenant in my blood..." - this was in direct reference to the Old Covenant (Old Testament) being replaced with the new - see Jer. 31:31-34 and Ex. 24:3-8 (blood sprinkled on the people); Heb. 9:15-28; I Pet. 1:2-9
- f. This was the "blood of the covenant" - a covenant being a promise and in this case, a promise based upon His blood, thus one that cannot be broken (not our blood, our sacrifice, our faithfulness) but all *His work* in which we find ourselves by the *grace* of God
- g. This is in remembrance of Him and not an actual sacrifice or a time of a "special presence" of Christ (either in the bread and wine being His actual body or blood) - Christ promised to always be with us and the attributing more to the elements of the Lord's Supper has been the path to many idolatrous practices in many variations of "Christianity"
- h. This is truly a time of highest respect, realizing our eternal souls depend upon it and realizing the magnificent demonstration of condescending love of God toward us

3. Whenever we participate in this ordinance of the Lord we "proclaim His death" - reason #3 - vs. 26

There have been many over the centuries who can formally worship the Lord and just before doing so or just after are irreverent as though it makes no practical difference in their lives

see also Mat. 26:29 - He will not drink of it until we're with Him in His kingdom

- a. How often is often? This is not clarified - it is important to practice often enough to keep before us the Lord's sacrifice for us, but no so often (as may have been the case with the Corinthians) that it becomes common, just liturgical (a formality) and with this coming a lack of respect/honor for what it represents
- b. In doing this practice we are "openly declaring" (καταγγέλλετε) the Lord's death - this is a time to remember what was given on our behalf, and in countering the Corinthians, it was a time for them to seek to emulate such character and not to proclaim their own "greatness"
- c. This is to be done with the understanding that we continue it till He comes - it has a prophetic purpose as well as also referenced in Heb. 9:27-28

4. Eating and drinking of this ordinance unworthily brings with it a special "guilt" - reason #4 - vs. 27-32

So it is the "manner" that is unworthy and not the person - the costs of disrespect are very high!

As we will see in the next verses, this guilt is not that of eternal condemnation, but the guilt a child may face before their father and be in need of discipline

- a. Many have misunderstood the meaning of this verse (and in particular the usage of the word "unworthy") - some will not partake because they say they are "unworthy" themselves, which is true for all of us, thus none could partake
- b. "It is to be remembered, therefore, that the word here used is an adverb, and not an adjective, and has reference to the manner of observing the ordinance, and not to their personal qualifications or fitness." Barnes
- c. To partake of these elements and participate in this time disrespectfully of Who we remember and honor is what it means to partake unworthily - their disregard for their brothers and sisters during the time set aside for this observance (proclamation) would be akin to having children arguing and being hateful to each other during a time set aside to honor their parents
- d. There is a special "guilt" (literally being help liable) associated with such irreverence - to be guilty of the body and blood of Christ is in reference to being held accountable degrading what His body and blood were given for - the results of such guilt are addressed in the next verses
- e. This is why, when we come to this time we are to "examine ourselves" (δοκιμάζω) - this entails "putting to the test" one's self - how am I coming before the Lord in honoring His great sacrifice on my behalf to meet all His righteous, holy demands? How am I treating all that comes with being a Christian (made so by His death)?

It's comparing ourselves to the genuine selflessness of what the Lord did on our behalf - He's the "genuine" and we prove the genuine in us over against His example

This is related to the idea of something being boring to us - examining ourselves for points of boredom when it comes to these lofty concepts should be something we look to regularly do - boredom with these things demonstrates an issue with us that must be dealt with seriously

Those not learning/changing (repenting) because of these disciplines of the Lord die (all a part in graciously keeping them from the condemning judgment of the World)

No doubt many of the pains and trials of life are a direct result of our lack of "examining" ourselves in comparison to the Truth of God's revealed Word

Compare this with Heb. 12:4-13 and the discipline of the Lord and its purposes - we are not to be embittered by it but in seeing its purpose, properly motivated (gratefully) to change

There are many who come to gatherings of the Church expecting to be served and not expecting to serve - this thought process must not be acceptable to the "Body of Christ"

In this text and others God places a higher priority on our ministry to His Church than on any other group - many justify their neglect of the "Body" with other "points of service" and end up presuming upon their local church (that it is a ministry of convenience and not a necessity)

- f. During this time (and throughout life) we should be seeking to "prove" ourselves *before* the Lord - the "making proof" of ourselves is more along the idea of proving the reality of something - assessing what I have been given in Christ, its infinite value, my overwhelming love debt - and then, in that attitude, partake of the bread and cup
- g. If this is done indiscriminately (not "discerning the body rightly") one brings "a judgement" on themselves (this is a point of judgment and not condemnation - in Romans 8:1 the word is κατακριμα for condemnation and here it is an exposed wrong doing that must be disciplined (for our proper growth and not as in punishment))
- h. So this is not something (a time or concept) to take lightly - one of the ideas in "discerning the Lord's body" (especially in light of our context) is the distinguishing it apart from all that is common - As the Lord was not to be considered an option among many (in chapter 1) so the significance of what He has done on our behalf (and our purposely, seriously remembering it) is not to become "common" to us - compare to II Cor. 13:5
- i. Another concept (in light of the context coming in chapter 12) is that their not discerning the Lord's body also includes the other idea of "the Lord's body" that is going to be discussed in chapter 12 - that is of the Church (and its members) - this also helps explain why Paul does not reference the "cup" also in their discerning - these ought not neglect those who make up the body of Christ while at the same time partake of the Lord's Table remembering God's goodness to them
- j. Because this had been allowed to become common (versus sacred), many in their congregation were inflicted with sicknesses (weaknesses) and many had died - this clearly demonstrates the Lord's seriousness with His symbolisms and ceremonies - we must not allow our supposed gratefulness and celebrations to become times of (with what we have been given as stewards (and the irreverence seen in treating as common what is holy)) - vs. 30
- Though it may also include the thought that many of those weak, sick and that have died were a direct result of their *neglecting one another*
- k. For, as is plainly stated, we would judge (discern ourselves rightly) and take action to change (as such definitive action prove resolve more than just stated resolutions) we need not face such chastisements from the Lord - this is a fundamental truth for the life of a Christian - there are many times of painful discipline that can be avoided! - vs. 31
- l. For these chastisements from the Lord are ongoing reminders of His special work in us since we are not slated to be condemned with the world - those of the world will appear to "get away with it" at times but rather than envy, we pity them realizing this is so because of the eternal condemnation coming - vs. 32 - since we are "sanctified" and being sanctified, we should expect to be treated as God's children and not like the rest of the world - many would think that this should just be "good things" and "good treatment" (as we would define "good" being what we naturally like), but it actually deals more with God being "harder on us" because He loves us as His children

D. "Wait for one another" - vs. 33-34

1. The word for wait is "ἐκδέχεσθε" indicating not just a waiting for someone, but an anticipation (as in deferring to another) of their arrival - ***we wait on those we deem important***

There are many who come to gatherings of the Church expecting to be served and not expecting to serve - this thought process must not be acceptable to the "Body of Christ"

- a. If one is motivated by hunger coming to these meals, then let them eat at home first - this indicates this meal's priority was on others and not self-indulgence
- b. We still see this practical issue in our day when at gatherings of Christians there is a seeking to satisfy self more than a drive to serve and encourage each other
2. Take care that your "coming together" does not result in requiring "judgment"
- a. These times are never to be looked upon (in any way) for the purpose of self-indulgence
- b. Just as a parent must discipline their children when they behave badly toward their siblings, so our Father disciplines us in our bad behavior with His other children
- c. Of all times (but not this only), the observance of the Lord's Table ought to promote in us such a strong awareness of God's goodness to us, that we are not likely to disdain or belittle our fellow "brothers and sisters" nor keep our focus on ourselves
- d. This is another reason (one of many) that the actual attending of Church gatherings is so important - ***how are we to fulfill this role faithfully without it?***

XXV. One Body, Many Members, One Purpose, One Focus - 12:1-31

A. As seen at the start of this epistle, there were rivalries in their church that were being accepted and encouraged

1. There were factions/rivalries of spiritual leaders, rivalries between men and women, rich and poor
2. And now, apparently, there were rivalries over the gifts of the Spirit of God
 - a. Their ideas of the gifts had become diluted with external influences causing even these very items intended for “unified diversity” to become simply divisive
 - b. Sometimes, though, these types of divisions can become so common they are expected, encouraged, and soon come to be a normal part of the Church
3. In Corinth, that which they had been given (by grace) had become points of pride and competition

God had given them these graces for His purposes and not for their personal exaltation

B. Remember where you were before coming to Christ - vs. 1-3

1. Since he's about to discuss the “spiritual gifts” (χάρισμα - literally a gift of grace thus an undeserved gift), he does not want them to be uninformed regarding (literally) “the spiritual” - vs. 1
 - a. He points them back to what they know of themselves before being able to see and accept the Truth; they were led along by “dumb idols” - things or concepts that were made as though they were god-like by man, but had no underlying spiritual content (other than, at times, demonic influences as seen in chapter 10)
 - b. They then themselves were led along like an animal to the sacrifice before and for such man-imposed deities or pulled along and directed ignorantly to and by that which had no actual “person” (as being able to speak/communicate) behind them
 - c. So being mute because they had no actual spiritual substance, they could offer nothing of substance except the disillusionment that comes from deception

These were “deluded” into following them (either by others or their own selves) - there is actually a spiritual realm that is either mostly neglected/disregarded or is tied so closely to the physical realm they are not spiritual (or actual) at all

A misdirected/misinformed belief system is actually profoundly tragic - it produces a wasted life of short-lived produce

2. So, to be informed, realize two fundamental proofs of the living Spirit's working - vs. 3

- a. First, anyone that could/would curse Jesus DOES NOT have the Spirit of God in them - to curse Jesus **in any way** is characteristic of the unregenerate - this term used by Paul (of cursing Christ) seems strong but demonstrates the **natural response** (versus living Spirit's response)
- b. By nature we are the enemies of God, thus also of Jesus Christ, and were it not for the Holy Spirit we would all, one way or another, curse Jesus
- c. And, none of us would have ever considered to proclaim “Jesus is Lord” but by the empowerment and illumination of the Spirit of God
- d. Though this seems simple, we are utterly dependent upon the Spirit for such insight and ability so we should then expect our dependency for all other “virtues” will require “grace-gifting” to be done and doable - this realization then should be expected to produce in us a humble gratefulness rather than a competitive pride
- e. It should also (when thought upon and understood) make us eager to do anything truly spiritually motivated as much as possible - this is a life full of true significance!

Even in many who profess to be Christians profane Christ in their living (in what they do and don't do) and even in their speech (which is anti-Christ when countering in any way trust in His work alone)

It is truly illegitimate pride when our pride is focused on ourselves because of these gifts

C. The eagerness then we should have (to be so used) comes when we realize the full Godhead is involved - vs. 4-6

1. When we are children, some of our most exciting and memorable times come when we are able to assist/participate in something productive that “grown-ups” are doing

This fact should also indicate to us that these graces are for their purpose and none would be overly magnified nor overlooked (disregarded as unimportant)

- a. Normally, children realize they don't know much and when their parents work with them on something of significance they want to do it more
- b. Paul demonstrates in these next few verses that all three persons of the Godhead are involved in the outworking of these “graces” given us by the Holy Spirit

2. Though there are a variety of gifts, their source is “the same Spirit” - vs. 4

The bulk of our attention should be upon the greatness of the giver of the gifts and not the ranking of the gifts themselves - God does not rank them, why should we? (other than prophecy over tongues)

- a. Though there are many types of these “graces” given they are given by the Spirit of God for His purposes based upon His sovereign knowledge
- b. Regarding the gifts, He is the assigner of them and are to be a unifier of the Church and it should seem absurd that they would become divisive

3. There are a variety of venues (situations to use these gifts) but one Lord - vs. 5

We should be seeking the gifting of the Spirit in “the work” because it is the Lord's work we do not/never “our work”

- a. Though we will be called upon in many different ways and in differing circumstances to use these gifts, these situations are focused upon “one Lord”
- b. It is His work we continue and His name in which we work - the Spirit graces us with the gifts to do these “ministries” - in this light we realize none is small and none is “greater”

4. Though there are a variety of “effects (results), they are from the “the same God” - vs. 6

- a. This is a big point that's missed today - the “results” (good ones) are of the Father

We're not to look upon the work of the Lord as though it is a compilation of what all his servants desire to do - better to look for the working of God before we seek out the purposes of man

- b. There are a variety of "activities" in the service of the Lord - some seemingly small, some large, some short, some long, some visible, some not seen by most - these are all utilized by the underlying empowerment of God - another way to phrase it would be that there are many effects but one God that brings them about (as their source) and that or His purpose
- c. Personal pride is kept in-check with this knowledge as well as envy and resentment (related to the "works" of others in the service of the Lord) - with what we learn in these verses we are to be expecting (looking to) to work in harmony and not driven by competition
- d. Paul brings this out several times - see Col. 1:29 for an example - "For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me." ESV

D. The gifts of the Spirit are given for the "common good" - vs. 7-11

- 1. The gifting of the Spirit of God (which is the "manifestation" (revealing) of His being at work) are given to the benefit of the Church - these are to be seen as ministerial gifts - vs. 7

Sadly, often we are motivated more to utilize our physical (natural) gifts and look to do all we can to avoid dependence upon God's grace to do His work

- a. In our day as in theirs, there seems to be a loss of this understanding - we often discover that we are not looking for (expecting) these gifts to actually be demonstrations of His working amongst us - if it were so, we would be more desirous to be in positions/ situations to utilize them
- b. We should, in light of these truths, be longingly looking to use these "supernatural" powers - focus is so often placed upon "natural gifting" or the results of a "good education" that we are not seeking the actual working of God's Spirit all around us (especially when surrounded by His people/instruments/channels of these giftings to His Church)

- 2. These next verses list several gifts but are more likely to be representative and not an exhaustive list - vs. 8-10

The ability to actually know what is truly wise (eternally) is a gift of the Spirit - without it, we would all be given to some form of temporal values

Wisdom and knowledge were both popular words with the Corinthians but both had been secularized and were points of pride and nor points of beneficial service

The "miraculous/manifestational" gifts were to be used to lend to the authority of the message the "miracle worker" was bearing/representing

(Acts 13:8-12)

Gifts such as this were necessary realizing the Scripture as we have it now was not complete

This gift was also essential realizing there were many false prophets (as we still have today, those falsely speaking for God)

It needs to be noted that Paul was dealing with (and going to be dealing with) a problem with this gift at Corinth - we see no other church having this issue

- a. For instance, this "same Spirit" may give to one the gracing to have a "word of wisdom" and to another a "word of knowledge" - the "wisdom" here should be understood in light of the entire context of this letter - the wisdom of Christ is contrasted with worldly wisdom - so this "gifting" of wisdom is the special insight into what is really important and true in contrast to the popular thought of any era - and with the inclusion of "λόγος" it is also a gifting to communicate it (ability, opportunity and even the courage)
- b. While one may be gifted to discern and explain "wisdom" another will be gifted in the details - one is the priorities (wisdom) and the other the particulars (knowledge) - it is also highly possible that these two may be given together (as in the gift of teaching)
- c. The gifting of faith can easily be misunderstood, but this is to be understood differently from saving faith (since that is given to all "believers" (thus the name)) - this word is used again in 13:2 but is preceded by "all," so it could be in reference to the faith that ends in the miraculous - It can also reference those gifted with "convincing, contagious" faith - seeing these gifts are meant to encourage/strengthen the "body," this would be key to helping each other focus our faith correctly (and not that some will always have more faith than others)
- d. Others were give "gifts of healings" (notice the plural) - this was all sorts of healings and though it most often refers to supernatural healings it need not be limited to it - practical, physical and emotionally (mental) healing are all needed in the Church (especially the healing that is truly **BY** the Holy Spirit for His people)
- e. Others were given a gift for "miracles" (supernatural acts) - as seen in Acts, things like raising the dead, having others die (Ananias and Saphirah) and even causing a sorcerer to go blind
- f. To others were given "prophecy" - in the most general sense, someone with this gifting speaks for God - there were several examples in the book of Acts where there were still those who foretold the future and, seeing this listed with the miraculous gifts, probably included this as well as "inspirational messages" directly from God
- g. "Distinguishing of spirits" - this was a gifting with the special ability to rightly distinguish between what (being said) was truly from the Holy Spirit and what was not (of man's spirit or of "evil spirits") - we see this concept referenced in I Cor. 14:29 - this overall responsibility was ultimately for all to seek to do as John instructed in I John 4:1
- h. Still to another "kinds of tongues" - there are centuries of debates over this concept that still rage on today - clearly, this endowment was given at Pentecost and was what was prophesied by Joel; and these were known languages (languages of other people) - there are a few other examples (mainly in this epistle) that seem to indicate a language unknown to people (as in 14:2) - this will be dealt with in our study in chapter 14

These couple chapters are the only usage of this term in the New Testament - even "tongues" in general is a relatively small concept when considering all the other concepts emphasized far more

i. And still to another the gift to interpret tongues - this is typically taken to mean the interpretation of a "tongue" (language) as referenced in chapter 14, but there is no reason to think it could not have been a special ability to understand what someone from a foreign country was saying and need not to be limited to a church gathering (though this was to be required as seen in chapter 14) - this was a transitional time (between the Testaments) and it is not unreasonable to expect the miraculous was occurring all over and in many ways

3. The point of this text is to focus their attention on the Giver of these gifts more than the gifts - vs. 11

- a. It is easy to "go off track" when dealing with these miraculous gifts because of the misuse of these concepts throughout the ages (and even in Corinth) - but Paul, in this chapter through chapter 14, is dealing with their competitive and arrogant responses to each other
- b. If the point was to exalt or even legitimize these as "showcasing" gifts of one's own significance, or if the point is to cause us to expect to still see all these gifts today in every believer, we truly would have problems - for instance, with "healings" why later does Paul counsel Timothy (I Tim. 5:23) to drink wine for his stomach issue or in II Tim. 4:20 Paul stated he left Trophimus "sick;" and there's also Epaphroditus in II Timothy 2:25-27 who was sick to the point of death? These and more lack any reference to miraculous healings continuing and being used by the Apostles (they were more for signs and less for true ministry/healing)
- c. If one is focused on the "one and the same Spirit" giving out these gifts (as they are deemed needed by His will), then there would not be a divisive spirit in the pursuit of being used by the Holy Spirit for His purposes - the Corinthian Christians had allowed themselves to become so self-focused that they had lost sight of *why* these gifts were given

This is not to say that God cannot nor does He heal today - He clearly does! But these particular "sign gifts" had a very specific purpose, and as Paul will soon deal with in chapter 14, there are other gifts that are more designed to edify the Church - Corinth had lost sight of this need to edify

This occurs as the remnants of the "old man" (sin nature) are looked to and lived by more than our true spiritual selves

E. The interdependency of the members of the "body of Christ" - vs. 12-26

1. When teaching them regarding spiritual gifts (as well as other texts dealing with the same), it is clear that none of us is given all the gifts - this alone should be enough for us to realize that we are to work together and that when some gifts are disregarded or belittled (thus their recipients also) we will suffer because of it - we are in need of *all* the graces provided by the Spirit

And the problem with this is that it leads to a living FOR the priorities of society (in each era) above God's eternal priorities

- a. The Corinthian Christians were erring in still trying to live by the "rankings" of society
- b. This reality is also lost to those not seeing themselves as being in the *work of the Lord* - this happens when one sees themselves just as "saved" from condemnation and failing to focus on what they were saved *FOR* (His workmanship... for good works - Eph. 2:10)

2. Just as the body is one "unit" with many parts, so is "Christ" (the/His Church) - vs. 12-13

It is common for certain traits or types to become so dominant that they belittle other God-given, God-ordained parts of the Body - again, this is always a thought process from without "the Body"

- a. The core idea is that "the many make up the one" and not "the one is many" thus emphasizing — the need for diversity (as God has "divvied it up") - this is not just any diversity but is a diversity working toward a the common purpose of service to the Lord (His way) - we must be careful though not to equate "unity" with uniformity
- b. The church is made up of various parts from all areas of life (Jews/Greeks, slave/free) - these were extreme contrasts used to make this point - the world emphasizes these and other differences as being fundamentally defining of life but, in Christ, life definition is far above all earthly distinctions (and is eternal)
- c. This was God's doing seeing we were all "baptized" into one Spirit and made to "drink" of the same
- d. We were all "immersed" into the Holy Spirit - He is the unifying "substance" and means - our significance is not found in our differences from others in the Body, but is found in His usage of us and His gifts to us ("baptized" and "made to drink" are both passives)
- e. In this "immersion" of the Spirit, we are also then "made to drink" of Him - this is seen in His indwelling of us from here on out - we see the external and internal both described, providing an excellent picture of our being "in the Spirit"

This is not a direct reference to water baptism realizing that though one is baptized by water it does not guarantee they are baptized into the Spirit - water baptism is to reflect outwardly this inward reality

This also helps us see how our new identity is fully associated with the Holy Spirit - "hit or miss" Christianity does not appear to fit with this reality

3. To truly have a "body" there needs to be many parts (members) - vs. 14-21

When the church body becomes infected with foreign "ideologies" of importances (based of worldly/temporal values) certain bodily functions stop their work causing the entire body to suffer

- a. This is where the analogy becomes more detailed - but it must be kept in mind that the focus is on God (by His Spirit) that set these members as they are - the outworking of His gifts and responsibilities is not to trouble us - the point of these verses is not that we ought not envy other members, but more that we ought to appreciate our position in the body (trusting God's infinitely wise placement of us)
- b. The first picture - if the foot could say because it is not a hand that it is not a part of the body, though it might "think" this, it does not change it's reality - it is still a part of the body

We do see this happening in churches where its members have excused themselves from serving using all sorts of “excuses” which are, in light of what is being stated here, absurd

The best a member can do when another fails to do their responsibility is to continue on, and if possible, try to make up somehow for the weakness - this will and does happen

The point of these examples is not to compare the gifts to particular parts of the body but to simply demonstrate that perception/popularity never dictate true value

A part lacking honor is ironically given more honor in the care that is given in the attention needed by it (for good or even for “bad” purposes in dealing with it) - we are designed to deal with all aspects of the body no matter their perceived status

As regards the foundation of the Word of God, the teaching is what remains to this day seeing the Canon of God’s Word is complete as delivered by the Apostles of Christ and those (recorded) that were used to miraculously prophesy God’s Word

- c. A seemingly “lesser” member (foot versus the hand or the ear versus the eye) is not to think lesser of itself - the feet carry about the entire body and the ear senses what the eye cannot - when there is a conflict in the inner-workings of the body parts, there is a problem for the entire body - pain is usually the indicator that there is an issue
- d. So, following Paul’s illustration, if a member did not think it was part of the body and either attempted to live for itself or ceased to function at all, it would produce conflicts of all sorts
- e. If there were no diversity of parts there would be no body! - so, God has set up each part according to His infinite wisdom - so diligence in whatever part (at any give time) that He has given us to do, is to be expected
- f. And then, of course, no member can regard another member as unnecessary and unimportant - no only does this belittle a brother/sister in Christ, but it disregards God’s usage of them - we often confuse our roles when we sense that another “member” is not doing their part - we are not to take the role of “the Head”
- g. One member cannot rightfully say it has no need of another because it is not in its “job description” to properly define what the need is - it is easy to forget that many of our criticisms are indirect criticisms of God - there’s a difference between challenging/encouraging one another “in the work” and just being critical (to no profit but the support of our own self-importance)

4. The seemingly more vulnerable and unseen parts are given “more honor” - vs. 22-25

- a. God has so designed it in the human body that our “parts” that seem weak to the popular view (such as the organs) yet they are indispensable - they may not be parts we desire to be seen but because of their significance/role, we give them higher honor - as far as the analogy, we should realize that what “parts” might *seem* strong or more “attractive” can change with each generation
- b. Paul illustrates this further demonstrating how we handle our parts that we deem inappropriate to “put on display” (out of modesty or because they are flawed), we (using the other members) take care to specially adorn them - this could (and has been) analogized many different ways, but the core point is that as God has built an interdependency in our human bodies (with all their parts, attractive, unattractive, weak and strong) they must work together
- c. On verse 25 John Gill wrote, “... they are so tempered and mixed together, are in such close union with, and have such a dependence on each other, that they are necessarily obliged to take care of each other’s good and welfare, because they cannot do one without another...”
- d. This is all to be seen in action, when one is hurting all hurt with them (and are also to see themselves affected being in the same “body) and the same for when one is honored - all feel honored with them realizing we are all on the same “team”

F. God has established the church (the “Christ’s body”) - vs. 27-31

1. Every Christian is a member/part of this body and are to realize how all others are related to them
 - a. All of us now are “in the body” thus “in the work” with each other and the gifts lend to our inner working for the outworking of God’s purposes - those in Christ that have lived before us (all the way back to the first century Church) have been a part and in many ways still affect us
 - b. To show how this began, God first appointed (in the founding of the Church) apostles, prophets and then teachers (apostles being the ones sent out by the Lord to preach the initial message along with others who *also* “prophesied” (were inspired by God’s Spirit to provide His Word (Luke and Mark being examples of non-apostles who prophesied)), followed then by many teachers used to promote and promulgate the Apostle’s doctrine and the inspired Word of God as it had been given
 - c. As a part of this initial founding, God also appointed miracles (in support of their message) including healings and also “tongues” (speaking in another language) - we see these demonstrated throughout the book of Acts - again, in context, Paul is not listing “gifts” to provide a listing of *ALL* the gifts that were and would be given to the Church, but still demonstrating how God has used a variety of outworkings in the ONE body
 - d. Along with these foundational and miraculous (sign works/gifts) God also appointed “helps and administration” providing various assistants and governance to meet the needs of the Body and to enable/encourage the work the “Body of Christ” (church) has been given to do
 - e. The obvious (rhetorical) question then is, “not all do the same thing at the same time do they?” so neither should they promote that all should serve the same role in the work of the Lord

2. “Earnestly desire the greater gifts” - vs. 31

This “way” is not in contrast to the gifts but is the key to their proper implementation - this way is “charity” and needs to be the driving force behind the pursuit and usage of the giftings of the Spirit

- a. As has been stressed and will be further illustrated (in chapter 14), the “greater gifts” are those that edify (build-up) the Church (versus the miraculous (sign) gifts that served a purpose but not to grow and encourage its members) - these services to Christ’s body are to be “zealously” sought (as if “coveting” them only here for the greater purpose)
- b. There is a “way” to this type of pursuit (an inner motivation and drive) in contrast to the “way” they had already been living, which was one of self-ambition and self-honor (glory) over against their fellow brothers and sisters in Christ

XXVI. The Absolute Necessity of True Love Undergirding All That’s Done - 13:1-13

A. Paul goes on to lay the foundation for not only every believer’s work in their service of the Lord, but the driving force that is to be behind **WHY** we do what we do

1. There have been (as it was in Corinth at this time) many “good works” and seemingly impressive ministries for God filled with seemingly impressive people who are remembered for what they did, but the “why” behind it is known (truly) only to God

There are numerous facades of love “out there” but at their core there is too much of “self” driving them - this is why so many illustrative phrases and examples are used to identify what the “real thing” looks like

- a. As is about to be clarified in this chapter, if what we do for the Lord (and thus for others) is not motivated by love of God and of people, it is of no value to us
- b. It is not possible to walk away from these upcoming verses without realizing that ***this will be the core factor when we stand before the Lord in person***
- c. And yet it is not natural - it is naturally beyond us and a trait, a character, that will need to be developed and fostered for it to grow

2. The church at Corinth had been demonstrating their affections driven by “self,” which is why their priorities had gone so far “off track” - they were motivated wrongly

It is the outward affection of this love and its focus upon the need and not the state of its recipient that gives us an idea of the change of perspective that is needed by us if it is to be implemented

- a. This is not an easy text to digest and it is almost overwhelmingly immense when compared to our natural inclinations, and ***will contradict these natural instincts at every turn***
- b. This “love” is evidenced in a form of selflessness and is most profoundly seen in God’s demonstration of it - He “loved” so He gave - yet it is considering the recipients of this love that demonstrates its profundity! - see Eph. 2:1-10 as an example
- c. Paul is looking to direct these Corinthians toward a need-focused compassion, seeking the good for the other and not for itself - pride in self is the antithesis to this love

B. If one has all that could be desired for ministry (the superlative in each area) and lacks this true charity at its core, though each would be astoundingly impressive, they would be hallow - vs. 1-3

1. If “I” (Paul illustrates) actually could have/speak all tongues of mankind and even that of angelic beings (heavenly languages) but lacks ἀγάπην (love seen in preferring another above self), it is like being useless noise - loud attention -getting noise with no point or purpose - vs. 1

Yet many “works for God” that give the impression they are loving are just attention-getting sounds - put enough of these together and people can become preoccupied for most of their life looking of the next “gong” to get their attention only to be ultimately let down

- a. Paul starts with this because of their apparent obsession with “tongues” - humanly speaking, imagine how impressive it would be to come to church and know all these languages
- b. To have such impressive ability and to foresee such a powerful impact that would come from it - yet without a genuine focus for the truly best for the other(s) is like an impressive sound that brings much attention ***only to result in nothing of any true value***
- c. “... it would be all empty noise, mere unharmonious and useless sound, that would neither profit nor delight.” Henry

2. If one could have true “prophecy” to the degree they could understand “all mysteries and all knowledge” and miraculous faith, but lack this Godlike love, they would be truly “nothing” - vs. 2

There may be some inference by Paul to pride in the usage of “πάντα” (all) - this fails to consider the dependence upon the omniscience of God - yet we should be profoundly grateful that He is loving in His uses of His “omni’s”!

- a. To have a gifting to this degree would truly have been a scenario that would sound very appealing to these Corinthians who were enamoured with such things
- b. Much of this is sought today and endorsed as viable (Christian) pursuits on their own - nothing is wrong with these (speaking what God says, knowledge and faith) - but the thought of having these without the “way” of love is to render them useless (for they would be misapplied)
- c. It is good to try to actually consider why we would do/desire such noble areas - if it is not genuinely motivated by investment (including the heart) in others we should then consider the futility of avoiding the usage of allowing our heart to be thus engaged
- d. In defining the phrase “I am nothing” Robertson in his Word Pictures described it as being an “absolute zero” - we might also describe this as “useless”

Spiritual discernment of the Truth and genuine “smarts” are both very good things in the Church but when they become an end in themselves they become tools to degrade others and promote self - this would be one professing themselves to be of great value to the Lord’s work not realizing they are actually a detriment

- e. So consider what’s being stated here - if one could have “prophecy” and thus know ALL mysteries (that which is hidden and not normally known/seen), having Scriptural insight better than all others and yet the usage of such is not grounded in this charity, “I am nothing” - many in ministry spend the bulk of their focus on understanding Scripture/Truth, yet neglect to check the for appropriateness the “way” in which it is implemented and motivated
- f. And even having miraculous faith to do what seems impossible (the moving of mountains), what good would it be if not seen as a **needed investment** in the well-being of those whom God has placed around us? - much of this in the history of the Church has been feigned (pretended) to glorify the individual and not the Lord and the encouragement of His people

3. And even if the most outward-looking work of love be demonstrated (without the inward reality), it is of no “profit” to the one making the sacrifice - vs. 3

Paul is not trying to picture doing what we do (even love) with a purpose to benefit us, but we do want (out of love of God) what we do to be of genuine value in our work for Him - God can and does use selfish works, but the workers have nothing to show for it themselves

A soldier does not sacrifice regularly to somehow not remain a soldier - he does so to “please him who has enlisted him to be a soldier” - II Tim. 2:4

The irony of true love is it finds its motivation in the enjoyment of the good done for others rather than self and in so doing does good for self - but the pursuit to do good for “self-sake” is to be devoid of this love and thus to bring about no lasting “good” for self

- a. Paul pictures himself here (hypothetically) as giving away all that he owned with a purpose to feed others, yet it brings to himself no benefit at all - **the absence of this true love disqualifies all personal good it might have brought - this is serious!**
- b. Why might one do such a drastic thing without love? - we can assume it would be out of pride (done for the recognition and praise of others) - but it might also be in an attempt to earn personally merit with which to somehow obligate God (either for one’s eternal soul (in earning merit for salvation) or to force a “deserved blessing”) - this last one hits “closer to home” than many of us would like to admit - we often allow ourselves to “add-up” our good works with a growing expectation that things will then go better for us here on earth (as though one sacrifice would lead to us avoiding other remaining responsibility)
- c. Even if he would give-up (surrender) his body to be “burned”, if it is without love of God (thus love of others also), it brings no lasting gain to the one making the sacrifice - there is much debate over the authenticity of the underlying word for “burned” and in other manuscripts it is the word for “boast” - either way it demonstrates one offering-up their body for a sacrificial purpose (even martyrdom) - this one is a good demonstration of how the love of God (thus producing a sense of a love-debt to Him) is crucial to have “at the heart” of what we do for Him and not out of earning “credit”

4. These three profound verses, in all their profundity, must stir in the reader the urgent question then of “what does this love look like and how will I know if I have it?”

As the “wood, hay stubble of I Cor. 3

- a. None of us desires to stand before our Lord thinking we have done so much, only to discover that all we did was in one degree or another “for self” and is thus burnt-up
- b. NOW is the opportunity to evaluate what we are doing and its value - we must compare (as openly and honestly as we possibly can) our “works” and motivations to the descriptions coming - there will be no true benefit in self-deception (it may bring us temporary comfort now from a nagging conscience, but will bring us **great disappointment when we stand before Him Who gave all for us in His demonstration of this same love**)

C. The descriptions/characteristics of this essential love/charity (H ἀγάπη - “the love”) - vs. 4-8a

1. “Love is patient” (μακροθυμει) - vs. 4

The greek word pictures “long passion” meaning it either does not reach an angry passion against another for a long time or that out of a deep compassion it bears-with another a very long time

Lenski

Many will say they love God and yet allow themselves to grow angry and even bitter against Him because of their impatience or refusal to endure difficulty

- a. The other translation of this word, “longsuffering” is very descriptive of this concept - it literally “suffers a long time” with something or someone because of this love
- b. As odd as it may seem, this Godly charity requires some form of “contradiction” to the “user” of it to be genuine - for “to love” because one is treated nicely is not this word
- c. To be patient (thus forgiving) toward others is as being blind to their offenses toward us
- d. “In the Scriptures “longsuffering” has to do with injurious persons and does not let their ignorant, mean, or malicious actions arouse the resentment and the anger which they deserve.”
- e. Realizing that God does no wrong, these Corinthians and ourselves may also need to exhibit this characteristic towards God (not because He is wrong, but because we may, sadly, instinctively see what He does or allows as wrong toward us - this is out of our ignorance or limited frame of reference)
- f. This quality is one of giving others time - it cares for them and is not likely to jump to conclusions prematurely for the sake of the other - it is aware that it needs to be truly informed
- e. This is a “passive” aspect of love (in what it allows done to it) while the next is active, what characterizes what it (love) does

2. "Love is kind" - (χρηστεύεται ἡ ἀγάπη) - vs. 4

It is interesting to see how these qualities of true love are characteristics needed in a cruel and hostile world made so by sin (which is at the core of unkindnesses of all sorts (from the vicious all the way to the inconsiderate neglects)

And these must remain so because any depth will infringe upon closely guarded "rights" of not being bothered

One of the results of sin is "uselessness" - see Rom. 3:12

- a. This is the only usage of this word in the New Testament and a good way of defining it would be to say it references a "friendly usefulness" (friendly in its demeanor and useful/helpful to its recipient) - there is a helpfulness that is unfriendly (unkind) making the recipient uncomfortable of feeling hurt in its obvious imposition
- b. Love then is thoughtful, gracious and generous toward others (possibly in countering the opposite of the first characteristic of patience) - impatience and the results of a "short fuse" is often the opportunity of another to encourage the "victim" with the opposite
- c. This true charity is useful because it is others-focused, thus considerate - selfishness is useless to a society and certainly to the church family of believers - to be considerate is the opposite of neglect - kindness is to see another in their need over and above their surface issues (which often provoke "surface" responses (all lending to superficial/shallow relationships))
- d. It must be noted also that to be useful one must be "used" - true love not only allows itself to be used, it expects it - many react being used for another's gain because they don't expect it

3. "Love is not envious" (οὐ ζηλοῖ) - vs. 4

True charity would rather another receive the good and itself the hardship - it finds pleasure in another encouraged because of its sacrifice

For love to not be envious it must be contented - the core of this quality is faith (confident trust in God's sovereignty that what it should have and does have is best in His hands)

- a. More exactly, love does not "burn with envy" (it is not competitive when it comes to another's well-being, encouragement and promotion for the good)
- b. Envy is wishing for self what another has because it would rather it be comforted, promoted or encouraged than the other (and is willing (would prefer) to have the other discomfited)
- c. Another translation of this word is "jealousy" - some might point out that God calls Himself jealous at times - though His jealousy is for another while ours is typically for self
- d. Love would rather others are noticed and would prefer to be overlooked so another can be recognized and befriended (treated kindly) - its focus is not selfward but "othersward"
- e. Love is a promoter of others (even at the expense of self)

4. "Love does not brag and is not arrogant" (ἡ ἀγάπη οὐ περπερεύεται, οὐ φυσιοῦται) - vs. 4

These and the previous point describe love by what it is not and by what it does not do - the responsibility of true love is the focus on responsibility and the avoidance of what would be intruders and invaders into these relationships - it is active, proactive and cautiously defensive

Love does not flatter another for that would be to participate in the entrapment of another in their own pride

These emphasis led to inflated egos and even bragging that soon came to seem responsible, normal and appropriate

- a. It is not a braggart because it is not "inflated" (puffed-up) - those who boast of themselves do so because they have developed an exaggerated estimation of their own importance
- b. Arrogance is so because it has convinced itself of its own "greatness"
- c. "How much behavior among believers and even ministers is actually "attention seeking" designed to impress others with one's own self importance? Some "spiritual songs" may appear to encourage, rather than discourage, this preoccupation with the self rather than with others and with God." Thiselton
- d. Love, to remain loving, actively seeks to avoid inner thoughts that exalt "the self" - this is not a "putting down" of self with self-condemnation or self abasement, but actually fails to consider self at all - self is seen as the fortunate slave of God privileged at any point to build-up and encourage another - "tongues" had become a "parade" gift to them
- e. The Corinthians had allowed their church to become a place of competitive pride masked with facades of theological parties, "spiritual leaders" and supposed uses of spiritual gifts exalting the recipient, not the giver of the gifts, and not the edifying of the "body"

5. "Love does not act unbecomingly" (οὐκ ἀσχημονεῖ) - vs. 5

It would abhor the idea of being indecent in any way - it does not want to unnecessarily make others uncomfortable

Most of societies indecencies stem from others seeking to find a way to stand out, making themselves "the point" - this typically leads to indecent creativities each seeking to outdo the other

- a. Love does not act improperly or rudely (it is not ill mannered or disorderly)
- b. Love seeks to learn the proper decorum of wherever it finds itself and to act accordingly - those that are disruptive and ill mannered draw attention to themselves, their ways, their rights and their significance
- c. This is the same term/idea used in describing the women who were acting shamefully or the shameful acts of disregarding the "lower classes" at their "love feasts" - it is the shameful acts that result from unrestrained pride and self-focus
- d. So it is not disruptive and discourteous but polite not imposing itself on others - immodestly is also the seeking to attract undue attention to self, often involving some form of "shock"

6. "Love does not seek its own" (οὐ ζητεῖ τὰ ἑαυτῆς) - vs. 5

Its focus is outward when looking for needs to be met

- a. Essentially, love is not looking out for itself - it is not focused on its own interests because it is focused on the interests and needs of others
- b. The idea of "seeking" here carries with it the idea of a diligent search (even research) for the betterment and welfare of another - these are the antithesis to selfishness

Eros is driven to possess while agape is driven to give

This idea is at the very heart of agape love - this makes possible all the other qualities

Resources gained are looked upon in their potential usage in the encouragement and edifying of others - not for self glory or obsessive self comfort

It's not incite"able" because it is not excitable - it is level headed with a steady focus on the need of the other - focus on self forces a redefining of what "needs" really are

Paul did not hate the people of Athens, but out of irritation of the distraction he was angered/stirred

When focus drifts to self we become irritable with those around us - we must be careful to keep distinction in our thinking between people and bad character - one we look to love, the other we learn to counter

Charity keeps no "score" when it comes to others wrongs (failures) and personal "successes" (in competitive comparison to those it loves) as in I Peter 4:8

Taken in light of the accounting term used here, charity is a poor "bookkeeper" when tracking "trends" of wrongs against it - tracking wrongs might distract from discerning needs

Love does not rejoice in injustice

- c. In contrast, "ερος" is focused on getting for its own (possessing, controlling) - it has been pointed out that Cupid is pictured with a bow and arrow as in being a cunning hunter to get for itself
- d. True love is essentially disinterested with self (not preoccupied with self interests because its interest is focused on others - its enjoyment is interest in the welfare of others)
- e. This characteristic emphasizes that it is not a "rights seeker" and would not think of neglecting the poor at feasts and segregating from them, nor imposing its own rights to self-expression upon all others - nor would it seek a very "public gift" to stand out (so as to rise above) from others
- f. The idea of "seeking" is internal - it doesn't just look like its interested in other, it really is! - this aspect must be measured from within and is not defined by the observations of others
- e. This does not mean that the person has no consideration of self at all (health, well being, etc.) but that its self-concern is that it be usable and useful for others (especially the Lord)
- f. This love makes its possessor not interested in "getting noticed" and being appreciated - **it notices, it appreciates** - its focus on God primarily makes Him and His glory the top importance and will be the driving force (as with our Lord and His "zeal" for the Father)

7. "Love is not provoked" (οὐ παροξύνεται) - vs. 5

- a. The verb is present indicative middle/passive indicating that true love is not (at all times) allowing itself or participating in making itself irritable towards what it loves
- b. For this to be the case, it must be on-guard to not allow this attitude to happen - not that it never gets provoked to anger ever, but that it does not grow angry at what it loves
- c. It is this way because it is not "seeking its own," so what is there to provoke it to a self-defensive anger that reacts to what was done to it rather than what is best for the object of love?
- d. Anger and wrath are directed against what is harmful (as seen in a truly loving parent becoming irritated with the multiple influences seeking to influence (badly) their children) - the same word for "provoked" here was used of Paul in Acts 17:16 while in Athens observing their idols
- e. This one, taken literally (at face value) is a difficult one to face for most of us because we realize we are so often bothered by those we say we love, and this is so because we are so often focused on ourselves and how others treat us (or we think are supposed to be thinking of our feelings)
- f. So with the Corinthians, the wealthy (for instance) would not be seeking their own and then, on the other side, the poor, if left out, would not be riled

8. "Love does not take into account wrongs against it" (οὐ λογίζεται τὸ κακόν) - vs. 5

- a. Again, this verb is also present indicative middle or passive - so either way, it does not participate itself (middle) (prodding-on self to keep track of offenses) nor does it allow itself to be persuaded (passive) to keep record of wrongs to it (as though it ought to)
- b. This quality of love is the fundamental idea behind "forgiveness" (letting go an offense)
- c. The word for "taking account" in this verse is the same word used of God in Romans 4:8, "Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account."
- d. In the church at Corinth, wrongs were being done and Paul was pointing them out as such, but now making clear they were not to track each other's wrongs
- e. When confronted with the faults of others, it seeks to conceal/cover them from others (as in "charity covering a multitude of sins") - not that it helps people sin or in their sin, but that it does not try to leverage it against them before others - the opposite of this being "gossip" where the wrongs/faults of others are used to make a person or group feel superior in themselves
- f. The proactive side of this quality is that it does not try to assume evil intent (which is associated with "believes all things")

9. "Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness" (οὐ χαίρει ἐπὶ τῇ ἀδικίᾳ) - vs. 6

- a. Charity in no way finds joy or happiness when others do wrong, nor does it find gladness in its own "iniquities" (sins) because of sins' damage to others (either in others being hurt by their own sins or the damage that comes because of sin or personal sins' influences on others)
- b. Self-righteousness is often what causes us to "rejoice" when sins occur in others
- c. Another way of looking at this is that it is careful to make sure **it does not celebrate wrongness, so it is motivated to learn "truth"** - many thinking they are loving/encouraging in their actions and speech are actually harmful, because what they support and encourage is wrong (and their ignorance/sincerity does not magically counter the wrong done)
- d. Also included is the idea that it is not happy when one is wrongly accused or "sentenced"

In our society there are many celebrations of diversity that celebrate immorality - we who should know the dreadful end of sins path would not consider this loving

Love does not ignore sins, it just does not seek to exploit them or gloat over them - charity shares the joy and contentment of facing the truth

agape grieves when sin infiltrates and infects/affects its object and rejoices when the Truth infiltrates and infects/affects its object - it is then characterized by being motivated/driven to know what both really are (and in this case, by defining both by the Truth of God's Word)

Love loves to discover integrity (genuineness) in another and grieves to find hypocrisy

True love is a steady friend through "thick and thin", "for better for worse" - it can be trusted to stand with its object and will not turn on it out of resentment or convenience

He "suffered for them" - denied himself a right in order to keep them focused rather than focusing on his right

"Love has a tenacity in the present, buoyed by its absolute confidence in the future, that enables it to live in every kind of circumstances and to continually pour itself out in behalf of others" Fee referencing the thoughts of another writer named Findlay

There is not genuine hope without faith - when dealing with people, not so much IN the person as much as in God - our love of Him usurps all others

- e. Love of God is at the core of not celebrating sin in any capacity - if we truly love Him, why would we find joy in what opposes His character? - love of God encourages purity
- f. For instance, true love would not encourage the man in chapter 5:1-2 - it is in opposition to God and His "norms," and is not best for the man associated with the church (nor would it celebrate the usage of courts (in chapter 6) to win judgements against fellow believers)
10. "Love rejoices with the truth" (συνχαίρει δὲ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ) - vs. 6
- a. Leaving the negatives he returns to the positives - the same core, Greek word for "rejoices" is used again only with the prefix "συν" meaning "together with"
- b. There are several ideas included with this phrase, one being that charity is not afraid of the truth (as if the truth of any matter would make it look bad) - avoiding the truth is of no benefit even though it is often mistaken as a loving thing to do - when love "covers a multitude of sins" it does not mean IT itself does not see them; instead it can rejoice because facing the truth is the best step that can be taken in countering wrongdoing (the ἀδικία in the first phrase)
- c. True love rejoices to see Truth take root in one's life and is grieved to see its opposite (unrighteousness) embedding in one's life/soul - love is not "all-permissive" to make others feel better (as if it is a loving act), but is focused on the "true Truth" that exposes sin for what it really is - a destroyer of souls in this life) leading to a condemnation of eternal judgement (in the next)
- d. It seems confusing at first to see Paul's usage of "unrighteousness" in contrast to "truth" until we see "unrighteousness" as "un-rightness" (wrongness) - it doesn't find joy in what is wrong behaviorally or philosophically because there is no benefit for the object of those we love in being wrong! (love corrects encouragingly/enthusiastically/motivationally)
11. "Love bears all things" (πάντα στέγει) - vs. 7
- a. There are two general ideas behind the word for "bears" - the first being that of shielding or protecting (as the root word has to do with a "roof") - so it is that which is water-tight (keeps secrets and can be trusted with them) - many who have stated their love for another have gone on to be the most painful of enemies as they reveal and exploit these secrets
- b. The second meaning/usage is that of "bearing with" as in staying with another through difficulty as in a support for them (bearing them up) and even to bear with the troubles they inflict on us in the process
- c. The "all things" in these verses demonstrates how thorough it is - **it is not conditional** in them
- d. It reiterates this as being God's love in that it chooses to care for the other
- e. Paul used this same word (9:12) in relation to how he "endured all things" in not taking their support - he did not want the Gospel message hindered in the least for their good
12. "Love believes all things" (πάντα πιστεύει) - vs. 7
- a. This could be worded so as to say it "has faith" in its object - as in our case, a true love of God actually does continually work at believing all He has revealed to us in His word
- b. When it comes to the application to people, this quality will strongly resemble a naïvety because it strives to believe the good of the one it loves - the opposite being a love of self that causes one to distrust all things because of self-protection
- c. When believing "all things" it does not necessarily mean that it believes all that one says or "puts forward," but that it has faith in the good that can turn a wayward one it loves back to the right (which is partly why it bears with them)
- d. Love never "loses faith" as such is not given to suspicion and is uninterested in rumor - even when hearing actual news of ones bad character, it visualizes a "turn-around" for them because...
13. "Love hopes all things" (πάντα ἐλπίζει) - vs. 7
- a. This is closely associated with the previous phrase and builds on the reality that it expects/anticipates the betterment for the one it loves
- b. Even Abraham used such a concept in his struggling with God's promise and not seeing the fulfillment (or its possibility) - he "hoped against hope" (Rom. 4:18)
- c. It "sees the hope" (potential) for those it loves versus assuming the worst - a pessimist is not loving, because they focus on the immediate and not the possibility of God's grace (which is what it must hope and believe in, because true love recognizes the faults and weaknesses of its objects - love looks like it is blind because it seems to hope against reality)
- d. This hope may also seem "pushy" because it will expect the best of/from others

Charity sees those it loves with the eyes of faith (again, faith in God's grace at work and not the person)

This is a good point demonstrating that even if one quality could begin to wane, another will "make-up" for it so that love does not/cannot falter

James 1:12 is a good example of both words used together - ultimately one "endures temptation" because they "love Him"

It is never "beaten down"

These qualities are best looked at together, as a group rather than each as a standalone quality - their interaction with each other serves as a "checks and balances" type of relationship - any one of these characteristics would be alert to neglect or contradiction to it by a deficiency in another area of "love"

Regardless the accusations that may come, each of us needs to evaluate/scrutinize the usage of genuine love - again, the goal is not the appearance of love but the actuality of it as so described here and illustrated by God Himself toward us

These statements are not designed to downplay the significance of these gifts as they are so given by God for His purposes now, but make it clear that what these Corinthians could and should aspire to above all other goals and objectives is to truly love God and others - to "DO" love (as an action (verb)) because "Loving" IS WHAT WE ARE (adjective)

- e. The word "hope" carries a few ideas - love, in "hoping," anticipates growth and possibility in what it "loves," and therefore is willing to "wait it out," and remains a support and exhorter
- f. Seeing it hopes "all things," it hopes **through** all things (as seen in enduring all things)

14. "Love endures all things" (πάντα ὑπομένει) - vs. 7

- a. Basically put, love "bears under the load" with and for another (because of hope)
- b. It is love of God and of others that drives us to "stay with it" when pressures mount on us, because of our relations with either/both - pressures and pains that come from those we truly love and the ones that come from those who are unkind to those we love
- c. Vincent, in his Word Studies makes a point, "An advance on beareth: patient acquiescence, holding its ground when it can no longer believe nor hope."
- d. With this word ("endures"), it is very important to understand it is applied to "all things" and not "most things" - it is evidenced in "bearing with" (forbearance) and "bearing for" - it is sharing another's "load" and at times, bearing the others as **our** "load"
- e. Love is with "its object" to the end (or even **through** the end)

15. "Love never fails" (ἡ ἀγάπη οὐδέποτε πίπτει) - vs. 8a

- a. Notice the proper Greek article before agape - "The Love" - it is a summary of all the previous qualities while transitional to the next truths
- b. It could also be worded that charity never "falls" as if stumbling and yielding to defeat
- c. Though the other "edifying gifts" will come to an end (use up their usefulness) agape never will
- d. Love expects to patiently wait and strives to be useful (thus used) - it does not envy because it longs to see others "have" - it counters egotistical thoughts in its possessor (for "self" would get in the way of its objective), so it is not arrogant because it values others as more important than its itself - its thoughts and desires are for the other's best, so it is repulsed at the idea of being improper and/or indecent before/with others because it doesn't aspire to get noticed - being characterized by forgiving, it is not roused to anger against its object because it refuses to keep track of past wrongs against it or even to look on them as wrongs; and because of this, it grieves at the failures of others and rejoices when Truth "wins-out" in their lives - because it hopes to this end (Truth winning-out), it puts-up with the struggles of immaturity of those it loves, trusting in God for another's best to somehow "be on the horizon," so it forges on like a disciplined, focused soldier looking past the conflict at the prized victory
- e. There are some common misconceptions of these qualities that when they arise will be used to make a case that any one of these qualities is not loving - it can be (for instance) looked upon as blind optimism (naive) even though its focus is more on God than the person it loves - or, love of God or of others can often rouse anger at that which is truly harmful and the protective response of love can be misinterpreted to be unloving

D. The greater significance of Charity - vs. 8-13

1. Paul is about to go on and use illustrations to demonstrate the "partial-ness" of "prophecy" and "knowledge" to then demonstrate the potential "**fullness**" of love **now** - not that either of these is false or incorrect in how they have been given, only that they are incomplete compared to what they will be
2. The special gifting of "prophecy" (speaking for God by revealing, explaining/clarifying His Word) will someday be "put out of action" having fulfilled what it was purposed to do - it will no longer be needed - the same verb is used (both passives) with "knowledge" and that in reference to the gifting of special insight
 - a. There is an indication of this thought stated in the description of all that will come with the New Covenant as described in Jeremiah 31:31-34 - when this is fully implemented "They will not teach again, each man his neighbor... for they will all know Me from the least of them to the greatest of them..."
 - b. The revealed Truth we have now is proper and more than enough for our lives, but with what we will instinctively know then, these gifts needed to help us learn and understand will no longer be needed - "then" we will not know everything, but will know all we ought to know
 - c. "...There will probably be as great a difference between knowledge hereafter and what we call knowledge here, as there is between hearing of an object and seeing it. We may hear of a description of a person or place and have thereby a certain form of knowledge of him or it; but that form passes away, or is merged into a higher, as soon as we see what we had before only heard about." Charles Hodge

3. "If there are tongues they will cease" - they will stop, come to an end - this is a different verb than used for prophecy and knowledge and Robertson (RWP) wrote, "Future middle indicative of pauō, to make cease. They shall make themselves cease or automatically cease of themselves."

a. The other two will be made to be "put out of action" (passive) while "tongues" will participate in their own end (middle) - they will use themselves up as if indicating (or at least hinting at) that because of their usage they will work themselves "out of a job"

Initially as a means to get the Gospel introduced to the world and secondarily as a sign to the Jews

b. The revealing and explaining of God's Word will be needed throughout the entire age, while tongues will by its usage become not needed - this thought is in harmony then with the absence of even mentioning tongues in the next verse (10)

4. In the "now" we know and "prophecy" "in part" - vs. 9-10

This does not imply that we will be omniscient (since only God is), but that knowing the "right" and instinctively understanding what we ought will be who/what we are - our learning/discovery will be unhindered!

a. We have available all that we should know, but that is limited compared to what we will know when with the Lord; and yet with this "partial" knowing, none knows it all - and even what we do come to know we are apt to forget and thus need preacher/teachers

b. But when the "perfect" (complete/mature) is come, the "interim measure" will no longer be needed - our insight will be without distraction, misunderstanding or confusion

c. This is why all that is learned while we are alive in these bodies will require faith - with any point of Theology there are limits to how far we can go in comprehending them - many errors stem from the pursuit to go beyond what is clearly revealed in Scripture to make it fit in our limited minds and limited frames of reference

Prophecy will be what Paul stresses is "better" than tongues and "knowledge" is what the Corinthians were enamored with - and yet agape is to be sought for before both - not at the exclusion of both but to utilize both as they are to be used

d. This is also the cause of the frustration we feel when dealing with the lofty concepts of God and His word - that there is more glorious details to be searched-out and yet we cannot fathom them!

e. That which we have now and rely upon will then be "discharged from duty," being finished

5. The analogy of a child versus an adult - vs. 11

a. We can identify the difference in our thinking and talking when we were children and now that we are adults - as children we considered what we knew to be a great deal and yet, in retrospect, was very inferior to what we have come to know as we've matured

Actually, we learn the knowledge of God and Christ so as to solidify our faith and give it its focus (dependence) bringing with it a lifelong expectation to get us through all that will be faced

b. Again, this does not discount the insight (knowledge) we have been given now to work with, but along with this knowledge we are told, that what we know now pales in comparison to what we will know - ***so faith and hope would be more a focus than placing confidence in knowledge***

see Romans 8:24-25

c. When we are with the Lord and in eternity, faith and hope will essentially be gone (though confidence and trust in God will remain) - faith will then be sight and our hope seen

d. In light of this, there is no reason for even the smartest of us to be proud in his/her knowledge - interestingly, as we mature on this earth we become aware of what more there actually is to learn - pride in present knowledge is a mark of immaturity

Even though it is denied by many determined to be immature, they pursue a life with an intent of "not knowing" - it's seen not in what they learn but more in what they refuse to learn and know (and thus live by)

e. Though this is not the purpose of this text, there is an assumed pursuit of maturity in this life where it is expected that when we are adults, we expect to take on the responsibilities of an adult and to rid ourselves of childish behavior and priorities

6. The analogy of looking at life through a mirror - vs. 12

It is as a language or a thing that clearly has presence and order and is known to have clarity to someone (typically its creator) and without the creator it cannot be certainly comprehended

a. As we are now, while on this Earth, we perceive "life and beyond" as if looking at it in a mirror (a looking glass) and in that, not seeing all details and depth

b. The underlying word for "dimly" (αἰνίματα, where we get "enigma") and pictures a riddle as in getting a general gist of something but not having all the details to make it out perfectly

c. Corinth was known for their mirrors, so to assume these were "cloudy" or obscured the image is to read too much into it - these mirrors would typically be small and when looking at some thing in it (what it reflects) is to not see the full picture and to not have all the nuances to be viewed

None of the Corinthians (and us) communicates with God this directly and we work with the more than adequate revealed light and detail in His revealed Truth - but we are not proud in our limited frame of reference and trust God in the many unknown details

d. Plainly put, we cannot see life for all it is - but in the future, that will change

e. When with the Lord and free of these sin-infected bodies, we will see all for what it really is in the light of the Lord - the "face to face" statement appears to reference Numbers 12:8 where God is rebuking Aaron and Miriam for their criticisms of Moses - He stated regarding Moses, "With him I speak mouth to mouth" (as here in our text "face to face" - then Lord also stated, "...even openly and not in dark sayings..." (and in our text "dimly"))

f. And then, Paul assures, when seeing Him "face to face" he will "know fully" just as he has been known fully by God all along - all veils will be removed and not only will we see life for all that it really is, but ourselves for what we really are (and have been) - though now, we know only "in part"

7. Three qualities that remain when the others (giftings) cease or are discontinued - vs. 13

These were all needed and still are in all that we do in our obedient walk for the Lord - each is involved in all the qualities of the outworking of love in this chapter

When many quote that "God is love" they often see God as being the love they define rather than God being "love defined"

- a. But now, and always faith, hope and love remain - the special gifting of tongues, prophecy and knowledge will go away but these three will always be needed
- b. It was these three qualities that Paul complimented the Thessalonians regarding in his first letter - I Thes. 1:2-4 - their "work of faith" (laborious efforts stirred by their belief), "labor of love" (pains incurred because of their selfless love for God and others) and their "steadfastness of hope" (their unshakable, consistent expectation of God at work)
- c. These three (in contrast to the spiritual gifts) will always remain - even in eternity, we will trust God and continue to hope (have our expectation for our eternal future) in Him
- d. Everyone has faith and hope in something, and their "implementation" is controlled by what they love - also, love is what allows us to be most like our Father (for He does not have faith and hope, but He does have love) - see I John 4:7-10
- e. Love utilizes faith and hope for it "believes all things" and "hopes all things" - so the believing (faith) and the hoping/expecting are so **because of love**

XVII. The Misplaced Emphasis on "Tongues" (Lacking a Focus on Edifying) - 14:1-40

A. Preliminary thoughts before working through this chapter

Paul's dealings with tongues in this texts is at best permissive and in no way is an endorsement of what the Corinthians were doing - many miraculous things were happening and it would be difficult at first glance to distinguish the genuine from the fake

It is not uncommon to read where many appeal to Rom. 8:26 and the phrase "in groanings which cannot be uttered" - but, as is clear, they cannot be spoken - it's not "tongues!"

It is also quite clear that Paul is stressing the pursuit of "prophesying" over tongues - this is deliberate and without question - the purpose, especially in assemblies, was the edifying of those present

As Paul has been stressing throughout this epistle, we are to be driven to participate (in love) to the betterment of others over ourselves - compare with Php. 2:4

1. This text has been often used in a way to "make a case" for what is called "the gift of tongues" today

- a. The majority of what is put forward as "tongues" has little to nothing to do with the original gift of tongues as seen in the New Testament
- b. Many texts are drawn from the accounts in Acts and paired with what Paul is detailing and working through with the Corinthians and yet they are not meant to be paired
- c. First of all, Paul is dealing here with the misconceptions of "tongues" and their improper focus upon them, while Acts demonstrates the genuine outworking of Tongues as a sign gift and, initially, as a tool at Pentecost to present the Gospel to those speaking other languages
- d. Second, the underlying word for "tongues" (γλῶσσα) is in its **normal** usage in reference to an **actual language** and is not (as so many strive to make a case for) "ecstatic speech" brought on by the Holy Spirit - many texts have been made to appear to be unintelligible speech/sounds because of the apparent usage Paul deals with 14:2
- e. The Corinthians were practicing an apparent "ecstatic speech," but Paul does not commend or endorse it (again, Paul is not at all looking to establish what they were doing as an acceptable practice - the instruction by Paul in 14:39, "... and do not forbid to speak in tongues..." can just as easily be in reference to the legitimate, organized usage of the actual gifting of one to speak in a foreign language - for exactly what purposes we are not told and should be careful not to speculate so as to legitimize much of what is done today under the banner of "tongues")
- f. It will do us no good to be wrong on this text! It is not our purpose in this study to twist the text to counter Pentecostals or Charismatics in general - we desire the actual intent and meaning of what Paul was telling these early Christians, so we can be corrected ourselves in how we might be drawn to see or use something legitimately given by God as a means to making us look better (or even to use something we know is good to JUST benefit ourselves) - even truly edifying, challenging resources from God can be molded into ego-boosters when manipulated and re-purposed by us - this is our natural tendency

2. There will be many "but what about's..." when looking at this chapter, and it is best to take it in the sequence and emphasis in which it has been given to us

There is no example where tongues speaking was ever used to build-up believers - the usage in 14:2 is self-focused even though it would seem sincere to even the one "experiencing it"

- a. There was a gift of tongues; that is not in question - it was given by God, distributed by His Spirit and used to demonstrate (1). the indwelling of the Holy Spirit even to, especially to, the Gentiles (as was seen by Peter in the house of Cornelius in Acts 10) (2). As a sign to unbelieving Israel (vs. 21-22) and then (3). to "...speak of the mighty deeds of God..." (Acts 2:11) to foreigners in their own language by those who had not previously been able to do so
- b. The key point we should be looking for in these verses is the need to "pursue love" (as was emphasized and defined in chapter 13), and not to become "taken-in" by public displays of spirituality of any sort - this can involve areas such as personal testimonies, musical presentations, preaching and teaching, charitable acts and more, all with the purpose to direct attention to self

see Matthew 15:8

- c. It is very easy to confuse group admiration and encouragement of personal spiritual experiences with the actual working of God's Holy Spirit - much of the spirit of man permeates services intended for worship, but the worship is more directed toward the participants than it is the proposed object... God (an exalted ego is very stirring!)

B. "I wish... even more that you would prophesy" - vs. 1-5

1. Pursue (as if hunting it down) charity (agape) while desiring earnestly spiritual gifts - vs. 1

As soon as what we are aiming at (as far as our life pursuits) drifts from charity it will automatically drift to what reflects self-significance and we become more a burden to the Church than a true blessing

We then need to evaluate if this is the case with us. Are we longing to be so used of God as to properly "build-up" others for His purposes? What really are our longings? This is quite often never evaluated

So immediately, Paul is "pushing" prophecy over tongues (mainly because it is for believers)

- a. If selfless love of God and others is always in the "cross hairs" of what we are pursuing in life, then we will automatically desire the gifting of God - but with genuine love as its drive, the gifts will be so desired because of the **good it will bring to others** (not considering self)
- b. The Corinthians had lost sight of this and had utilized the concepts of "tongues" to draw attention each to himself - none of the spiritual gifts will be genuinely exhibited if they are devoid of Godly love (**and this we each must regularly assess as we seek to serve**)
- c. "It is an exhortation to obtain charity, to get this excellent disposition of mind upon any terms, whatever pains or prayers it may cost: as if he had said, "In whatever you fail, see you do not miss of this; the principal of all graces is worth your getting at any rate." Matthew Henry
- d. Considering the words "pursue" and "earnestly," it is clear that Paul is describing an urgency - it must be a priority to do **both** and to not (as we're about to see) allow one's self to become distracted - the gracing of God's Spirit implements (is an outlet) for living out agape
- e. And of all the gifts to earnestly desire, desire the opportunity to "prophesy" - this is not an opportunity to "expound on our brilliance" - what it is to "prophesy" is described in verse 3

2. "Edifying self" versus edifying the Church - vs. 2-5

Even if it was talking about an acceptable practice, Paul would be discouraging it from public practice in this text

We will come to another example (15:29) where Paul demonstrates the inconsistency of what they are doing in contrast to Truth (how it really is)

Judging the edifying value of what is done when we assemble together would be something good to evaluate regularly - many traditions creep in that fill time and attention but do not edify (challenge and comfort)

When Paul references "mysteries" elsewhere in his writings he is referencing what were previously mysteries but are now revealed (and understood)

These are the products of forth telling God's Word which is infinitely better than watching or listening to another's "spiritual experience" that lacks the undisputable authority of God's Word

If faithfulness and growth are to be had in experiences, these experiences will need to continue and grow in intensity to keep us from losing motivation - emotions tire after a while and personal experience is too easy to come to doubt when countered by conflicting experiences

- a. Verse 2 is one of the more difficult verses to handle, and how it is handled affects much of the interpretation of the rest of this chapter - it's either speaking of a legitimate practice of speaking in an unknown language that no one understands but God (as in how many who have defended "ecstatic speech" would hold to), or it is referencing an illegitimate practice the Corinthians were doing during their services (assembling together) and Paul is countering it
- b. It is my position that this is the latter, something they were doing and should not be doing and that it is distinct from the "legitimate" gift of tongues (actual human languages) that are to be allowed (as in verse 39) - there is no example of "ecstatic speech" in Scripture where one is speaking a heavenly language! Why would we then think this verse makes it "good"?
- c. During their times together, some were having "spiritual experiences," speaking out "words" (sounds) no one understood, though they were supposed to understand (that somehow they meant something to God and included "mysteries" stemming from their spirit) - even advocates of this practice admit no person understands what is being "spoken" and this is at the crux of Paul's point - **to the Church it is of no value!**
- d. Some take "...but in spirit he speaks mysteries." as in reference to THE Holy Spirit, but the sense is more *his own* spirit (as in his own mind and soul (even inner feelings/emotions)) - this practice, assuming that some great mysteries are being uttered while others look on, have no use in the Church - again, this is Paul's point - what good are unrevealed, unexplained "puzzles" to the Church? - Paul will deal with interpreters later, but that is in reference to actual "tongues" (known languages unknown to others, and needed interpretation to be of value)
- e. On the other hand (making his case), one who speaks what God has given (in His Word) is "speaking to men" (audibly and understandably) - this is "prophecy" as Paul is using it here - (1). "edification" (οικοδομῆν - the act of construction/building-up) - not in the sense of their pride but in who they are before God, and laboring for their growth in better serving Him - (2). "exhortation" (παράκλησιν - encouraging, challenging comfort and convicting motivation) - (3). "consolation" (παραμυθίαν - persuasion, convincing, giving strength)
- f. **There are no Scriptures instructing us to "edify ourselves"** - verse 4 is the only one in which it is mentioned and should not be looked upon as a good thing - many feel "edified" by stirring and even seemingly overwhelming experiences - these might be motivating to some degree and even encouraged, but details and consistency are needed in actual "construction"
- g. So, when saying that one who "speaks in tongues" (in the manner just addressed) "edifies himself," this is no compliment or endorsement - the purpose for the spiritual gifts is the edification of the Church and if no so used, they are not of God!

True “prophesying” equips (for the work/purpose), challenges/motivates (to the work), and encourages (through the hardships/challenges)

Yet even now, many are only motivated to minister by some idea that it will build them up - but what if ministry seems only to be giving and no sense of “getting”? Is it then not ministry?

The Corinthians weren’t getting other things right so why would one assume they were getting this right?

No matter what stance is taken on the legitimacy of what they Corinthians were doing, it is absolutely clear that Paul places prophesy far above tongues (because of its usage and benefit to the assembly/church) - rather than just directly saying “don’t do it” (which he rarely does), he looks to convince them with expediency and usefulness (why to pursue one over the other)

So even in this verse, tongues would just be an obstacle that needed to be handled so that true edifying could be had - for if it is not understood, it is not edifying!

Effective “edification” requires the ability to communicate both ways (in a known language and clearly) - as ministers we are to constantly be striving to be clear

The heart of true Biblical textual research is reverent as it seeks to confirm what we are reading matches what was written

The Corinthian practice of “tongues” is becoming more irrelevant and useless! - this is most often the result of any ministry motivated by pride

One being apparently overcome with the Spirit and uttering sounds with no apparent meaning would be like a clanging cymbal - grabs the attention but provides no substance

h. In contrast to this, in verse 3, the benefit (usefulness) of “prophecy” (speaking forth what God has said/revealed) is three-fold - true “prophecy” is spoken to men (other people) to their “edification” (οἰκοδομῆν - construction, building, erecting), their “exhortation” (παράκλησιν - a motivating “call”, challenging encouragement) and to their “consolation” (παραμυθίαν - comforting encouragement)

i. This is in direct contrast to their usage of “tongues” (as they saw it), which only lent to what they believed to be or claimed to be edifying (constructive of self) - we may not struggle with this idea of “tongues,” yet may define what we see as “ministering” by how it builds us up personally (but this is not the intent of ministry)

j. So, one “edifies himself” the other “edifies the church” - is this an “either/or” proposal or option or is Paul discouraging it altogether (especially as a public practice)? Again, there is no reason (in light of the rest of Scripture and the contexts leading up to this chapter) to lend to the idea that this type of self-edification is actually good

k. To drive the point home even stronger he says, “I wish that you all spoke with tongues..” - there are a couple things to consider with this statement: first, he would have it that if tongues is to be experienced (the true gift and not what they were doing), that all of them could do it (that it would not be exclusive in their eyes and thus a point of competition and pride); second, that in doing so (*actually* being gifted to speak in *actual* languages previously unknown to them), they would do so with the purpose to prophesy (“...even more that you would prophesy” either in other languages so that others could hear, understand and be encouraged/challenged, or that they would learn the greater value of just forth-telling the Word of God in their own language)

l. To the Christian, why we do and don’t do things is to be more driven in what lends to purpose and not to its rightness or wrongness - we will give an account before God on what we did, “whether good” (useful) or “bad” (useless) (II Cor. 5:10) - so here, in this context, Paul need not say “it’s wrong to speak in tongues” directly; it’s wrong because it is not useful to the Church and should not be thus sought after

m. The only way the gift of tongues could be useful to the congregation, would be if there were an interpreter and even then, true “prophesying” would still be needed “so that the church may receive edifying” (which comes by forth-telling the Word of God) - ***so it is not the “tongues speaking” that edifies the Church; it’s the interpretation/explanation of it in their own language*** - so why have it, unless the one speaking can only speak in another language (an actual foreign language) that others do not understand - this would be the case in a city of commerce where many foreigners would come and many could be Christians looking to fellowship)

C. There is no benefit if there is no understanding - vs. 6-12

1. What use would it be to supernaturally speak in a foreign language if what is said is not understood? - vs. 6

a. Paul was planning on coming to visit the Corinthians again and uses it as an example - what if when he comes he comes speaking “in tongues” what help, he asks, would that be?

b. There might be, initially, some wonder at the spectacle but that is all it would be - even Peter, on the day of Pentecost ended up speaking in his first “sermon” in the normal vernacular of the people - if he would have spoken in a “language they did not understand” how would the message get out?

c. The “benefit” comes from “revelation” first (God’s Word supernaturally revealed/imparted) - this is why there is an ongoing work to get as close as possible to what the “original manuscripts” contained - these “Holy men of God” were “inspired” by the Holy Spirit in what they wrote and could genuinely say, “This saith the Lord” (see II Pet. 1:21) - God revealed His Word in an actual language and not in some heavenly language - God created language to communicate to us so why would we entertain the concept that He would not have us use language to communicate what He has revealed?

d. Because there has been “revelation” we have a true source of “knowledge” from which to draw and this is what they would need to learn when Paul would come again - ignorance is its opposite and is at the root of so many erroneous yet “spirited” works for God

e. This knowledge is then the source of the “preaching” (prophesying) - preaching without imparting knowledge is not truly preaching! - and this preaching needs to be understandable, not simply “dramatic” and spectacular (a show/performance)

So how could any of this happen if the fundamental "delivery method" (language) is not present - many "spiritual experiences" sought after today have a not-so-obvious laziness at their core ("I want to feel, not do; I want to be recognized and admired on my terms")

The best of music has organization - even more modern "music" must follow some pattern if it is to be recognized again later

"Tone" from the type of instrument and pitch and timing from the musical notes (like a language)

This analogy is also fitting in that the Christian who does not understand the "call to battle" may not recognize there is a battle at all, and be caught by surprise - if the alert is heard only as sounds, they will be unprepared

If verse 2 is looked upon as someone speaking in a heavenly language they even they do not understand, this contradicts the very purpose of language - a two-way channel of communication between God and man

compare to Eph. 5:11-17; Col. 4:2-6

This would be what someone speaking in "tongues" (as they were doing it) would sound like to their fellow church family - the "un-gifted" and "unbelievers" will think "you are mad" (see verses 23-25)

Living for the "miraculous" and "supernatural" will take its toll on the practical (the actual) - actual needs won't be met and that which the exhibitionists long to see/do will be what is not NEEDED at all

Again, the "if" that is used here does not suggest Paul actually prayed in "a tongue" - Paul counters specifically "ecstatic speaking" and not an actual language of foreign tongues in this verse - that comes in verse 18

- f. Yet we still see today many searching out (in churches) the "spectacular" (spectacle) because of immaturity (evidenced in a drive to be entertained and not challenged) - "If I can be stirred, if I can just be made to feel" that becomes the "religious experience" itself and not the obedience (which is actually supposed to be the "religious experience" - compare with James 1:27)
- g. From the preaching/explaining/clarifying of God's Word comes teaching/doctrine - teaching is knowledge "made to be" integrated into thinking and practice - it becomes part of who/what we are (it is far more than the impartation of facts!)

2. Sounds without meaning (lacking structure), are just "sounds in the air" - vs. 7-9

- a. We see this with musical instruments - if there is no "distinction in the tones" (as in notes grouped together to make a melody), how would one know what is being played? Play notes through a "flute" or pluck the strings of a "harp" distinctly, and a **song** can be recognized
- b. The word for "distinction (*διαστολήν*)" means a "variation," and in this case is a variation in pitch and tone, and even time (length) - this is the same with speech - the less there is vocabulary, grammar and clear enunciation, the less there is understandability - vs. 7
- c. In battle, if the bugle/trumpet does not follow a predetermined pattern, how will the soldier know what is meant by the sound? - action in battle was often dictated by the sound of the bugler, so these patterns needed to be understood, and would have afforded no benefit to the soldiers if the bugler decided to "play from his heart" sounds that meant something only to him, there would be drastic consequences! - vs. 8 - Clarity and understanding are a must!
- d. "So also you... unless you utter what is clear... how will anyone 'take in' what you are saying?" - vs. 9
- e. It is just "sounds upon the air" if the sounds are not words, sentences, language - language is unique to humanity and is partly what makes us distinct from animals - Paul is clearly demonstrating, that *what the Corinthians were purposing as "tongues,"* were just sounds and not a language at all
- f. We have a phrase, "Like talking to a brick wall" when we speak and the hearer does not listen and understand - so this was a phrase, "you might as well talk to the wind" since no one hears/understands - this truly is "vanity" (good for nothing)! - generally speaking, we need to evaluate regularly the value of what we do overall (we are looking to "redeem the time" not just from evil efforts but from useless (not lending to purpose) practices)

3. We do not want to be "as a barbarian" to others - vs. 10-12

- a. As it is, there are "a great many kinds of languages in the world" (literally, *γέννη φωνῶν*, ethnic sounds, for though this is referencing language, Paul's illustration is about to point out that they are just sounds to the one who does not know the language) and none "is without meaning" (literally, without sound, voiceless, senseless) - senseless speech is not actually speech
- b. So, Paul continues, "If I don't understand the meaning of the sounds/voices" both will be "foreigners" (barbarians) to each other - the underlying word for "barbarian" (*βάρβαρος*) is believed to be onomatopoeic (sounds like what it represents) - as if mimicking what it sounds like to us, "bar-bar" (or now we might say "blah-blah-blah")
- c. This contradicts how believers are supposed to be "feeling" with each other - not as foreigners but as family - not as strangers being "out of place", but as belonging friends
- d. So since they are (if they really are) "zealous for the spiritual," then strive to look to be "over and above" when it comes to the "edification of the church" - if the construction of the Church is the goal, then when one longs to see the Holy Spirit of God at work, it will not be for the "miraculous displays of the supernatural" as much as it would be to anything that lends to the spiritual growth of those who make up the Church

D. The "mind" needs to be engaged in the fellowship "meetings" (gatherings)- vs. 13-19

1. This section is also used to make a case (by some) for ecstatic speech and prayer, but they confuse his illustration (the hypothetical) to make his point with his actual actions - vs. 13-15 - this is made clear by his conclusion of "what I will do" with the inclusion of his mind also

- a. So (therefore), if anyone "speaks in a tongue" (a language not know to the hearers) he is, based on what was just said, to pray that he be able to interpret - for how can any be edified if they cannot understand what is being said?
- b. For, Paul says, "If I pray in a tongue... my mind is unfruitful" - even though, in his scenario his spirit is involved, that does not make up for the absence of the mind/thoughts/understanding

The usage of the word “spirit” carries, in this verse, more the idea of the “spiritual” (as in the soul) - it’s like feelings not brought on by reason/thinking - one today might call it a “sense” or “impression” upon how they “feel”

Some may trust their “feelings” so much they determine what is wrong to be right and what is right to be wrong because of how they “feel” about it

We are to walk by faith and faith is not feelings - quite often (if not most of the time) faith will be needed to get us above our feelings - and faith (in action) comes by hearing the Word of God - Rom. 10:5-17

And “fruit” is not always for the producer but for the recipients (or for the farmers purposes) - we are to bear fruit for Him, and this practice was “fruitless”!

Music is an interesting concept to compare with this discussion realizing the less “order” there is is a song the more difficulty there is in group participation - some “musical artists” would be very difficult to sing along with if they sing with their “spirit” being predominant

- c. The question is whether or not this is somehow a legitimate thing to do... to “pray in tongues” in such a way as to have only the “spirit” involved without the involvement of one’s mind - seeing there is no other text that lends (at all) to the idea of such prayer, why would we think (again) this was a good and acceptable thing to do?
- d. We see a great deal of this today where many will put too much stock in how they feel, what they say they “sense” - even those who believe this is in reference (somehow) to the Holy Spirit, how exactly do we think He “speaks” to us - we know for certain He uses the Word of God, He uses people and He uses conviction (by means of guiding/illuminating Truth)
- e. Informed feelings/senses can be helpful, while misinformed (even deceived) feelings/senses can be extremely harmful (to ourselves and others) - this practice of the Corinthians church (mindless speaking and praying) is similar to many practices today (though many of ours are not as dramatic) - even (quite often) phrases such as “I’ve prayed about it and don’t think I should...” could be one of many ways of invoking God in our self-justification for avoiding responsibility, or taking on what we should avoid/discard
- f. The “mind” in verse 14 is “unfruitful” (ἄκαρπός - barren, profitless) and this is not a good thing that is being described - for, as he clarifies in verses 15-16, if this approach (mindless experiences demonstrated in ecstatic speech) is taken regularly, it will be fruitless with several other aspects of “assembly practices” such as praying, singing and “blessing”
- g. So then, what is to be done (what should be done)? - If my spirit (or even THE SPIRIT) is to be a part of praying, most assuredly so will the mind (thinking, understanding, the faculty of reasoning) be involved as well - notice it’s not stoic reasoning, for the spirit should and will be stirred as more understanding of the Truth is had
- h. The same then goes with singing - it should be a unified, harmonious combination of spirit and mind - heart and mind participate (for a person can be stirred by a tune without words, but good, thoughtful lyrics can stir the heart even with a dull melody) - so, Paul on his part as their spiritual father declares **what he will do** (so also then should they)
- i. So, even if it were so that one would genuinely speak in tongues (back to verse 13), **the goal is to be understood to edify/build-up others**

2. Putting others in the position of being “idiots” - vs. 16-17

If one is overcome emotionally and begins to praise God from the heart (has a “praise experience”) and what is stated or supposedly expressed is not understandable to the others in the place

This is very ungracious - we strive to make others feel welcome and appreciated and never should allow an atmosphere of exalting some at the expense of others - each is to “esteem” the other “better than themselves” - Php. 2:3

Open agreement and consensus of the Truth is another strong form of encouragement - and ignorant “amen” is a shame

- a. If you (now applying it directly to them) “bless in the spirit *only*,” if you offer up public praise and thanksgiving to God (εὐλογῆς) by means only of what was considered by them to be the “spiritual” (again see vs. 12 where they considered themselves zealous for all things “spiritual”), what affect or result will occur? (we need to think ahead what we are seeking to happen)
- b. The wording sounds difficult to understand but is describing (as the affect) one who (or those) sitting “filling the place” (literally occupying space) will become like an “idiot” (ἰδιώτου), and ignorant person, because they are now in a settings where they are not understanding what’s being said - the focus is on the discomfort and out-of place feeling that is being put on another that is not being considered (because others are having “their moment”)
- c. This can also come, in a sense, in the form of “intellectually superior talk” and so-called “teaching” that has as its audience only the “mentally elite,” and some pleasure is found in “being above” others
- d. How will there be the consensus agreement (“Amen”) if others cannot understand what is being said in praise and thanksgiving, or they do not even know what’s happening? -apparently this was something they should have been striving to have - and so should we (unified “amen”)
- e. Even though the one offering praise believes themselves to be genuinely grateful, the other who cannot understand what is being expressed is not “edified” - clarity is essential in our gatherings!

3. **Better to actually be useful to others than to appear to be spiritual** - vs. 18-19

We do the Church no good when we promote the “spectacular” over the foundations - its the little consistencies and little points of learning (a little hear and a little there) that build -up to maturity - “mountain top experiences” are reached a step at a time, inch by inch - all else is fake and only a show offering no solid footing in life

- a. Paul points out that he spoke more “tongues” than all of them - this is a clear demonstration that he meant literal languages (and a diversity of them) in contrast to their idea
- b. If anyone could showcase even the gifting of tongues, Paul could, but he would far rather speak “five words” with the use of his mind (rational, understandable words) rather than “ten thousand” words in a “tongue” (another language others could not understand)
- c. Some would rather be impressive than plain, clear and useful - and yet actually being used of God to instruct and strengthen others, is to be desired more than getting noticed for our “greatness” or even our significance

- d. If exceptional encounters with God will likely occur at times, but should be sought in private so as not to draw undue attention to ourselves - we do not want “it to be about us”
- e. Five words uttered with thought behind them are worth more (in Paul’s calculations here) than ten thousand words (many personal “experiences”)

E. Demonstrating that “God is certainly among you” - vs. 20-25

1. “Grow-up” when it comes to discerning thinking - learn to (and actually) scrutinize what you do - vs. 20

Avoid the immature motivation to the appearance of self-greatness and drawing attention to self - this leads to a life of “pretend” which can, if not stopped, become one’s reality

- a. “Don’t be children in your thinking...” - don’t think like children (παιδία) do, being driven by and given over to the “showy” and “flashy” - it is childish to give one’s self over to the pursuit of fun versus productivity - “fun” needs newness and variety to be maintained and often requires no depth of content (but provides no lasting contentment)
- b. But, when it comes to futility (“evil”, baseness, uselessness), strive to be an infant (νηπιόζετε - a helpless baby versus a small child) - this is actually a pursuit we are to follow after - we actively work to avoid frivolity which leads to a wasting of time and energy/effort
- c. So, stay focused, don’t be distracted away from critical thinking - assess what you do and why you do it - as Paul “pressing on” continually - Php. 3:14-15 (this is how the mature think)

2. Learn from history, and don’t redefine something against God’s purposes - vs. 21-22

Typically the problem of not learning over a period of time is a result of a determination not to learn (for a variety of reasons) - no doubt, some diagnosed with learning disabilities suffer more from an undisciplined will

It is never the blessing of God in any assembling of supposed Christians to have be without any understanding of God’s Word - today this often, sadly, comes as a result of God’s Word not even being presented - if our methods and ministries lose focus on the purpose of instruction and edification by means of God’s Word, this is no blessing! - this is more an evidence (a sign) of disbelief

- a. Paul references a text from Isaiah 28:11-12 (see Isa. 28:9-13) - the prophet is rebuking Judah, that even though taught, they were still as children, newly weaned - and even though they were taught a little at a time (as children are taught (“line upon line, precept upon precept”)), “...they would not listen” - it was more an issue of the will than it was of mental capacity
- b. Paul utilizes this part of Israel’s history to demonstrate a time when God told some of Israel that He would “...speak to this people...” “By men of strange tongues...” because they would not listen and learn when taught (even comforting things) in their own language
- c. This was not a good thing then, so why would it be now?
- d. It was a negative “sign” (an indication) when one would hear speaking in another language and could not understand it - even as it was at Babel (***the issue was not being able to understand***) - at Pentecost it was a blessing to those that heard and understood in their own language
- e. So, why would the Corinthians look to utilize tongues in a way that was evidence of God’s judgment against those who refused to believe and accept? With Israel it was evidence in the time of Isaiah, and ironically it was again a sign to many of Israel (especially the religious leadership) of God’s judgment
- f. And prophecy (refer to verse 3) is for believers (thus, as will be dealt with in verse 27), if foreign languages are going to be any part of the assembling together, there MUST be an interpreter
- g. Note also, “...Paul’s parallel between the foreign language of the Assyrians and the tongues spoken in Corinth rests on the fact that the later were likewise foreign human languages.” Lenski

3. Consider also the needs of the “outsiders” (unlearned/untaught) and “unbelievers” - vs. 23-25

“...he mentions this, because it seems as if their governing view was the glory and applause of men, in which, he suggests, they would be sadly disappointed.” Gill

Is this not the objective of a church when it comes to ministering to the untaught and unbelieving? - if these services are directed to self-edification and self-glory it will counter our purpose as believers - we must continue to ask ourselves what are we really after in our coming together as believers before our Lord?

Notice that it is not the miraculous or “supernatural” that reveals God’s presence among us - it is lives changed by the revealed and explained Word of God!

- a. Paul presents two “ideal” scenarios, one ideal to the Corinthians and one ideal to Paul
- b. Scenario 1 - if the entire church assembles and everyone speaks in a tongue (either their ecstatic speech or an actual foreign language) and some unlearned (most likely believers) and some unbelievers also attend, they will conclude “you are mad!” (out of your minds)
- c. Scenario 2 - “all prophesy” in the church gathering, and the same as before enter - the result is fourfold: (1). “He is convicted by all” (his conscience is stirred and he experiences actual guilt) (2). “He is called to account by all” (by what he hears and understands his life is condemned before God and he is found lacking) (3). “The secrets of his heart are revealed” (his inner struggles and thoughts are brought to light and he sees them for what they are and, what was previously ruled-out as impossible, ***a solution is presented!***) (4). “He will fall on his face and worship God” (out of repentance and grateful worship, he surrenders to God)
- d. The conclusion to the “second ideal” is the recognition that “God is certainly among you” - the goal then is to instruct, build and solidify each other in our life’s walk for the Lord, expecting that our times together will involve conviction, accountability, thoughts and inner motives revealed for what they really are and with all this then true, genuine worship of God and a realization of His presence!
- e. Note also the “posture” of true worship - it is not necessarily being on one’s face (as the method was then) but the inner disposition of full surrender and reverence before God

F. In “corporate gatherings” of the Church, edify/minister in an organized structure - vs. 26-33

1. “What then my brothers...?” - in light of all that has been stressed early on in this chapter as well as chapter 13, what should you be doing and not doing? - vs. 26-28

- a. Clearly the priority of these meetings is the “building up” of others - it needs to be a constructive time, thus requiring organization, planning, structure
- b. For instance, when everyone is together some may have a hymn/Psalm (a holy song) - there may or may not be music, but there can be a recognition of this type of service and gifting - musical talent is likely a part but it is more than that - the core focus is on lending to the challenge and growth of all those attending - “Church music” is to be ministering not entertaining
- c. If one has a “teaching/doctrine” or “revelation” (special insight), let it be (as in verse 33) two or three (limiting the number but keeping the opportunity available) - this describes those with insight and ability, not those who just want to voice opinion - these are well-studied
- d. If one attending is able to speak in another language (a tongue) and they desire to speak, there needs to be an interpreter (so all attending can be edified by what is said) - and if there are many, no more than “two or three” and there MUST be an interpreter - if no one can interpret, they need to “keep it to themselves” and God (whatever they desired to share) - it may have been that some would come to join with these believers, though they could speak little to none of the language (we are not told why one would desire to speak in a foreign language)
- e. Thought needs to be put into these meetings with the goal being the spiritual betterment of all those that attend - these verses are here to limit and control participation - we can assume then that the majority are not participating publicly - it is a place, though (and time) where genuine spiritual gifts are expected to be used though they need not be in the public aspects (while in front to the group)

Many may have musical talent but it is not supposed to be a time where it is showcased to the glory of the “performer” - as it was with “tongues”, it was not to be a time to show-off one’s personal experience

Structure is not there to stifle ministry but there to make it stay ministry and not a “free for all” - too much order can cause a focus on formalism while not enough makes it next to impossible to focus at all

There should be a desire to share and edify each other with all of us - just not always in the corporate service

2. “Confusion” in the Church is not of God - vs. 29-33

It is not order for order’s sake - it is order with and for purpose - discipline and organization (to not ensure rightness but discipline and organization) are necessary for true growth/maturity

It is to be treated with utmost seriousness - the “judging” isn’t one will against another and pride - it was reverent caution realizing that error can easily get a foothold and become academic in “the body”

This is a supporting verse (vs. 31) against the common practice of “over-talking” another - discourses should always be civil and gracious

If personal will or pride become involved often winning an argument becomes the objective and not the correctly landing on the Truth

We fight with each other and/or we neglect responsibility because we fail to see our God-given role where He has predetermined we should be - we need to see ourselves in His eternal plan and not on an uncertain journey with no determined path or end

- a. A loss of personal control and “chaos in the ranks” is by no means God’s working - this is one of the drawbacks of those claiming that God is “overcoming” their spirit in such a way that control is lost - ***multiply this by many people and it truly is chaos***
- b. As with the church so it is with us individually - we need schedules, goals, guidance and discipline if we are to be useful for God’s purposes
- c. When it comes to what Paul had been stressing be done, “prophesying”, he suggests it be two to three and while any one of them speaks, the others “pass judgement” - this isn’t everyone passing judgement for many were untaught, undiscerning - but those who were so gifted and responsible were to listen with a scrutinizing ear - “forth-telling” God’s Word was to be associated with “weighing it” for accuracy
- d. And if one of the ones listening is given special insight (revelation) that needs to be shared, the one speaking (standing) should defer to let it be shared - again, though, the other “prophets” listening must do so with scrutinizing ears - it may be possible also that this special insight is one of correction to something else that has been said, just as it maybe cooperative and supporting (building on) what has been shared
- e. When God’s Word is being shared, let it be one-by-one “so that all may learn” - ***the concepts and truths are so important we don’t want anyone to miss them!***
- f. This self-control is characteristic of “the spirit of a prophet being subject to the prophet” - being unable to wait and over-talking others is not a sign of a “prophet” - this verse may also have application to other prophets being subject to each other also
- g. There has been a trend that it is deemed unacceptable to be “wrangling-over” Scripture as though it is only divisive - but amongst truly Godly men it is the ongoing struggle to be unified around the Truth, and it is sometimes necessary and desired - the allowance and even expectation of ongoing examination of what is said in these gatherings is ultimately comforting to all when we realize the truths we believe hold-up to challenge!
- h. For God is not the source of disorder/confusion (as in a commotion) but is the source of “peace” (harmonious unity in “the ranks”) - His gifts (truly utilized) work in harmony with each other; they compliment each other - so we must see ourselves as the team we actually are as He put us together for His work in this place at this time
- i. This is to characterize all the churches “of the saints” (those holy/set-apart by God)

G. Let each remember his/her place and be subject to God's order and organization - vs. 34-40

1. Regarding the women, they are to "keep silent in the churches" - this may also be in connection with the last phrase of the previous verse - in other words, "as in all the churches... the women are to be silent..."

- a. This text as well as I Tim. 2:11-12 demonstrate that women were to not speak during the "service" (we might say during the "preaching/teaching portion")
- b. These verses have received a great deal of debate especially with recent commentators and in the church as it is in our era - it is looked upon as making women "unequal" with men overall - but these are organizational texts (regarding the "prophesying" and other teaching/exhortation aspects of the church assembling)
- c. The text is not unclear - Paul also says "they are not permitted to speak" indicating something beyond and above himself is not permitting it - trying to be careful and yet thorough, it does seem to be dealing specifically with the tongues, prophesying and teaching times
- d. Their "subjection" is to be the "Law" (generally a reference here to the Old Testament - Paul actually appears to be referencing Gen. 3:16 which was before the Law of Moses) - the woman (Eve) would be in subjection to her husband - she had acted independently of Adam and chose for herself in committing the first sin
- e. If she desires to "learn" (is desiring to ask questions and maybe even challenge in her questioning what is being taught) she is to do it at home - if not, it would be possible for her to be in open disagreement with her husband (which would be wrong)
- f. At home they are to ask "their own husbands," though the underlying Greek phrase is "τοὺς ἰδίου ἀνδράς" which can also be interpreted "their own particular men" (as in not just husbands but also brothers, uncles, etc.)
- g. Some have been so bothered by these verses that they have worked hard and offered many speculations as to why the text does not belong and that it was not likely in the "originals" (though it is in the majority of the texts/manuscripts)
- h. Paul adds also, "It is improper for a woman to speak in church" - the underlying word for "improper" in the NASB means disgraceful and shameful - not because of popular opinion regarding propriety (because that could vary and change), but because its contradiction to the order God established
- i. Then, almost harshly, Paul asks accusing questions, "Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached?" - seeing they were coming up with their own ideas of how things should be done (and even how they should believe), were they to act as though the revealed Word of God came from them and only to them?
- j. This definitely fits the context and the literal interpretation of these verses, for this would still be a response that is needed for the Church at large in its disregard of this text and many others dealing with several other topics
- k. Today it is not a matter of figuring out what the majority of churches are doing, but more of what the original Church did and believed under the Apostles

2. The true spiritual leaders need to "acknowledge" these teachings as truly of God - vs. 37-38

- a. If someone thinks they are truly gifted with "prophecy" (discerning and giving out God's Word), and any who claim to truly be "spiritual" they will demonstrate it in agreeing with what has been written here - This is clearly a text where Paul exercises "Apostolic authority" - for...
- b. If anyone does not "recognize" these as truth from the Lord, then do not "recognize" them as true "prophets" and as being truly spiritual - these teachings are a discerning standard ("litmus test")
- c. Another way this can be phrased, "If any one is ignorant (willfully or stubbornly) let them be recognized as such (willfully/stubbornly ignorant)

3. Strive after what is best, be gracious, decent and orderly - vs. 39-40

- a. Regarding where they should be most passionate, "desire earnestly" (be eager) to "prophesy" (give out, explain and aid in applying God's Word) - let this be at the top of our priorities
- b. On the flip side, if there are those so gifted with being able to speak foreign languages, don't take what He has written as a prohibition of allowing them to speak/share (with interpretation)
- c. Since the overriding objective is the building-up of the believers in the Church, make sure that this standard is followed in all - what is done/pursued is to be done so "decently" (as is proper and right versus wrong) and done orderly (organized versus haphazardly)

It is difficult to harmonize this text with 11:5 where Paul describes women praying and "prophesying" - though in chapter 14 it is exclusively dealing with the public assembly and chapter 11 dealing with other times

Not that her subjection was a part of the curse - just that it would be difficult for her to be subject to him

This doesn't mean that these men will be more intelligent than they, just that this is the process that is to be followed - many wives might find their unmotivated husbands more motivated when asked ongoing clarifying questions

It is absolutely clear that In Christ men and women are equal (there is no distinction) - but here, as it stands in this world and in the order of this age, God has setup an order and it is shameful to go against it out of personal disagreement

Sometimes the idea of "individual soul liberty" is carried to an authoritative level where God's word is more suggestive than it is obligatory to obey

Because Truth does not originate with us - "subjective truth" (what's true to me) most often usurps objective (actual) truth

Disregard the critics and skeptics - do not let them dictate what should be done for they will soon do so if not ignored and neglected - too often we see the opposite - critics of the Word of God are given too much influence in our churches

We each needs to see ourselves as coming to Church with responsibility and reverence in it - there is a standard of what is decent and a standard of what is orderly

XVIII. The Resurrection, the Gospel and Hope in Christ - 15:1-19

A. The concept of the resurrection of the dead was commonly looked upon in the Greek/Roman culture of the time as absurd (as evidenced in Acts 17:32)

1. In society then, as it is now, there were some who did not believe in an afterlife (that what we would have in this life is all we would get), while others entertained a variety of ideas of some incorporeal existence without a body

As in II Tim. 2:17-18 - that the resurrection had already happened and that what they had "now" was "it"

a. Even some "religious" philosophies held to this idea, believing anything physical to be evil of itself, and that only the spiritual (immaterial) could have any "goodness"

b. Some who did not hold to an actual bodily resurrection looked upon the reference to "resurrection" as being allegorical (figurating it as a new life only while here on this earth)

2. Is it necessary to have a bodily resurrection, or could we just have another existence without a body?

a. First, it is necessary to restore completely what was lost - sin is the "intruder" into creation and God's design, and death comes as a result of it - as a result of sin being defeated completely, these sin-infected bodies will be raised again in perfection (sinlessness) - **God will restore creation (including us) to what was originally "very good"**

"First fruits" indicating the first of many - we will be raised as He was - His body was raised and so will ours be (not another body, but the one we have as was His)

b. Second, as Christ was raised (bodily) from the dead (and realizing He was the "first fruits of those who are asleep" (vs. 20)) so we will be raised in accordance with Him - He still had the distinguishing marks of His crucifixion, demonstrating it was the same body that had recently bore the full brunt of the wrath of God by taking on Himself our sin

c. Third, our bodies are not fully "us" but they are a part of who and what we are - we do not like the affects of sin and its decaying affects on our bodies, but we do "love" our bodies

d. And finally, if there is no bodily resurrection then, as Paul explains, Christ did not rise and if He did not actually rise, our faith is worthless and we are still in our sins

3. The old and worn-out reasonings of the impossibility of raising those who have been so long dead (that there is nothing left), discounts who God actually is - it is even more impressive to consider God putting back together our "parts" after they have long become just dust

So the future hope is another reason why we appreciate our bodies now and expect they can and will be used for His eternal purposes - this is very encouraging realizing they can be so utilized so as to have lasting/eternal affects

a. The study and knowledge of our DNA should not take away from this thought but should, instead, lend more to it - the more it is studied the clearer it becomes how incredibly unique our bodies are to us and in distinction from all others (and all other "bodies")

b. As seen later in this chapter (vs. 51-54), we will all be "changed", transformed, but not in a different body, but in these bodies, being changed in that they will be "imperishable," without sin and any/all its affects

4. And, finally, the concept of our bodily resurrection is an essential part of the Gospel - just as He was raised so we will also, but "raised to what" must be considered

Living in the realm of "forever" (eternity) time will then be irrelevant and of no concern, inconvenience or dread to us - no death, sorrows, tears, fears or stress of any type! - and that without end!

a. When this "mortality must put on immortality" it is more than just the consideration that we will live forever - we will live forever with Him in the new Heaven and new Earth

b. As was the original creation so will be the new creation - only now with no possibility of the intrusion, once again, of sin

c. It must be considered also that the "wicked" will also be resurrected to their eternal demise - death is not the absence of consciousness, but is separation - the soul/spirit separated from the body and the "eternal death" being eternal separation from God

This is why this concept must not just be known but be regularly mentally devoured keeping us focused, encouraged and motivated

d. In this chapter Paul deals with only the positive - the hope that keeps us "steadfast and unmovable" as we continue growing in the work for the Lord

B. Remember the Gospel so as not to have a vain (worthless) belief (faith) - vs. 1-4

1. To introduce this crucial concept of the resurrection Paul points them back to the foundation - vs. 1

Forgetfulness is not just a matter of something becoming inaccessible in our memory as much as it so often is a result of having so many other points of focus and emphasis that what is most important is no longer thought of

a. The religious and self-centered focus had caused the Corinthians to forget the Gospel

b. As if a rebuke, Paul begins by stating he is "making known" to them (Γνωρίζω) as if he is going to teach them something new - then he states it was what he had already "preached" to them and that they had received it - they were certainly living as though it had been forgotten (as evidenced in their poor behavior (stemming from temporal values))

c. It appears as though part of the reason for this was related to their having some in their group that denied an actual resurrection (which has varying effects)

d. This "Gospel," whether they realized it or not, was that on which they "stood" - it is their defining foundation and to take away any part is to take away the Gospel itself (and to lose their footing)

It may not be for popular acceptance we might yield a point of truth - it may also be motivated by personal convenience

e. Many, without realizing it, are chiseling away at their life's foundation by what they allow themselves to "flirt" with - rather than being cautious, these were adventurous when it came to their "faith," willing to incorporate various popular, humanistic ideas - in their case, since the concept of a resurrection was absurd to the well-educated, it was becoming *reasonable* to drop the idea altogether for the immediate convenience

2. Paul points them back to the truth by which they were "saved" - vs. 2

a. The present tense of "saved" (being saved) - salvation is not just a past or future thing, it is always in our "present," pointing also to the reality of the work of "sanctification" in us (because we have been saved we are being (steadily) more and more separated to God and away from the world's ideals and philosophies (and priorities))

We hold to our "doctrine" not for the sake of passing some theological test before God, but because we realize all of life and eternal life pivots upon it - also, our "holding to it" would naturally involve our ongoing study of it throughout our lives here

b. This is also why Paul points out a "condition" (not a condition to be saved but *an indicator of being saved*) - "...if you hold fast the word which I preached to you..." - the underlying Greek word for "hold fast" (κατέχετε) demonstrates it is more than just memory retention of an event or an idea, but one that is deliberately held to (in our case, "clung to" realizing it is on such we place (bank) our eternal souls)

"I want to make clear to you what account I gave you of the good news, an account which can save you if you hold fast to it, unless your belief is a random and haphazard thing." Barclay

c. The alternative to holding to what Paul preached would be their giving it up - there are two basic ideas with the phrase "...unless you believed in vain." - (1). That their faith was not real to begin with (it was "vain" and thus a worthless passing event) - this is the case with many who "give Jesus a try" and move on to "try out" other philosophies that are more appealing to them (2). That the "faith" Paul was preaching was "vain" - it is this point that Paul goes on to refute in the rest of this chapter - what He gave them was eternally reliable!

3. What was this "gospel" that Paul preached to them that was to be firmly held to? - vs. 3-4

Thoughts become cluttered when priorities are let go and incoming concepts are not held to a strict scrutiny - what guards the gate of our mind needs to be identified and if correct, needs to be continually maintained

a. It must be noted right away that the Gospel includes ALL these parts - it is not the actual Gospel (good news) if it lacks *any* of what was "preached" or if anything has been added to it

This was the one of the first concepts Paul worked on with them early on in this letter - we hold to (not shun) Jesus Christ and Him crucified (to some foolishness to others a religious concept that trips them up)

b. What Paul gave them first of all (primarily and before anything else), is what he had also received (from Christ Himself as he wrote in Gal. 1:11-2:2)

In medicine, a misdiagnosis can be fatal since it does not deal with the actual problem - it might deal effectively (temporarily) with a symptom but the deadly cause remains uncured

c. First, "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures..." - He died, but not as a martyr or as a victim, but as so planned and indicated in the Scriptures (starting with Gen. 3:15, pictured in the sacrificial system (starting with the Passover) and prophesied throughout the rest of the Old Testament) - then, the first essential part of the Good News; it was *for our sins* (the underlying phrase being "ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν" as in "over top our sins" so as to be a covering for them in our stead") - notice the idea is not described as His dying "for us" (though it was), but His dying for our sins demonstrates the "why" and ultimately the core of what was addressed at Calvary - if the truth of sin is lessened or redefined to lessen the Gospel's "harshness" to those seeing themselves as relatively "good," then the Gospel is robbed of its point of effectiveness (not in dealing with the hardships of life but its dealing with the cause — of our eternal condemnation before God)

Sin being the cause of death, Christ now proves death has been conquered by coming back from the dead in the body that had been subjected to death - this lays the groundwork for our assured hope

d. "...and that He was buried..." - He really was (there was no trick here - it is pointless and even dangerous to consider other seeming possibilities so as to be open to other perspectives, trying to make the Gospel more palatable to themselves/others) - *"The grave was to Him not the destined receptacle of corruption, but an apartment fitted for entering into life"* JFB

e. And finally that He was raised "...on the third day according to the Scriptures." - Robertson pointing out the change in tense to the perfect passive indicative wrote, "There is reason for this sudden change of tense. Paul wishes to emphasize the permanence of the resurrection of Jesus. He is still risen."

4. So these are the core of The Faith by which we are being saved - one point has been "attacked" here and it is never to be looked upon as just a slight variance in opinions regarding the Gospel - for to yield this one point is to make void the Gospel (at least to ourselves) - opinion and disagreement regarding the Truth do not alter Truth (reality) but can and will affect the reality of others which is why it MUST be addressed and corrected as needed

C. The resurrection of Christ was a fact and witnessed by many - vs. 5-11

Ultimately the inner witness of the Spirit will outlast all other "evidences"

1. Notice Paul's usage of this evidence - he is writing to those who did not (nor would they) see the risen Christ in their earthly lives - so this was not to give the idea that to believe each must see for themselves - the majority of true faith will not be in what can be seen but will be in what can be trusted

Even when faced with the reality of Jesus' resurrection, many (over the ages) have developed multiple explanations (such as He was not really human/flesh, or that He "swooned") or that it was fabricated by the disciples

Peter references what he saw at the Transfiguration and uses it the same way Paul is here - see II Pet. 1:16-21

These men were no longer the same after seeing the risen Lord - His teaching laid the foundation but the reality of the afterlife sealed their life-long dedication - as it does for us also if we can keep our focus beyond the end of this life

This is most likely what was referenced in Mt. 28:10

the body sleeps

One that barely lives and may not be expected to live

Paul had no problem embracing even derogatory terms against himself realizing the lower he is/was, the greater God and His grace is magnified in the usage of him

Paul explains here what Peter also mentions in I Pet. 1:3 - "...born again to a living hope..."

As with Paul, we do not make of ourselves what we are in Christ - we can only take credit for the diversions form purpose and focus - so then, we do not look to self for strength and purpose (and especially value - this comes from God's grace)

He had to work harder than the others seeing he not only was not taught at the feet of Christ, but was fully opposed to Him - he had to "come a long way" and God's grace is what brought him to where he was now at this point

see II Cor. 6:1

- a. The resurrection was not without its "proofs" as is seen in so many eyewitnesses listed, just as all aspects of God's Truths have evidential support (scientific, philosophical and even experiential) but faith has the greatest influence on how each of these is interpreted - so we do not base everything on apparent "facts," but upon properly understanding them from a higher perspective than ours (the infinite perspective of God)
- b. He was seen first by "Cephas" (Peter) as in Luke 24:13-34 - Peter had denied the Lord three times but would later, as would so many of the early church, give his life for Christ - these early believers giving their lives is another "proof" (it might be possible to believe one or two might die for a lie, but not so many)
- c. He was also seen by the "twelve" - even though there were only 11 at the time, they had become known by this title (just as we have "the Big Ten" and there are more than 10) - Thomas was one of these that saw Him later (because he refused to believe without seeable and touchable proof) - it was to Thomas the Lord said that those "are blessed" who believe Him though they have not seen Him (see John 20:29 and also I Pet. 1:6-9)
- d. After this, He appeared to more than 500 at one time some of which, Paul mentions, were still alive at that time - any of these could have been sought out to confirm - this was written about 25 years after the resurrection - Paul is demonstrating that even in the face of such evidence, there are those (even in the Church) that will oppose - why they defy is an issue - note also that even the usage of the phrase "fallen asleep" lends to the concept of the resurrection
- e. He appeared to James who became the "pastor" at the church in Jerusalem, and was likely the brother of Jesus - he met with Paul (as mentioned in Gal. 1:19) and it is probable then that he told Paul of this appearance - this account was not mentioned in the Gospels
- f. He was seen by all the apostles (a bigger group than the "twelve" (maybe the 70 mentioned in Luke 10:1)) - see also Acts 1:2-12

2. The grace of God on a "premie" - vs. 8-11

- a. And finally, the Lord appeared to Paul - he describes himself in the most humble terms
- b. He describes himself as "one untimely born" (ἐκτρώματι) describing a child born early (so it would be very small and weak versus robust and healthy)
- c. This term is also used to describe a miscarriage (stillborn) - something that carries with it great disappointment and grief - he looked upon his previous self very low - with the presence of the article in front of this word, it is believed that this was a term used of Paul by the Corinthians (also playing of his name meaning "little" or "least")
- d. This description also likely includes the idea that he came to Christ after all the others, and was not a part of the original "apostles" - he initially epitomized the opposite! - God is never late, and His timing is full of purpose (as we see with Paul - his trek to the Lord's service was an unlikely one (as most would see it)) - see Acts 9:1-9
- e. Still in keeping with his name (given to him by the Lord), he identifies himself as an apostle but "least among them" (the one most naturally unqualified in the best of the essentials (in contrast to what he had worked for in his life - as he described in Php. 3))
- f. He still, painfully, holds to his past as fully disqualifying him from this calling, because he "persecuted the church of God" - his qualification then did not rest in himself but in his call and commissioning of the Lord - even we, when remembering the many painful memories of our inconsistencies or times we would be embarrassed at our behavior, can look even more to the grace of God used to bring us to where we have come and where He will ultimately bring us
- g. It was the risen Lord that made all the difference in his life!
- h. Thus it was by the grace of God that he was what he had become - this is a pivotal truth for us all - it is easy to overlook (or just not consider) God's grace at work in us (daily) to be used to produce any good at all, or reach a truly sound conclusion that is of lasting worth
- i. The grace of God at work in him was not "not found" - it was not wasted (as was part of his drive) seeing he worked harder than the other apostles - this is not bragging, but is used to make a stronger point of the grace of God at work - as if to say, "look at me, me of all people, so far behind in preparation and likely potential in the work of God" - because it was this grace of God that was at work in him to bring him along in making up so much "lost ground"
- j. ***It is possible to waste the grace of God by not availing ourselves of it to do what we ought***

- k. So the focus is not to be on the instrument, but on the enablement (grace) of God at work to bring us along (by means of others also) - so it makes no difference whether it was Paul or the other Apostles who “preached” to them - they believed and that is the point - the “tool” of God often becomes the focus, and because of this, can become a distraction - with these Corinthians, they were distracted at times with their apparent embarrassment with the tool God used with them (Paul)

D. Without the resurrection there would be “hope in this life only” - vs. 12-19

1. Having reiterated what were to be some of the Gospel fundamentals and where they came from (the Apostles and their witness), Paul asks “How can some among you say there is no resurrection?” - vs. 12-18

We all stand in need of having our thoughts scrutinized for accuracy and impact by something outside ourselves - many well-intended and seemingly innocent thoughts have led to sizable error and caused harm

We fiddle with these Truths of Scripture at great risk not only to ourselves but to those around us (even those closest to us)

The Trinity is another Scriptural Truth that is denied or explained away because it does not fit into the finite thinking of many

- a. Paul looks to demonstrate the seriousness and danger of considering such a notion
 b. As we have seen throughout Church history (and still see today), there will always be those who look to question the reliability, accuracy and even the motive behind God’s Word - their motive is not mentioned and is irrelevant, since the focus is on the repercussions of their thought
 c. It was clear that it was unanimously “preached” (formally declared/heralded) that Christ was raised from the dead, and yet some “are saying” (just stating their personal thoughts) that there is no resurrection from the dead - even though it is commonly touted that each is “entitled to their own opinion,” we should not see ourselves with such a liberty when it comes to the Doctrines of the Faith - they are not subject to us
 d. Note also that Christ “was raised” (passive) - it was by the Father, and yet we are also taught that Christ raised Himself (the Father - Rom. 6:4,11, Mt. 16:21; 17:23 and 26:32 - Christ - Mk. 9:21, Luke 18:33) - this is no contradiction when the doctrine of the Trinity is considered - three person, one essence, so unified they are one, though thrice distinct

2. Seven repercussions of denying the resurrection of the dead - vs. 13-19

this is restated in verse 16 also —

If such a significant part of their message could be disproved then the rest of their message could be called into question (and with so much doubt, no one would be inclined to follow) - we all desire to have what we “bank on” be reliable

This would also make these proclaimers of Christ delusional liars - they all were building their lives off of the message and actual resurrection of Christ

Romans 6 demonstrates our being “in Christ” and that our “newness of life” is in our participation with Him in His resurrection - no resurrection = no regeneration (new life)

With no resurrection of the dead even we would be as overcome with grief and hopeless as the unbelievers are at the death and funeral of a loved one

“Paul makes morality turn on the hope of immortality. Is he not right? Witness the breaking of moral ties today when people take a merely animal view of life.” RWP

We have sadly seen this happening as the Gospel in our time does not necessarily deny the resurrection, it just doesn’t focus on it as much as the supposed benefits that come with it in this life - the truth of our resurrection is to motivate us and not that life will get better while here

- a. The first repercussion - if there is no resurrection from death, then Christ Himself is not raised
 b. The second repercussion (the initial result) - If He is not raised, then their preaching (Paul’s and the Apostles’ and prophets’) is empty (worthless) - these messengers cannot be trusted - this is also something we must do throughout our lives; discern what we hear and pursue reliable content (though our standard of comparison needs to be trustworthy and proven, else we will lean toward immediate expediency as our guide)
 c. The third repercussion - “your faith also is vain” - removing this one piece of their theology makes their faith (doctrine in this case) without true content, thus hallow and useless - it would be like so many of the other mythologies of their day - verse 17 deals with the “belief” aspect of faith
 d. The fourth repercussion - then all the Apostles and prophets are proven to be liars, bearing “false witness” of God because they would be “testifying against God” (acting as a witness against what God actually did not do) if He did not raise Christ
 e. The fifth repercussion - “you are still in your sins” (if the dead are not raised and Christ is not raised - this (verses 16-17) demonstrating a domino effect - one fall causes all other pillars to fall and the devastating consequence begins to emerge - the joy of the Gospel was knowing that what condemned us before God (sin) has been completely handled in Christ
 f. The sixth repercussion - we have completely lost those who have already died - all hope of seeing those we have loved, who have died before us, is lost to us forever (if the dead are not raised) - answering those that would say that the soul still lives on without the body, Gill wrote, “... *should it be insisted on that the soul survives, and shall live without the body to all eternity, it must be in a state of misery, if Christ is not risen, because it must be in its sins; and neither sanctified nor justified, and consequently cannot be glorified...*”
 g. The seventh repercussion - we are “of all men most to be pitied” because we live a lie that finds its joy in what is not real - and what drives us, gives us purpose to “keep on” and fills us with hope, is all a facade (and life truly is useless (futile) and meaningless)
 h. This effect is also true with many other points of our theology (the virgin birth, deity of Christ, the sinlessness of Christ, Christ’s fulfillment of OT prophecies and the reality of His future return, to name a few) and why we so vehemently defend “the Faith”
 i. So if there is hope in this life only in Christ (that our stay here will be bettered and that the message of the Gospel is actually an improved life on this Earth) then yes, we are a pitiful bunch - so much of the hope that gets us through the hardest parts of life is founded in knowing what’s coming (that the life to come is free from the presence and effects of sin)

XIX. In Fact, Christ Has Been Raised From The Dead! - 15:20-58

A. So, enough with the useless speculations, Christ has indeed risen from the dead - vs. 20

- Now that Paul has addressed the issue he moves on to instruct more on how and why this was needed - he wasn't "stuck" on this point (suffering "analysis paralysis")
1. It is often the case that many are trapped in endless debates, never actually facing reality
 - a. We don't know if any of these issues were a result of some sincerely seeking the truth, or if it involved a "stall tactic" of sorts - a diversion from the truth, even if just for a short while
 - b. So Paul continues with "Νῦν δὲ", "But now", "At the present" or "As it stands now," Christ is risen (this is the reality and it will be profitless (as just demonstrated) to deny it)
 2. Not only is He risen, but His resurrection is the "firstfruits of those that have fallen asleep"
 - a. The firstfruits were not only considered the best "of the crop," but also served as proof (or a guarantee) of more to come - He is the evidence of what is coming
 - b. He wasn't just evidence of the resurrection, but of a resurrection to **never die again**

B. How do we know we'll never die again? Consider how death started and how it ends - vs. 21-28

1. The "means" of death and the "means" of resurrection to life - vs. 21
 - a. "δι' ἀνθρώπου θάνατος" - *Through man death*, and that man was Adam - because of his sin in the garden, all mankind was plunged into sin, thus death - see Rom. 5:12
 - b. "δι' ἀνθρώπου ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν." - *Through man, resurrection of the dead* - this being Christ
 - c. So, to start with, the real issue is addressed - the focus had been on the body and the impossibility (or impracticality) of a bodily resurrection - but the real issue was sin
 - d. So being born of Adam brings with it death, just as being born again in Christ brings with it "resurrection of the dead" - the second phrase is interesting when considering that there still is a death for those in Christ, but with it comes a resurrection
 2. The focus is on the resurrection of those "in Christ" and not on those who aren't - vs. 22-23
 - a. As in Adam all die, so all those in Christ live - it is without exception
 - b. So the focus is to be on what it means to be "in Christ" - everyone is in Adam by birth, but not all are in Christ by "rebirth" (John 3:3) - with this there is a "newness of life" (Rom. 6:4)
 - c. Since death is inevitable (normally), our hope can only be found in being "in Christ," and we must learn to take death as a normal part of life not living in dread fear of it - instead we are to respectfully anticipate our own death (and even that of others) - this last part is key in dealing with any potential bitterness, disillusionment or despair when those we love die
 - d. Each will come "in his own order" - Christ being the first and then all others "at His coming" - this resurrection has not yet happened but, daily, the number that die "in Christ" build-up the number of those anticipating their resurrection - the underlying word for "order" (τάγματι) is usually a military term describing a military grouping - in this case Christ first (as commander) and those that are His - and the association to something military is fitting, realizing the world, as it stands now, is not our homeland and awaits its conquering King - those that "are Christ's" will then be resurrected and this followed by "the end"
 - e. Note: there does seem to be an allusion to even the "wicked" (sinners) also being included in the "τάγματι" (order, class, group) as distinct from those that are Christ's
 3. "Then comes the end..." - vs. 24-28
 - a. "The end of what?" is what needs to be known up front - this is not the end of all things, but the end of this "age" - this is what is also described in Rev. 11:15, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."
 - b. The end of this age is the beginning of the eternal age under God
 - c. Paul does not go into detail as to all the events leading up to and participating in "the end," so this is not a good text to define the particulars of our Eschatology, though it clearly demonstrates its overall result (including the bodily resurrection of those in Christ)
 - d. This comes after Christ hands over "the kingdom" which will be the result of "καταργήση πᾶσαν ἀρχὴν" when all "rule" (as a whole and individually (both ideas are included) of this age) is brought to naught (rendered useless) - at this point, there will be only one "rule" left that being Christ - He will reign openly and unchallenged - see Dan. 2:44-45, 7:14, Php. 2:10-11
 - e. All "authority and power" are included in this, signifying all civil authorities and all others ruling by "might" (not necessarily legitimate authorities but those also ruling because they are stronger/advantaged and rule by intimidation and/or opportunity) - this is an all-inclusive list to ensure that all other types of "rule" will be gone (including competing spiritual powers)
- All sinned in Adam as evidenced in all sinning
- This "redemption" of the body (as Paul references it in Romans 8) is the final part the believer awaits - the death of the body is just a part of this process, and more focus on this eventuality rather than looking on death as an end, is infinitely better
- Though Paul does not deal with the concept of this "eternal life" starting at spiritual birth, it's affects are a major part of the hope he deals with in this chapter
- There is an earthly return of Christ - for if this was just in reference to the new earth, that would not be a "return" - the graves of those that have died in Christ are "sacred" places not because of those buried there but because of God's future usage of it
- Texts like these remind us of the futility of living for this age - we need to live in this age with a focus on its usage in preparation for the next - it determines life "focus"
- Notice the part our resurrection has in all this still yet to come - we are not told of this so we will "just know" it's coming, we will be there and see it in person (in body)!

This is in reference to Psa. 110:1

This is our overriding objective also - even our thoughts are to be taken "captive to the obedience of Christ" - we are to see ourselves as the fortunate "subjects" we actually are and live accordingly

This of course includes all that is associated with death - imagine a time when we will no longer have the concept of death in our living

Attention to detail like this demonstrates further the reality of what is being discussed - this has been the plan from eternity and **will** be fulfilled

This eternal state will be one (forever) of pure unity - this will not be the result of the abolishment of individuality (as the "New age movement" and Easter Mysticism espouse), for the Godhead has three persons (individuality) in perfect unity Oneness

This concept is difficult for us to fathom because of the influence of present sin - but we begin to come to this understanding the more we delve into the Word of God and learn more the truth/reality of things and how - infinitely above (holy) all other things God is - the result being the fading glory of this world

- f. Christ's "mediatory" kingdom will exist (He must reign) until all these "enemies" are "put under His feet" (they become, as it were His footstool - fully under His authority) - these "enemies" are all that contradicts His perfection - these are now headed in this direction and this idea is in harmony with the millennial reign of Christ referenced in Rev. 20 (when the last efforts of Satan himself are met with ultimate defeat) - this defeating work is done by God the Father and Christ alike, though the "teamwork" breakdown is God the Father bringing all into subjection to Christ and when this is completed, Christ will hand over all rule to God
- g. Then some of the most hope-filled words in all of Scripture, "The last enemy that will be abolished is death" - this "hated enemy" (ἐχθρὸς) will be "brought to naught" (nothing) - this describes a time coming when there will be no trace of death in our lives (it will not exist!)
- h. And to make this point absolute and not just a possibility, Paul declares, "He has put all things in subjection under His feet" - it is a "done deal" and is, no matter what happens and will be fully completed - death is dying! - in the face of death we are able to fix on this promise, this reality, and realize the swift coming death of death! - thus we can face death now as an enemy that has met its match, and in the midst of the temporal pain it inflicts on us now, we take comfort (and even righteous pleasure) that its demise is on the nearing horizon
- i. The next phrase seems technical but attention to doctrinal detail at this point is essential to keep focus where it ought to be - Paul is making it clear that when "all" is made subject to Christ, this does not include the Father (Who is the one subjecting all things to the Son) - these references to "subordination" (of order and not of quality or power) are good reminders to us not to resent the orders of subordination He has given to us and placed us in - seeing this is in the Godhead, who are we to balk at the idea?
- j. The end of the end and the beginning of all that's new - when all things (including death as the last) have been placed under submission to Christ, Christ Himself will place Himself in subjection to the Father ("Who subjected all things to Him" - notice the absence of any competition in the Godhead (which is so because of the absolute harmony which we will also have with God when sin's presence and affects are no more)
- k. The other idea that could be intended in this verse is that the "One" is in reference to the entire Godhead and that, then, in the phrase "that God may be all in all" it would be a singular rule again (in contrast to the overruling of the Father and the Son acting as a mediator, which will no longer be needed)
- l. "That God may be all in all" - another way we could phrase it (practically) would that "all will be **about** God" and that it will be fully known and understood that this is the way it is (and will find complete fulfillment in such unhindered insight) - see also Col. 3:11
- m. "All things will say: God is all to me. This is τέλος, this is the end and consummation. Further than this, not even the apostle can go." Bengel
- n. "That God might be everything to everyone!"

C. Why would we do what we do if there is no resurrection from the dead? - vs. 29-34

1. The first illustration is a difficult one to understand - some were known to take this verse to start the practice of being baptized for (in the stead of) those that had already died

Plus, baptism is a result of salvation not a means (as an act of open obedience before others of identity with Christ)

- a. This is not possible since nowhere else is this mentioned, nor even inferred - some say it references a practice in Corinth that Paul uses in a mocking way to demonstrate the inconsistency of this practice (erroneous as it would be) by those denying the resurrection
- b. Others, more likely than the previous, believe this is in reference to those who were baptized because they came to the faith by the influence of those who had already died
- c. The most likely (and fits this context and all other references to baptism) is that this is in reference to part of the reason for baptism, as well as a reference to all who are baptized as evidence of their faith - those coming to Christ are "dead in trespasses and sins" and come to Christ and are baptized as their identifying with being "in Him" with the hope of the resurrection yet to come (the result of the saving work of Christ)
- d. Yet, also, when we are baptized "into Jesus Christ, we are baptized into His death" - we die with Him - but if there is no resurrection, then this would be an absurd concept as well then as what baptism represents - "newness of life" - we are not "dead men walking" - we are eternal souls living with the anticipation of the soon to come resurrection to eternal life of these dying bodies (they will soon come to "match" the state of our souls)

So what good would baptism be if there is no resurrection - those spiritually dead would be just as dead later

2. In addition to asking why the ordinance of baptism, why “take any chances at all? - vs. 30-32

Because of the way society was, being a Christian was becoming more dangerous, especially for those openly identifying as such

The reality of death for the faith was a constant companion - but not in a gloomy, despairing disposition, but in a “calculated risk” that the loss of his life here paled in comparison to what was coming

see II Cor. 4:11-12

see Rom. 8:18

He dealt with far more than was recorded in Acts - see II Cor. 11:24-27

Paul sarcastically agrees with this idea, if there is no resurrection - when the reality of the resurrection is denied or just avoided in the thoughts, it lends to “live to party” mentality and even philosophy of life

- a. If there is no resurrection of the dead, why would Paul and his team face danger?
- b. The idea is to live always (every hour) with the threat and likelihood of peril? - if what we have now is all we will have (or the best we will ever have), why would we risk it?
- c. Paul uniquely declares his daily situation - “I die daily” - one way or another, he faces death because of the Faith - he declares such as if openly swearing (affirming) by the “boasting” (glorying) he had in them “in Christ Jesus our Lord” - compare to Eph. 3:13
- d. He not only ties in his determination to face death, but also their part in his motivation - their salvation, their growth motivates him to such, for this is at the core of all ministry - others
- e. The present tense of ἀποθνῄσκω (I am dying) is key - his was a life of a long death - one with this life perspective accomplishes more in their life than those living to stay alive - **those truly live who live to die for Christ, and His work/kingdom**, even if this death is a little every day - these do not balk at the thought of giving what and who they are to Him, daily
- f. Sadly, many today are “fair weather friends of Christ” only - if the threat of loss or death become evident, they will forsake Him “loving this present age” - it is regularly missed these days, that having nothing truly worth dying for equates to having nothing to truly live for
- g. But all we have here to lose is of very little consequence compared to what we will have
- h. If he was motivated by “human motives”, why would he suffer what he did? - he “fought with wild beasts in Ephesus” - this is debated in commentaries as to what he is referencing, but there is not enough reason to not handle this plainly/literally - what possible profit could it bring? - this was often the sentence of criminals and was a punishment that also served as brutal entertainment for others
- i. Instead, if the “dead are not raised” then life should be lived for the moment and the pleasure in it, “Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die” - this is a quotation from Isa. 22:12-13 and reflected the attitude of the Israelites who, in Jerusalem, were surrounded by the Assyrians and would not take on a repentant posture before God - instead, even in the face of death, they partied (seeking to get as much (fun) out of life as possible)
- j. “If men but persuade themselves that they shall die like the beasts, they soon will live like beasts too” - JFB quoting South

3. Bad “friends” ruin good morals - vs. 33-34

Many encouraging and sobering truths from Scripture affect our behavior - there may be truths we are uncomfortable with but they serve as guides and protectors, without which we would wander and fall

see Prov. 13:20 and II Tim. 2:16-18

Just as we still see, many religious and philosophical groups will teach great deal, but find ways to evade God “in their thoughts” altogether

Some, in their self-concluded wisdom, reason themselves to ignorance - through their own logic, they entrap themselves into a snare of their own making

- a. Don't be naive regarding those that are close enough to influence you - ongoing influences will affect our thinking and ultimately our behavior - this is done (in this context) by the influence upon thinking regarding the reality of the resurrection, lending to some “living loose” (since there would not be an accountability) - so don't be deceived into thinking this way
- b. Often, the impact of an incorrect belief/doctrine is unpredictable - in this case, as Paul demonstrates, it was leading to the ruination of their morals
- c. Verse 33 is a fundamental truth that children should learn - beware bad friends! - the KJV has it translated as “Evil communications...” - every interaction needs caution
- d. So, “Wake up from your drunken stupor and focus on what is right” - the underlying word ἐκνήψατε also carries the idea of waking up from sleep (so get back to reality!)
- e. As a result of this, “don't keep on sinning” (don't continue doing what you've been doing!)
- f. Because of their lower standards and poor behavior, Paul points out that there are some in their midst that “have no knowledge of God” - some had “An habitual ignorance: willful, in that they prefer to keep their sins, rather than part with them, in order to know God” JFB - if they did “know God” there would be no doubt of the Resurrection, and His power to do it
- g. One of the characteristics that makes evil men evil is that God is not “in their thoughts” or “all there thoughts are, there is no God” - Psalm 10:4
- h. This is to their shame! They were as the “heathen” or worse, because they knew little to nothing and yet had so much Truth around them - it is a shame that having been given so much of such value, that they were wasting it
- i. So, the strong exhortation that began in verse 12 concludes with a chastening - in their “flirtation” with novel, popular, secular ideas they had swerved into a position of forsaking the resurrection and in so doing, the core of the Gospel - and so focused were they in their pursuits, those among them did not even know God

D. "And so is the resurrection of the dead..." - vs. 35-49

1. Some will ask "how can the dead be raised", and if they are, what kind of body would they have? - 35-36

The premise of part of the question is how can there be a body when the body has perished and decayed? What body will they have? If a different one, how could that be a resurrection of the body? - these had no concept of what the resurrection would be like

Some are blind, not because they cannot see, but because they do not see what they see (they do not know what to look for and to distinguish/discern what is before them everyday throughout life) - God opens our eyes (by His Word) to see what is really there

The analogy is often made also that unless we die to self we do not ever know what it is to truly live

- a. The "objector's" question is taken head-on - Paul does not shy away in intimidation from what might appear to be the obvious yet most challenging question
- b. Instead, he begins in the vocative case (an address mode in Greek) with "ἄφρων" addressing them as foolish, being without real sense (unable to consider what is right before them)
- c. There are at least a couple reasons for this address - first, they had become proud of what they believed was their intellect and wisdom, and second, to illustrate that a question that was seen to be challenging was, in reality, very simple to answer
- d. There was a glaring illustration that was seen daily all around them - it was so common they missed the miraculous nature of nature as God created it - the seed that was sown does not "come to life unless it dies" - there is a resurrection occurring daily in plant life, but because God was not known by some among them it was considered impossible to happen to/with people
- e. As seen in Romans 1, because God is not honored as the Creator He is, people miss the obvious evidences of God in the creation - see the beginning of Psalm 19
- f. Jesus used this example in John 12:24-25 - unless a grain "falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone" - but if it dies it lives again and that with more fruit

2. The body that is "sown" in death does not depict the glorious body that is to come - vs. 37-41

But as with the seed, these bodies must first die so the other may come

The bodies as we have them now are pitiful in comparison to what we will have - at death they will be left to await this change

It is not unreasonable to assume we will have a temporary body while we await the resurrection of these bodies though this is not definitively stated anywhere

We can only speculate the differences there will be in having bodies free from any influence or affect of sin

- a. What is "planted" is not "the body that shall be", but just a "bare seed" and pales in comparison to what it will become (when raised to life) - we will not be raised into the same sin-infected, corrupted, decaying bodies we have now
- b. God gives to each a "body of its own" when it comes to seed, so it will be with us - we will be raised (as will be dealt with soon in this chapter) incorruptible, no flaws, weaknesses, deformities - we will be as we were designed to be at the beginning - these will be bodies unique to each of us as individuals, fitted for the glorified persons we will be
- c. What bodies will we have in between death and the resurrection? This question is not dealt with here but is conceptually dealt with in II Cor. 5:1-5 - Paul references a "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" so that we will "not be found naked" - this is directly speaking of our eternal, resurrected bodies, but demonstrates that our soul will always have a body (clothed in a body)
- d. He that created "bodies" and "flesh" of differing types in creation will certainly be able to create us a body again out of the elements of the creation (as He did at the beginning of these bodies) only now, to a greater glory as the celestial outshines the terrestrial - our bodies though, will be like that of our risen Lord as described in Php. 3:20-21
- e. "This is another similitude, serving to help our ideas of this doctrine of the resurrection of the body; that though it is the same in substance, yet different in qualities..." Gill

3. "So is the resurrection of the dead..." - vs. 42-44

We live throughout our lives now with constant reminders of the processes of decay - these should be ongoing reminders that our stay here is limited - this concept should be embraced and not abhorred

We must not be discouraged and overcome with grief as these bodies face the unavoidable results of entropy - focus must be maintained on what is on the other side of death so as to make full use of these bodies we have now

There will be no marathons in Heaven and the New Earth - there would be no need of a limit

- a. Just as the process with the grain/seed, so it will be with us - the body is "sown" in corruption at death (though ultimately the "sowing" is throughout our life since death and decay are constant companions throughout life)
- b. The first contrast - sown a "perishable body" (φθορά - decomposition) as something that is no longer of any value and purpose to us - yet it is buried (as a seed) with the expectation of a resurrection to an "imperishable body" (ἀφθαρσία - indestructible, not subject to decay/entropy)
- c. The second contrast - sown in "disorder" (ἀτιμία - disgrace, shame) as we see happening the older we get and leave behind the "prime of life" - and the death process itself is degrading, humbling and far from "glorious" - yet it is buried with the expectation it will be "raised in glory" (δόξη - honor, splendor) more honorable and admirable than we have ever been in our bodies as they are in this lifetime - the "prime of life" is ahead of us!
- d. The third contrast - sown in "weakness" (ἀσθενεία - lacking strength, ill) as we also see happening as we age and our strength and stamina lessen - yet the body is buried with the expectation it will be raised in "power" (δύναμις - with might and strength) as we have never known - the weakness we sense in this life will be unknown in the next
- e. The fourth contrast - sown a "natural body" (σῶμα ψυχικόν - a Greek phrase describing the aspect of man whose body is predominant over the soul/spirit) - yet this body is buried with

the **expectation** of the “spiritual” body to come - what was buried in weakness is raised in “power,” and what was sown in humility/dishonor it is raised in “glory”

These two Greek words are used in contrast by Paul not to contrast the material but the “type” of body we have versus what we will have (what our new bodies will be “fitted for”)

f. When “spiritual” (πνευματικόν) is mentioned in conjunction with the new body, it is not making the point that the new body is immaterial, but would be better understood by us by using the term “ **supernatural** ” - just as the “ψυχικόν” (natural) body contained a soul so also the new body will not only contain a soul/spirit but will be in its service (versus the soul/spirit of man now being in subjection to the physical)

g. To sum it up, if there is a “natural body” there will also be a body that is “spiritual” (again not immaterial, but “of the spirit” versus a life “of the flesh”) - vs. 44

4. “Earthy” versus “heavenly” **because of** and **only through** Christ - vs. 45-49

Even what many would consider a “spiritual experience” is really only a physical experience that feels different from what they have become accustomed to

a. With all the efforts of mankind to reach some “transcendental state” through drugs, music, emotional highs/lows and deep thinking, they will not reach success, because the “natural” is infected with sin and will always be forced back into the reality that the physical will not be ignored/neglected, but **demands** to be catered to one way or another

b. The hope for a genuine “higher state” will come only through the One that provide such “life”
c. As Paul reminds these Corinthians, we read in Genesis 2:7 “...man became a living soul,” and **that man** sinned introducing death to the world and to all mankind (as its head) - in contrast to this, the “last Adam” (as there could only be one more (there are only two possible positions in which to be)) became a “life-giving spirit” (versus the life- **losing** or life-taking of man now)

Christ in contrast to man being simply a “living being” became one who gives life (not just receives it as we do)

d. In Adam we have a life but are unable to keep it - in Christ we are made alive to such a degree that we cannot lose it! - so, this is where we, as “living beings” set our only hope to truly have life, and in having it “more abundantly” (see John 10:10) - this abundant life was obtained when the “Shepherd of the sheep” gave His natural life for the sheep

This “abundant life” is not our lives now (though this helps) but the life we have yet to live with Him

e. The physical life must come first and then the spiritual - we **must** live in light of the limits and temporality of life as we live it now - it appears as though some in the Church of Corinth entertained an idea that they were now living in the “spiritual state” - this is not to take away from the eternal life which we have as ours now, but to simply come to grips with the reality that we must live out our natural lives before we will live the eternal “spiritual life” - vs. 46

This may seem like an obvious idea, but many become disheartened and feel overwhelmed with the distractions and discouragements of living out these “natural” lives - hope must be focused forward, not backward

f. “...we will also bear the image of the heavenly” - vs. 47-49 - the two groups summarized are those that are “earthy” (of the earth) and we are all this at the start (and in this life) - but, in infinite contrast, there are those “heavenly” because of Him who is from Heaven - this is who we are and are not to **identify** with (nor live for) this life - why would we?

Contrary to some cults, our souls/spirits did not pre-exist in Heaven

g. Adam was made on this earth and of the earth (dust) and God breathed life into him - Jesus (in contrast), was **always** living and came to Earth (thus the term “heavenly”)

h. The transition to the “heavenly” comes through Christ - **see Php. 3:17-21** - there is no other way to transform the “earthy” - some will ask at this point, “What happens to those not in Christ?” - we are not told in this text the answer to this but we see later their demise (these do not cease to exist but instead live-out what is termed “the second death” separated (realizing death is **separation**, not the loss of consciousness) from God’s **goodness** for eternity

see Rev. 21:8

i. So, as we have born the image of Adam, we will bear (literally wear as if a garment) the image of Christ’s body (as His body was dead and buried and was risen, so also will ours!)

E. We (in Christ) “will all be changed” - vs. 50-58

1. “Flesh and blood” (as it stands now) cannot “inherit the kingdom of God” - vs. 50

a. Some have attempted to make this verse a proof texts that the existence in Heaven will one that has not physical substance (no body per se)

b. The meaning, though, is that our bodies as they are now (also referenced as “perishable” (corruptible)) cannot come as they are into the Kingdom - they must be changed one of two ways (and both ways are discussed in these verses)

Note the phrasing in the Greek - “ικληρονομήσαι οὐ δύναται” plainly stating that flesh and blood **do not have the power** to inherit the Kingdom of God

c. Also, “flesh and blood” are not the inheritors, we are as the πνευματικόν, those who are predominantly spiritual, whose new bodies will be in **service** to the spirit (the “real” us)

d. And let us not forget, this is the “kingdom of God”, where “righteousness dwells” (II Pet. 3:11-13)

2. How will this happen and what about those that are still living at His return? - vs. 51-53

a. With enthusiasm (“Behold!”) Paul reveals to them a mystery (something previously unknown that can only be known when divinely revealed) - “We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed” - not all will die before the Lord returns, but all will (must) be altered

- The excitement is not intended to be in the idea that some may not die before His coming but is more directed in the fact that we will all be changed
- We're not sure why the stressed description of the instantaneousness of this even though it may be to demonstrate there will be no warning and when it happens it will be complete and thorough
- Another word to describe these new bodies is "indestructible"
- The ever-present aches and pains of life (both physical and emotional) will be forever gone - there will be no hospitals, doctors, medicine, grief counselors, emergencies, bad smells and so on
- b. Some have attempted to take the phrase "We shall not all sleep..." to indicate Paul saying that some of them in that generation would not die before the coming of the Lord - but in reality, Paul was in the same position we find ourselves - we may live to see the coming of the Lord or we may die before this happens (both equally motivate/ focus us)
- c. It would be a comfort to them (and us) to realize that those alive won't miss out on the change (the opposite issue that the Thessalonians were facing in I Thes 4:13-18 where they feared that those who had died (and were "in Christ") would miss out on the resurrection)
- d. The resurrection will not be a slow process, but when it happens, it will be "in a flash" as pictured in the word "ἀτόμω" (an indivisible thing, in this case a very microscopic amount of time, and is where we get our scientific word for "atom" supposedly because it was believed it could not be divided) - it is also compared to the blinking of an eye, though seemingly inconsequential in time, its result is the final, pivotal point for us for eternity
- e. At the "last trumpet" (signalling the end of the age), the "dead will be raised imperishable" - the word for "imperishable" or "incorruptible" is "ἀφθαρτοι" describing something that cannot decay, that is not susceptible to the affects of entropy - this entails sickness, pain, weakness, fatigue, growing "old", and of course, death
- f. This happens because our perishable bodies must "put on" the imperishable (as opposed to what now characterizes it) and this "mortal" (subject to death) must "put on" immortality - these bodies will be fitted for the new Heaven and new Earth, both of which are eternal and also not under the influence or subjectivity to death - we will be "immortals" in an endless kingdom!
- g. "Note, It is this corruptible that must put on incorruption; the demolished fabric that must be reared again. What is sown must be quickened. Saints will come in their own bodies (1Co_15:38), not in other bodies." Henry

3. The time will come when we will be able to mock death - vs. 54-55

- But as one knowing that vengeance upon the enemy is sure and coming, we are able to endure it and not live in fear or bitterness of it
- "Blessed be God for these songs of victory and triumph, which the Captain of our salvation has put into the mouths of all those that fight under his exalted banner." William Burkitt
- a. At present, while still wearing the "perishable" we cannot laugh and mock death since its pains and stings are real in this age, but the time is coming when it (personified) will have no more influence /threat over us
- b. When the immortal has been "put on" then will come the fulfillment of that blessed saying in Isaiah 25:8, "He will swallow up death for all time, And the Lord God will wipe tears away from all faces, And He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; For the Lord has spoken."
- c. Death will be "swallowed up in victory" (utterly conquered) as in being devoured or flushed away
- d. Notice the wording of verse 55 - "ποῦ (where) σου (yours), θάνατε (O Death), τὸ νίκος (the victory); ποῦ (where) σου (yours), θάνατε (O Death), τὸ κέντρον (the sting)" - the emphasis in order is "Where?" as in mockingly asking "Where is it? I don't see it anywhere."
- e. When considering this fully, one might think that death could point backwards to all the dead, yet the resurrection has totally undone it all (for those in Christ) - so death will have nothing to point back to (in regards to us) and will have no ability going forward (no stinger left!)

4. The autopsy of death's death - vs. 56-57

- Essentially, using our analogy, Death starved to death having no way to paralyze, kill and devour its intended victims
- This isn't "all thanks to God later" but "all thanks to God now" - with all of death's death threats surrounding us, this is where our focus is placed
- a. So, when this time comes, looking back, what exactly was the cause of death's death?
- b. The "sting" (poisonous fangs) of death is sin but the potency (power) of sin is the Law of God
- c. The death of death then was caused by its potency being countered with the "anti-venom" of Christ's victory, in meeting all the demands of the Law - this led to the inability of death to feed off us anymore - the head of the serpent was crushed! - Gen. 3:16 (see also Heb. 2:15)
- d. All thanks (gratitude) belongs to God Who gives us the victory over death through the work of Jesus Christ - He is the cure of death to us and the killer of death to sin - this victory was won by defeating sin in fulfilling the Law (the underlying word for "sin" is "ἁμαρτία" encompassing all sin, but in particular the dread sins of omission (not living up to (always) that standard of perfection in keeping all aspects of the Law (which is at its core, the revealed will of God)
- e. This gratefulness is not just utilized in the times of reflection of the good coming but at the lowest of times when we are facing the current results of death

5. The motivation gleaned from knowing these facts - vs. 58

- a. He addresses them as "beloved brothers" - they are with him in this life journey toward this coming hope of the future - a confirmed future makes for an endurable present

"The former refers to their firm establishment in the faith; the latter to that establishment as related to assault from temptation or persecution. Fixedness is a condition of abounding in work. All activity has its center in rest." Vincent's Word Studies

see II Cor. 4:17-18

These are investments that only continue to grow in value and stand no chance of devaluing or causing regret when we give an account of our lives

The oft repeated slogan is very true, "Only what's done for Christ will last!"

- b. Paul, demonstrating his genuine love for them, exhorts them to consistency and stability
- c. Using a present imperative, he gives them two words that should characterize them in light of what they now know regarding their future resurrection - "Be being steadfast", "Be being unmovable" - the first describing one grounded, solid internally (confident) - the second describing one firmly "planted" so as to withstand the expected opposition - see Heb. 6:9, 13:9
- d. This "being anchored" posture in life is for the purpose to be "always abounding in the work of the Lord" (always looking to do more) - spiritual "stagnation" and the pursuit of Christian responsibilities that plateau are foreign to one focused on where everything is actually headed
- e. The reason for such focus is the realization that all efforts, actions, deeds are not "in vain" if "in the Lord" (for His purposes, following His instruction) - what's done that's truly "for Him" actually lasts! - all else has limited and temporal results - see also Gal. 6:9, Heb. 6:10
- f. Since the victory is won (in Christ), then all our efforts for Him (in His name, done His way, for His glory) are like having access to a wealth of treasure, and all we need do is gather it up - this is the way we ought to look on the endless opportunities for His service that God provides us - they outweigh all other ways we could be expending our time and energies!
- g. We, as those in Corinth were challenged, must not be shaken or toppled with the barrage of philosophical challenges to our priorities, focus and purpose

XX. Planning For the Future and Gracious Responses - 16:1-24

A. The "collection for the saints" in Jerusalem - vs. 1-4

1. Setting aside monies, weekly, for the needs of others - vs. 1-2

see Rom. 15:26-27 and II Cor. 9:2 - these responded well to this instruction

One need is not placed above another - both are needs, just in differing areas - those who cannot help materially or monetarily may help practically, socially, emotionally or spiritually

"A little a lot" is most likely going to end up being more than "a lot a little"

Greed/covetousness competes with this

The "they" in this verse are the "rich in this world/age" - those having more than they NEED

Time is also a resource of which we are to be stewards

- a. For various reasons, Christians in Jerusalem were very poor and needed aid
- b. It was either because of a famine (for a few years, as some speculate), or because they were suffering the loss of possessions because of ongoing persecution - or **both** of these
- c. It would be an organized collection with the cooperation of several churches
- d. Regarding this being for mostly Jewish Christians, Paul wrote in Rom. 15:26-27, since they had been benefitted by God's use of the Jews for their spiritual benefit, it was fitting that they could assist them in what was "material blessings"
- e. Paul's instruction was for them to lay aside something in accordance "as he may prosper" on the first day of the week (Sunday) - the way it is worded, it is likely they were to set aside some weekly on their own, at their homes (storing it up) - let this be a habit till he comes
- f. Paul does not give a percentage - the word picture behind the "as he prospers" is that of one who has done well, and has (at least) a bit more than he needs (as in "having had a 'happy journey' through the week and ended up with more than enough)
- g. "They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life." I Tim. 6:18-19 (ESV)
- h. We are to remember ourselves as the stewards we are, responsible for the resources our Master has given us to dispense for His purposes
- i. Paul also instructed that this be done before his arrival so that it not still need to be done when he is there - other matters would need their focus, so take care of these logistics while there is time

2. Planning ahead for the delivery to Jerusalem of the gift - vs. 3-4

In our day, we still do something similar in our "Ordinations" - a church or churches certify that they recommend an individual for ministry - we also do this in business with "references"

Accountability is an aid and not an enemy - it guards from the potential appearance of evil as well as protecting, those involved, from temptation

- a. Part of the agenda (when he arrives at Corinth) will be to send off those that they had "certified" (with letters of recommendation/reference) - this was a common custom in their day - without the use of the modern communications we have today, letters from recognized authorities were used to legitimize some before others
- b. In this case it would be letters certifying these individuals to carry, protect and present the gift from Corinth - these may also have included letters of recommendation by Paul to those in Jerusalem if he was unable to go with them
- c. Paul did not presume he would go with them to Jerusalem - it would later need to be determined if it was appropriate for him to accompany them (if his help were needed)
- d. This also fits well with the goal to remain "above suspicion" when it comes to dealing with money - it does us well to keep a system of accountability regarding the handling of money in ministries - it demonstrates proper stewardship (in light of the ongoing temptations mankind faces)

B. Paul gives them his travel plans (apparently to encourage them) - vs. 5-9

1. Paul writes of his plan to come see them after being in the Macedonia region

These, apparently, were poised to be offended if he did not come right away - it is evidence of immaturity when one bases their faithfulness on the faithfulness of other people - this is being unprincipled

- a. The way he words these sentences, it looks as though he wants to assure them that he plans to come to them - he had quickly dealt with this in 4:18 where he addresses that the “arrogant” said that Paul would not return to them (“arrogant” being self-imposed authorities)
- b. Here, and then in I Cor. 1, he is dealing with potential and present offenses - many, sadly, base their “character” on what they perceive to be the responses and “faithfulness” (or the lack thereof) of others (if others are “bad” then they can be “bad”)

2. Based on the other “clues” we have in this text and others, Paul planned to go to Macedonia for a short time and then stay the Winter with them

Paul is a good example of one who must be forthright but goes on to express graciousness and “paths to amends” - the bitter immature make no allowances for restoration

Many who are “offended” are so because they place on another unreasonable expectation

- a. For, as he states in verse 7, he did not want to see them just “in passing” - he sensed an urgency to spend more time with them and that they were expecting it
- b. He even looks to be “making peace” with them when he mentions that after his stay they can “send me on my way,” which usually involved practical and well as social resources - this was now somewhat of an allowance that he would take their help (in contrast to I Cor. 9)
- c. Based on the first part of II Corinthians, Paul’s plans had to change, and he did not make it as he had planned - he spends time dealing with it and trying to reassure them of his plans to still visit
- d. He had mentioned in verse 7, “...if the Lord permits”

3. He needed to stay in Ephesus because of the opportunities - vs. 8-9

If these in Corinth had not been so self-focused, Paul would not have had to deal with their offenses - even in those, though, he talked of some of the comforting news he received of them II Cor. 7:13-16

Paul recognized the opportunity as being present - “*carpe diem*” (seize the day) needs to be our philosophy in the Lord’s work rather than looking to put it off for what we would consider more convenient

- a. Paul described the opportunity in Ephesus as a “wide door of opportunity” and that, along with this, there were many adversaries - his presence was needed!
- b. See Acts 19 for more details of what happened while in Ephesus - in Acts 19:21-22 it records Paul’s intentions which included a trip back to Corinth
- c. Then in Acts 19:21 we read of the trouble that arose so he was forced to leave Ephesus
- d. There will always be needs around us but some, out of necessity (because of the constraints of time and resources) will need to be prioritized above others - if we are driven to please all, we will never be able to attain it; instead, “focus” needs to be kept upon the greatest urgency (and in this case it was the Gospel to the Ephesians)
- e. Along with the opportunity, there were also many “adversaries” - so, many opportunities and many who oppose - the account in Acts 19 came from a local businessman (silversmith) concerned that Paul’s teaching would disrupt commerce (since a large part of their product was idols) - to stay and seek to protect was also part of his motive

C. Treat Timothy graciously and carefully - vs. 10-11

1. As mentioned in I Cor. 4:17, Paul had told them that he was sending Timothy to them to “remind” them of his “ways in Christ” - they had forgotten much - *we frequently forget that we forget*

We often cannot see the message because of our obsession with the messenger (for good or bad) - God will use and has used a large variety of messengers/teachers - many “tune-out” before genuinely listening

- a. This is often the disadvantage to “degreed” or “certified” training - it does show we received a level of training to others, but commonly contributes to our own belief/perspective that we remember it all or understand it all (causing us to rest too much in what we perceive we know)
- b. Having someone young coming, to not only represent Paul, but also coming to serve and a “reminding instructor” was something Paul expected would be a challenge for them

2. Three instructions in how to treat Timothy (as Paul’s representative)

We once again find ourselves in an era where respect and caution with those actually in the Lord’s service is hard to be found - many treat them with contempt or with little regard, because they focus on the person and not the sender

- a. First, make sure he that he has “no cause to be afraid” - look to make him at ease - not for his sake but because, “...he is doing the Lord’s work...” - it is believed that Timothy had some battle with timidity (yet he was still a part of a very stressful and fear provoking work)
- b. “So let no one despise him” - don’t ignore or belittle him - the underlying word ἐξουθενήσῃ pictures treating one with contempt by considering them “of no account” - based on I Cor. 1:28, this is how the world will look on them and why God chose them - a similar term is used by Paul to Titus in Titus 2:15 where he ends by saying, let no one **disregard** you” - see I Tim. 4:12
- c. And thirdly, “...send him on his way in peace... - let him be sent back to me safe, having been cared for and leaving them “in peace” - look to protect him as a friend and as family and not to be as one who is an enemy - the world/age will be enemy enough!

3. Paul had sent Timothy but Timothy was first to go to the Macedonia churches first - Acts 19:22

- a. Titus made it after, apparently, being sent directly there to deal with their issues
- b. Based on II Corinthians, there were many poor responses (along with some good)

D. Unity in the Apostolic ranks - vs. 12

1. Even though Apollos had been set up as one of the “faction leads” by some in the church at Corinth, there were no factions amongst the Apostles
 - a. Paul writes that he “strongly urged” Apollos to visit them along with some of the other “brothers” - it may have been that he hoped that Apollos would help guide Timothy (and protect him also from some of the ungracious Corinthians)
 - b. It is essential that “partisanship” in the church not be given credence - we do not group ourselves by men - unity is around **THE FAITH** and not personalities - there would be tendencies to defend the men more than the Scripture
2. “...it was not at all his will to come now...” - this does not need to be taken as hostile or reactionary - Apollos was determined not to go because he likely had pressing matters - this is key to remember when we are tempted to be discouraged, when someone is unable to come and encourage us when we desire it (because they are (or might be) serving others)
 - a. From the “side” of ministering, we need to be as selfless as possible, seeking to serve whenever called upon (even when inconvenienced)
 - b. From the “being ministered to” side, we must never allow our expectation upon another to cause us to be bitter when we are not “served” as expected - each must be cautious not to press those who serve us too hard, for if we are persuasive enough, they may leave-off serving another and we would then participate in another’s hurt or neglect
 - c. Apollos would come when he “had opportunity” (when it would be the right thing to do)

This can serve as a temptation to the people involved to see themselves as more important than they are - there is no benefit to the church to cater to such vanity!

Often our perceived needs must wait to be addressed - timing is also in God’s hand - some allow their discouragements to hurt those who would help them

E. Concluding challenges - vs. 13-24

1. “Be watchful” - the underlying word is Γρηγορεῖτε, indicating someone on the alert having been roused to the seriousness of the situation
 - a. This (appropriately) assumes the tendency to drift off in “sleep” when we ought to be awake
 - b. Sleep is associated also with unconsciousness from reality, while focused on dreams
 - c. It not only includes watching for the danger, but also watching for the good (opportunities)
2. “Stand firm in the faith” - hold your ground against the multi-front attacks that will continue to come against the faith (as they were given it)
 - a. These statements are believed (by some) to be the commands a military commander would give to his men (preparing them for battle)
 - b. In this case it would be like saying, “be entrenched” and expect the fight
 - c. This instruction anticipates the tendency to slide or be topple (not being “dug-in”)
3. “Act like men” - (ἀνδριζέσθε) acting like a man in contrast to that of a child (immature) and in contrast to being “womanly” (picturing strength in contrast to weakness) - be “masculine” be “manly”
 - a. This is not a “put down” of women since this instruction is for all the Corinthians (church)
 - b. Its emphasis is in determination, an internal aggressiveness to push on - It is sad to see fewer Christian men being an example of this very trait they are to exhibit
 - c. Don’t be cowardly, but firmly trust (to the end) **the** faith
4. “Be strong” - be consistent, resisting the ungodly opposition, while holding firm to the Truth
 - a. The underlying idea is “be stronger” than that which is around you, looking to overcome you
 - b. Be determined to “wear down the enemy” and not to be “worn down” yourself
 - c. Be energetic when it comes to the faith, versus lethargic or sluggish
5. “Let all you do be done in love” - vs. 14
 - a. Everything they set out to do needs to be “couched” in love, driven by love, sustained by love
 - b. This is in contrast to their competitive factions (1-3), their lawsuits (6), in husband and wife relationships (7), the “elite” (knowledgeable) belittling the “weak (8) and the poor versus those more “well to do” (12-14) - they had been very neglectful in this area
6. “Be in subjection to such” - vs. 15-18
 - a. To “be in subjection” often carries more an idea with us of an authority structure - here, though, it is more in keeping with the idea to “follow the lead” of another - too often we follow based more on position than quality/character/principle
 - b. Yet, here, it is “follow the lead” of those such as Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus - these were characterized as “...they that have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints.”
 - c. These have “devoted themselves” (translated “addicted themselves” in the KJV)

see I Thes. 5:4-8 and I Cor. 15:34

Don’t be led astray from these Biblical foundations - those standing on the “sinking sand” will do what they can to pull us off this solid foundation

This is also in contrast to the “effeminate” men that were all around them in the city

See Eph. 4:13-14 for the example of what children are compared to in contrast to “men”

The majority of “church issues” go away when there is a selfless focus on the needs of each other rather than a “full of self” expectation on the church

Those of the “household of Stephanas” were some of the “firstfruits” (first converts) in the area - these had been faithful for a long time (proven)

There is much to be credited to those who stay faithful over a long period of time and show it as more their “habit” than a passing fad or “temporary revival”

Note also that sometimes encouragement is not found because there are struggles but more in that those with us “in the race” are still struggling/contending - it is most painful to hear of those that appear to have abandoned the faith

This “kiss” was a greeting to indicate affection and compassion for each other and required one to get in close proximity - in our day it is more a “holy handshake”

see a similar usage by Paul in Gal. 1:8-9 referring to those who promote and put forward “another gospel” (in the stead of the real one)

The coming of the Lord provides the **motivation** while the grace of the Lord provides the **means**

- d. It is likely that these were wealthy and influential and yet, set it aside as their priority, and served the “saints” (placed it as the higher priority)
- e. These would be ones to look to serve also and “follow their lead” with such ongoing demonstrations of genuine focus and character
- f. Paul was profoundly encouraged and “refreshed” at their coming - they made up for what he had been missing (from the church at Corinth) for a long while - most likely, this “lack” was news of how they were doing and other communications from the believers there
- g. Often, some of the greatest stresses/burdens we will face will be those of not knowing how those we love are doing (especially endured for a long time)
- h. So, because of such consistent service/faithfulness, “acknowledge such men” - vs. 18 - these are the type you want to put forward for recognition and example (above the proud or covetous)
- i. We do not want to be as those that elevate and put forward those that are “worldly” (taken with the age in which they find themselves and mutually admired by the same “age”)

7. Final greetings and admonition - vs. 19-24

- a. Paul sends greeting from the other churches in the region and the one meeting in the house of Aquila and Prisca (Priscilla) - these friends of Paul and fellow “tent makers” used to live in Corinth (thus the “heartly” greeting” from close friends)
- b. It’s easy to take the phrase “in the lord” as if a cliché, but it is a reminder of what binds them together (that even though all don’t know each other well (or at all), they are bound as a family, a fraternity (their not so “secret handshake” being a “holy kiss”)
- c. Paul used a “copyist” to write the epistle as he dictated it, but at this point wrote the few words in his own hand (validating then the entire document)
- d. Before, though, his normal salutation, he offers one more stern admonition - “If anyone does not love the Lord. he is to be accursed” - he word for “love” (in the present indicative active) is φιλεῖ, describing the love between friends (this is not the selfless love we are to have for an enemy, but one between those that **like** each other - true friends)
- e. So if one clearly does not “like” the Lord, then rather than greet them (as was just described), these are to be recognized as “accursed” (a word used to describe “... being consecrated to a god was hung upon the walls or columns of his temple...” - it is recognized as the enemy of God and is therefore not supposed to be embraced)
- f. “This is not said in the way of a wish or imprecation, but as a prediction of what would certainly come upon them if they did not repent, and of what did come on them because they did not repent; but continued to hate and execrate the Lord Jesus; and of what still lies upon them, because they continue to hate and execrate the Redeemer of the world.” Clarke
- g. As if in weary frustration of living in the ongoing affects of the presence of sin, Paul pens a well-known word to them, “Maranatha” a word/phrase pointing out that the Lord had come and is coming - this term not only gives absolute hope for the future, but a sobriety in how the time we currently have is used and invested
- h. Paul ends (as he does in his other letters) by pointing them to the source of all enablement - “the Grace of the Lord Jesus” - this and the love of Paul himself is to be on their minds as they undertake the challenges as responsibilities of this letter