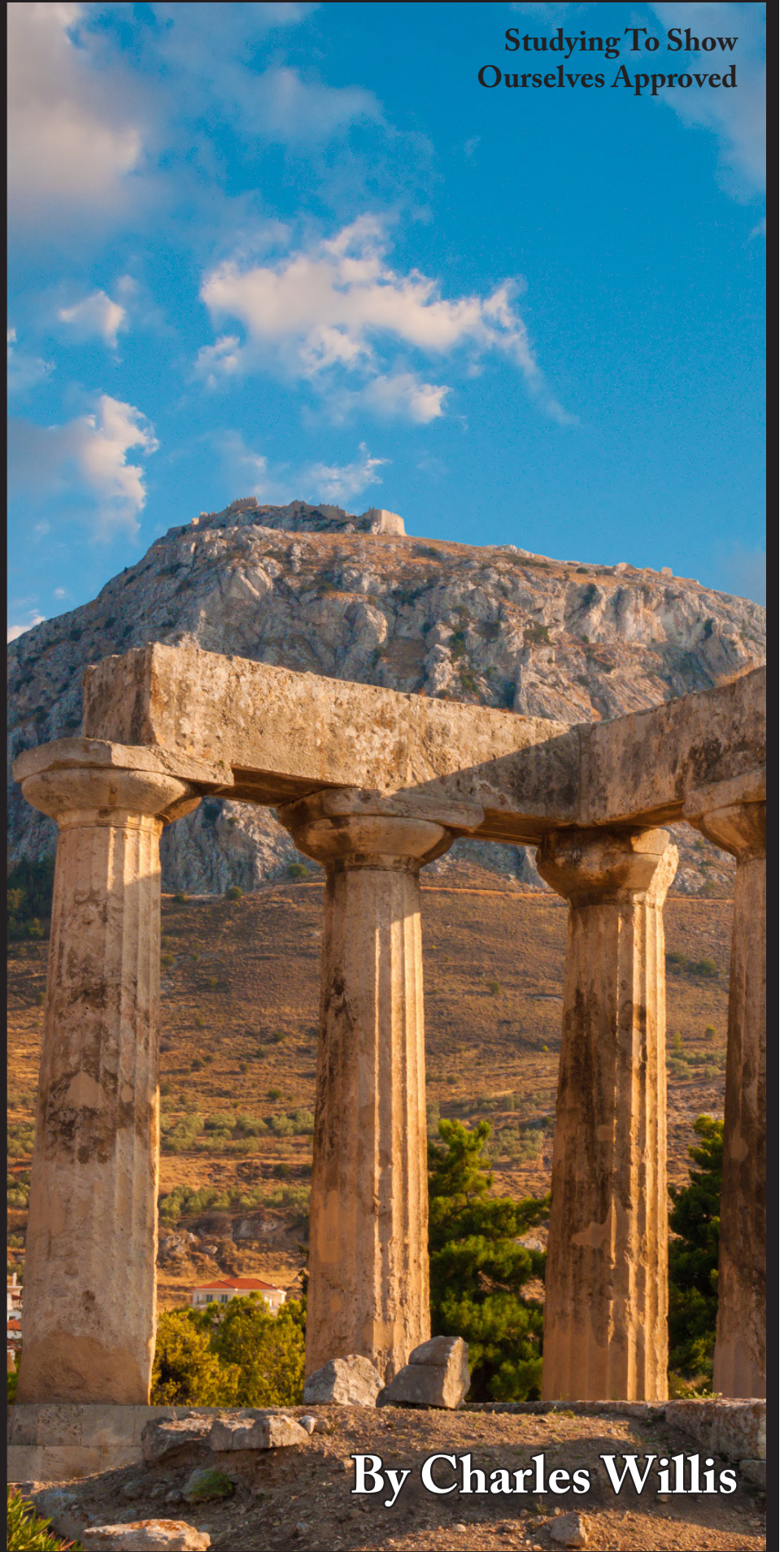


1 Corinthians

Studying To Show
Ourselves Approved



By Charles Willis

1 Corinthians

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Artwork in this workbook is of the ruins of ancient Corinth

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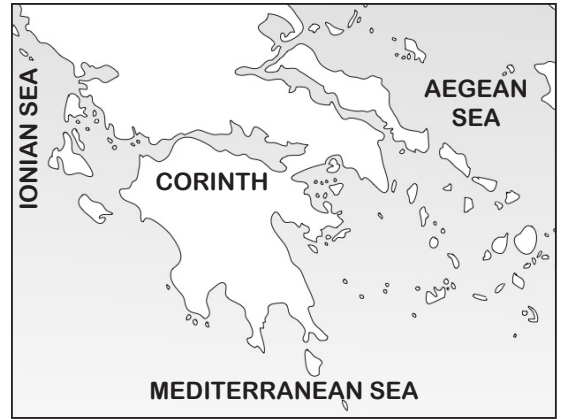
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Historical Background of City

Talk about “sin city” in ancient times would have been a reference to Corinth. Its vices exceed the vices of our modern Las Vegas. There existed in the first century the phrase “to korinthiazestai” meaning “to live like a Corinthian”. It was a slur describing a lifestyle of drunkenness and immoral debauchery. The city was a vacation destination, and one that no sailor would have easily skipped.

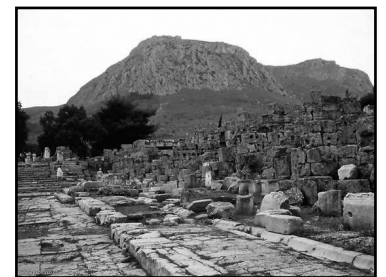
Corinth was the commercial capital of Greece. Its unique location served to make it a crossroads from four directions. It is situated on an isthmus of land connected to the mainland of Greece by a strip of land only about 10 miles wide. Since it was dangerous to travel the 200 miles around the Cape, ships would travel from the Aegean Sea and off-load at Corinth, travel the Diolkos (a special road for dragging ships and or trade goods) and load a different ship to continue the journey through the Corinthian gulf and on into the Adriatic Sea. No other ancient city had two sea ports on different seas! As early as 67 A.D. Emperor Nero attempted to cut a canal across the isthmus, but these efforts were not successful until 1893. These geographical traits made Corinth a great commercial city populated by people from all over the known world. The amount of trade made the city and many of the citizens wealthy.



Corinth had a reputation for moral depravity, more so than many other morally depraved cities. Morris writes, “The ideal of the Corinthian was the reckless development of the individual. The merchant who made his gain by all and every means, the man of pleasure surrendering himself to every lust, the athlete steeled to every bodily exercise and proud of his physical strength, and the true Corinthian types; in a word, the man who recognized no superior and no law but his own desires”. Aelian, a late Greek writer, tells us if a Corinthian was ever portrayed on stage, it was always as a drunk. The ‘Corinthian Sickness’ was what we now call venereal disease.



The Acrocorinthus dominates the skyline of ancient Corinth. This 1800 foot acropolis was the location of the temple to Aphrodite, the goddess of love. Attached to the temple were 1000 sacred priestesses who were basically temple prostitutes. In the evening they would descend into the city of Corinth to conduct “worship”. This was so common-place, a Greek proverb arose: ‘It is not every man who can afford a journey to Corinth’. This was by no means the only temple in Corinth, but it was the most prominent. Apollo’s temple was unique in having 38 columns, each 38 feet high made of one single piece of stone instead of being built up with drums (which was the usual practice). Poseidon was a chief god of the Corinthians with their close association with the sea. In his honor the Isthmian Games were held. These were precursors of the Olympics. His temple has been uncovered as well as the running course for foot races. Other finds include a large stadium, colonnaded roads, houses and government buildings. It is an important site that continues to deliver treasures of history.



The Church in Corinth was established by the apostle Paul. It was here that he met Aquila and Priscilla. He went to Corinth because there was no church in the city and he set forth to establish one. He reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath trying to persuade Jews and Greeks (Acts 18:4). He eventually found success with the Gentiles. We know specifically of Crispus “the leader of the synagogue” who believed with all his household, “and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized” (Acts 18:8). Paul was told of God not to fear the opposition, that no one would be able to harm him in Corinth. Emboldened by God’s vision, he remained 18 months



(Acts 18:11). While in Corinth it is generally held that he wrote 1 and 2 Thessalonians and perhaps Galatians. On a later visit he wrote the letter to the Romans.

This letter is unique in the New Testament for it deals with a series of problems that had invaded the church in Corinth. Each chapter deals with a different problem. In 7:1 we learn the problems had become so great the church wrote a letter to Paul. This first letter is a response to them, perhaps explaining the sort of “list” approach to the problems he addresses. We know from the biblical letter that the church in Corinth was on the verge of a division caused by an allegiance to men. There was incest among the brethren, saints were going to law against one another, there was confusion about marriage, the Lord’s Supper was greatly abused, there were problems about meat that was sacrificed to idols, women were out of place, there were problems with spiritual gifts and some were denying the resurrection. These are all individually serious problems which needed answers. Taken as a whole they demonstrate the terrible position of the church in an immoral society. Paul felt it was so drastic he planned to visit with them (1 Cor. 16:3). It is no wonder this letter has been of great help to many congregations. Paul penned the letter while he was in Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:8-9).

OUTLINE OF 1 CORINTHIANS

By Mike Willis, *A Commentary On Paul’s First Epistle To The Corinthians*, p. viii

Greetings (1:1-3)

Thanksgiving (1:4-9)

1. The problem of Factions (1:10-4:21)

2. Problems of Morality (5:1-6:20)

- a. Incest (5:1-13)
- b. Litigations (6:1-11)
- c. Fornications (6:12-20)

3. Questions Concerning Marriage (7:1-40)

4. The Proper Use of Liberties (8:1-11:1)

- a. The problem as related to eating meats (8:1-13)
- b. The apostles decision to waive his rights (9:1-23)
- c. The peril of the strong (9:24-10:22)
- d. Final statement of principles (10:23-11:1)

5. Problems relative to Worship (11:2-14:40)

- a. Relative to the women’s covering (11:2-16)
- b. Relative to the Lord’s Supper (11:17-34)
- c. Relative to spiritual gifts (12:1-14:40)

6. The resurrection (15:1-58)

**7. Reference to the collection for the Poor Saints in
Jerusalem and Paul’s Planned Visit (16:1-9)**

Concluding Remarks (16:10-24)

The letter begins with the claim that Paul was “called as an apostle” (1:1). This claim had to be constantly defended by Paul, most likely due to his past persecutions of the church. By the time he writes the second letter to the Corinthians he is making an even stronger defense of his apostleship saying: “we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus’ sake” (2 Cor. 4:5); “having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, I BELIEVED, THEREFORE I SPOKE, we also we believe therefore we also speak” (2 Cor. 4:13). Even further he goes on to say, “I consider myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles” (2 Cor. 11:5). Many references to his authority can be found in both letters.

1. To whom does Paul address this letter (v.2)?
2. From verses 3-9 list some of the phrases Paul uses to describe these people.
3. From his remarks and the problems we know to exist, what does this say about what should be our attitude toward brethren and congregations that are in error?

Paul chooses to begin his address with the topic of divisions that existed among the saints. The Greek word schisma is here translated ‘divisions’, a word from which we get the English word schism. It is not difficult to understand a similar situation that exists among those who claim to follow Christ. Many in denominations have taken the name of men which has done nothing but to divide believers and lead some away from Christ. If all men would truly learn the principles of Paul’s first topic, the religious world would stand a better chance of becoming united.

4. What had the house of Chloe reported to Paul?
5. To show the error of their divisions, what three questions does Paul pose?
 - A. _____
 - B. _____
 - C. _____

6. What do you make of Paul's repeated use of baptism in his reasoning?

7. God's plan for Paul was to preach, not to baptize. Why was he not to use "cleverness of speech"? Sure it was so the "cross of Christ would not be made void" (v.17). But what does this mean?

The "word of the cross" is called foolishness and the power of God (v.18). Certainly Paul is considering the gospel of Jesus Christ. I can't help but compare this thought with Romans 1:16 where the gospel is "the power of God unto salvation". Paul proceeds to describe the different attitudes men have about the word of God in a manner similar to that of Jesus in His teaching of the parable of the Sower in Matthew 13.

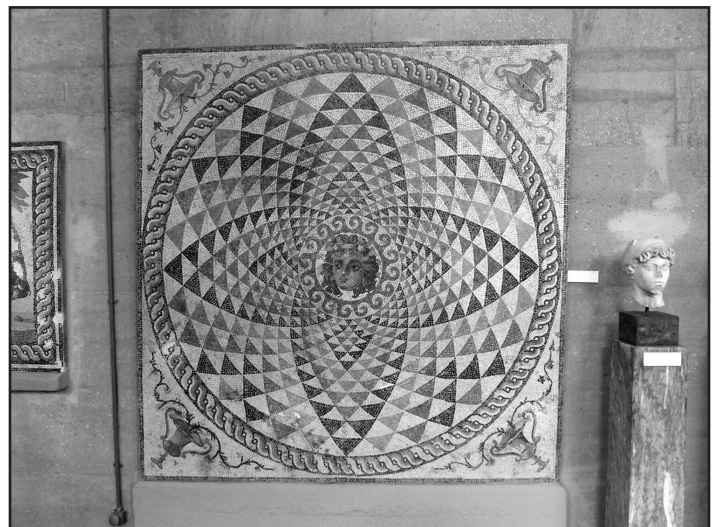
8. What does the wisdom of the wise tell us? Relate this to modern scientists.

9. What was the gospel to:
 - The Jews _____
 - The Gentiles _____
 - The Believers _____

10. Why can no man "boast before God" (v.29)?

11. What has Christ become for us (v.30-31)?

An ancient floor mosaic created in ceramic tile now hanging in the Corinthian Museum.



The Greek philosophers were known for the high-flung arguments filled with persuasive speech and a cultured use of words. They would frequently sit in a gathering place in the city to propound the questions of the universe. Many would follow their teaching or at least give them a careful hearing. Paul says in verse 1, “I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God”. As evidenced in his writings in scripture it is clear that Paul was very capable of eloquent speech, but he did not use it in Corinth. Nor did philosophy have any part in the gospel message. Paul reminds the Corinthians he was nothing like the Greek philosophers.

1. What was the one thing he preached (v.2)?
2. What lessons can we learn about what we should be preaching?
3. How was Paul’s manner (v.3) different from the Greek philosophers?
4. How was Paul’s method (v.4) different from the Greek philosophers?
5. Why did Paul use such caution in preaching to the Corinthians (v.5)?

Having led the reader to what the presentation of the gospel was, he now speaks for several verses about how the gospel is perceived by men. Two attitudes are presented which help us understand why some do not accept the gospel. We also learn a lot about the inspiration of the scriptures.

6. To whom is the gospel “wisdom”? Why?
7. Whose “wisdom” is Paul proclaiming? (an apparent comparison with the Greek philosophers)

8. What did God predestine (v.7)?

Street in Corinth.

9. How was the gospel revealed to man (v.10-13)?



10. To whom is the gospel “foolishness”? Why?

Calvinist doctrine looks to verse 14’s “the natural man” and proclaims the meaning to be: man cannot understand the scriptures until God operates on his heart. This requires the verse to be taken out of the context. It requires a misunderstanding of the entire first four chapters of 1st Corinthians. The natural man (the one in sin by Calvinistic thinking) cannot understand – not because of some inability that must be corrected by the Spirit of God, but because he rejects God’s message as foolishness. He does not have a spiritual mindset.

11. Who “appraises” (NAS) or “judges” (KJ) all things (v.15)? What does this mean?

12. What does the “natural man” condemn in the “spiritual man”? (provide 3-4 examples from your own experiences)

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

13. “We have the mind of Christ” (v.16). What is important about this statement? What implications does this have about our teaching, preaching and belief today?

Paul had to speak to the Corinthians as “infants in Christ” (v.1). He compares this to “men of flesh”. This must be in part comparable to the “natural man” of chapter 2 who considers the gospel foolishness. Some of the thinking of the “natural man” remained in the thinking of the Corinthians. They were not yet fully embracing “the mind of Christ” (2:16). So Paul says “I gave you milk to drink, not solid food” (v.2). They were not able to receive solid food yet because they were still fleshly. As any good teacher would do, Paul is teaching on a level they can understand. He returns to many basic concepts in this letter.

1. What argument does Paul present to demonstrate they remained “fleshly” (v.3-4)?
2. What argument is given to show the foolishness of calling themselves after Paul or Apollos (v.5-9)

Paul next presents a picture of building a structure. He indicates many people are involved, and different types of structures are built. Ultimately every man will answer to God for his work.

3. Paul says “I laid a foundation” (v.10). What was the foundation?
4. What should we learn from the phrase “each man must be careful how he builds” (v.10)?
5. How will each man’s work be tested with fire (v.12-15)?

Paul continues by referring to the Temple of God which is holy, “and that is what you are” (v.17). He makes this very clear in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, but it seems the context of chapter three may be considering the entire local congregation as the Temple of God. Nothing is said in this verse about the body. The church (the saints) is a Temple in contrast to another form of philosophy that some were trying to make of Christianity. 1 Corinthians 3:9 refers to the people as “God’s building” and it appears the same imagery is in mind in verses 16-17. The same imagery can be seen in Ephesians 2:19-22 which you are encouraged to read.

6. What will happen to someone who destroys the Temple of God (v.17)?
7. What are we warned to not deceive ourselves about (v.18-20)?
8. From verses 21-23 create a chart that visualizes Paul’s point regarding “ownership”.

1. How did Paul want the Corinthians to regard him and others like him? How does this relate to the way people think of the local minister today?
2. What is required of stewards (v.2)? Again, what is the meaning in the context? To what issue is Paul speaking?

Verse 3 indicates a judgment is required of stewards. That they be found righteous in teaching the truth of God. Paul said it meant little to him if the Corinthians were to examine him. From this we surmise that some in Corinth were passing judgment on Paul. Because the preacher is in the “spotlight” people tend to judge critically, especially from those who cannot make wise decisions. Chapter 9 indicates this is exactly what was going on with Paul. But their assessment of him meant very little. He says he does not examine himself. The servant is not the one who determines loyalty – it is the master. He was conscious of “nothing against myself” (v.4), but that does not make him innocent. His own judgment in this was as useless as that of the Corinthians or any other man.

3. Who is the real judge in these things?
4. How does verse 5 relate to 2 Corinthians 5:10?
5. What was the problem in Corinth addressed in verse 6? What three questions are written for the purpose of humbling them?

Problem: _____

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

A common debating technique is next employed by Paul to demonstrate the ridiculousness of the

Corinthians position in thinking they know more or are better than Paul. He has already stated they were yet babes in Christ (3:1) but they saw themselves as “filled”, “rich” and “kings” (4:8). The Corinthians had a haughty attitude toward those teaching them the truth, hence their divisions over teachers. They could argue philosophy as good as anyone else. The apostles and Apollos were “fools” and “without honor” but the Corinthians were “strong” and “distinguished” (v.10). Paul is not complaining about the difficulties in life as an Apostle, but trying to show them how silly their boasting in men really was. How ludicrous to think they were so important when the ones who taught them were considered the dregs of the earth.

6. What was the treatment the apostles endured (v.11-13)? How does this relate to what we should expect when we teach the truth?

7. What was Paul’s reason for writing these things (v.14-16)?

8. Why did Paul send Timothy (v.17)?

Some in the congregation in Corinth had become arrogant as though Paul was not coming to teach them again (v.18). Some see that perhaps this letter was brought to them by Timothy. Their attitude may have been “look, Paul is not even coming back to face us”. Paul affirms in verse 19 he will return and will verify the credentials of those who were arrogant. Their credentials were not based on words but on “their power.” This must be a reference back to the power that Paul used in convincing them of the truth (2:4), a power which came from God. “The Kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power” (v.20). He put it to the people rather bluntly: we’ll find out who’s teaching comes from God!

9. What does Paul ask that shows the Corinthians had the ability to determine what their meeting with Paul would be like (v.21)?

Roman baths in Corinth.



Paul indicates in verse 1 that some facts about the congregation in Corinth had been reported to him. This must be from Chloe's people which are mentioned in 1:11. Their report was not a good one. From this point on Paul seems to be addressing a series of problems evident in the congregation which needed correction.

1. What comparison does Paul make to indicate the severity of the sin in chapter 5 (v.1)?

From the beginning such immorality has been condemned. "You shall not uncover the nakedness of your father's wife; it is your father's nakedness" (Lev. 18:8). "Cursed is he who lies with his father's wife, because he has uncovered his father's skirt..." (Deut. 27:20). If there were any Jews present in the congregation they would have been aware of God's attitude about these things. If so they evidently were not voicing any concerns, other than Chloe's people.

2. What does chapter 5 reveal about the attitude of the saints in Corinth over this matter?

3. What does Paul say should have been their attitude?

4. What should they have done with this man?

5. Give two examples that toleration of sin is on the rise in America.

Paul, though not with them, had already judged the man (v.4). Matthew 7:1 says "do not judge so that you will not be judged." Jesus is not condemning all judging. Paul's words indicate we are to make some judgments in regard to sin. He condemns the congregation for not making a judgment against this man. As he says a little later, "do you not judge those who are within the church?" (v.12). He decided to "deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (v.5).

6. By whose authority does Paul say this?

7. What does Paul mean? How is such a one delivered to Satan?

8. Was this an action taken by Paul or was it taken by a group? What language would tell us?

A strong warning is given to this congregation and all congregations when Paul said, “a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough” (v.6). This particular congregation was surrounded with sexual temptation. The city’s reputation was of harlotry and fulfilling the desires of the flesh. The temple prostitutes abounded. The “Corinthian sickness” was what we now call venereal disease. If sin is allowed a foothold (either in the congregation or the individual) it will soon spread. We have an old saying that is equally appropriate: one bad apple can spoil the whole bunch. We learn that a congregation can become corrupted, unfaithful, displeasing unto God when sin is allowed.

9. What are saints instructed to do to prevent the congregation from being influenced to sin?

10. Explain the admonition in verse 8.

11. Which immoral people had Paul previously instructed the brethren to not associate with (v.9-12)? Are we to take the same punitive measures for these things as taught in the example of chapter 5?

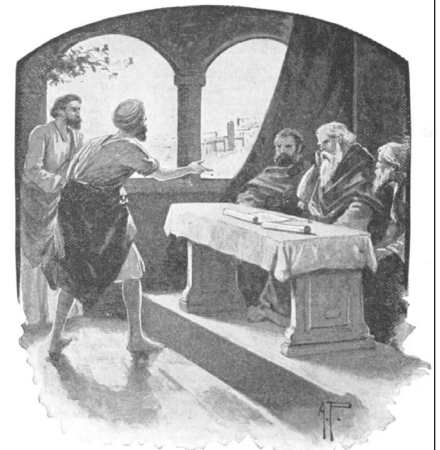
12. What modern “leavens” are at work in some congregations that may spread to the whole lump? Would the same actions need to be taken as is taught in chapter 5?

“Not even to eat with such a one” (v.11). This seems to refer to a social meal. We are not to have a meal with a “so-called brother”. It is understood that when one is “removed from your midst” (v.2) he would not be partaking of the Lord’s Supper with us. It is difficult to believe he is speaking of the Lord’s Supper for this reason. Social meals are events that are indicative of friendship, camaraderie and agreement. Heads of state meet for a meal to demonstrate their willingness to discuss and to show their unity of commitment. The world understands this thinking, but sometimes in the church we fail to make this application, especially if it is someone we are close to.

The disciplinary action of the church is limited to the saints in the congregation. Those outside the church “God judges” (v.13). We are to wield our influence for good within the congregation. We are to keep the congregation pure and holy by removing those who choose to remain in sin. God will be just in His judgment. We are to leave those outside the church to Him. Clearly though, we are to judge amongst ourselves, to watch ourselves and to help each other walk in the way of God.

At the very outset of the chapter Paul indicates the Corinthians practice of taking brethren to court is wrong. This is seen in the language of verse 1, “Does any one of you...dare to go to law”. The word “dare” in the Greek means “boldness” and in this context conveys the idea of being so bold as to do something. In chapter 5 the saints could not distinguish right from wrong when someone in the congregation was living in an incestuous relationship. They seemed to think “we cannot judge or condemn”. But they can easily tell when they have been personally wronged. They can be tolerant as a congregation of someone else’s sin, but they will not condone anything wrong being done against them personally. We can clearly see the Corinthians had problems with fraud and thievery against each other. Their motto seemed to be “I’ll get my rights” rather than be wronged.

1. How does this compare with American attitudes?
2. Paul was concerned about them having disputes, but what seems to be his main concern?
3. What will saints judge (v.2-3)? How?
4. Who does Paul say should be allowed to judge in such a matter? Would this work today? Why or why not?



Paul’s solution to their problems seems extreme, even to us. “Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded” (v.7). We have been taught to turn the other cheek, go the extra mile, even give our cloak also (Matthew 5:38-42). We are supposed to expect suffering and persecution. We often think of such passages in regard to those outside the church, but their application is even more true within the church. Certainly the brother who is offending is in error, but that does not justify my taking him to court to one outside the church for judgment. It is better to be wronged and taken advantage of than to submit to such a rule. As humans we will go to extreme lengths to avoid personal pain and loss. Taking a brother to court is wrong. To suffer for the sake of Christ is approved.

5. What other problem does Paul address which led them to take each other to court (v.8)?
6. How were they deceiving themselves about this?

7. What changes should have been evident in their lives (v.11)?

8. What does Paul mean when he says “all things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable” (v.12)?

Paul asserts, “the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body” (v.13). God did not create us to be a creature dominated by sexual fulfillment. He created the drive within us to be fulfilled in marriage, but some live every day of their life thinking of sexual relations - a problem in Corinth especially. This is not what God created us for. Our body is for the Lord. We are to be a “living sacrifice” (Romans 12:1). Christ is to be magnified in our body (Philippines 1:20). These are fundamental principles which the Corinthians had great problems with.

9. What does Paul say about one who is joined to a harlot?

10. What does Paul say about one who is joined to the Lord?

11. What is the instruction to Christians (v.18)?

12. What is the Christian’s body (v.19-20)?

Corinthian temple to Apollo.



1. Paul says “*it is good for a man not to touch a woman*” (v.1). Since we know God saw it was not good for man to be alone and therefore made woman, how can Paul make such a statement? What is meant?
2. What reason does Paul give for people to enter a marriage relationship (v.2)?

There is debate over why Paul included verses 3-5. It could be because of a question that was asked, or an evident problem in the congregation. Regardless, we learn there are obligations and responsibilities within the marriage relationship in regard to fulfilling God given needs. We do not have authority over our bodies but give that authority to our spouse. We are no longer individuals, but are “one”, belonging to each other. That being so, it is therefore wrong to deprive one another as this may become a stumbling block to the other through which Satan may tempt us (v.5). The only time we are to withhold ourselves from each other is by agreement for the purpose of prayer. In this instance abstinence is a good thing. Both felt the need to marry, in part because of sexual temptation, therefore we need to recognize our vulnerability in this area and not deprive one another within the marriage. Thus in verse 6 Paul’s concession is in regard to abstinence. It is not a command.

3. What does Paul say that indicates it is not sinful to remain unmarried? What qualification does he place on this (v.7-9)?
4. What instructions are given to the married as requirements from God (v.10-11)?
5. What instructions are given to the Christian married to an unbeliever (v.12-16)?
 - A. Could a Christian convert remain married to a disbeliever?
 - B. What about their children?
 - C. Explain how one is “*not under bondage*” if the disbeliever leaves (v.15).

Paul does present one argument for maintaining such a marriage relationship rather than letting the other leave: they might learn the truth and be saved (v.16). Endure and perhaps suffer in some manner to lead them to Christ. There is no certainty this can be accomplished! Some enter marriages with the stated belief their spouse will soon obey the gospel. Many who have made this assumption have had serious problems in their marriage when their spouse never obeys. Paul is teaching we should not subject ourselves to the bitterness and hatred in a forced continuance of a marriage with an unbeliever who desires to leave, most likely because their spouse has obeyed the gospel.

6. What is to be learned from Paul's teaching that we "*remain in that condition in which he was called*" (v.17-24)?

7. What present situation was driving Paul's remarks in this chapter and especially what follows verse 26?

8. What are the differences in the thinking of the married and the unmarried (v.32-34)?

Verse 35's "*not to put a restraint on you*" is similar to the concept embodied in verse 6: "*this is not a command*". He is recommending celibacy because of its advantages during the present distress. The distress would challenge the faith of all involved. Their faith would have to stand firm. He therefore says it is "*appropriate*" to promote and secure "*undistracted devotion to the Lord*". To illustrate this truth he speaks for a few verses about a father and his virgin daughter. At a time of arranged marriages, in light of the present distress, the one who does not give his daughter will do better. He is not forbidding marriage, for if immorality is a strong temptation he indicates the daughter should be given in marriage.

9. How long are marriages bound (v.39)?

Corinth Temple To Octavie



Paul changes topics at the beginning of the chapter to discuss things that had been sacrificed to idols. Worship in the temples consisted of feasting and had a “come and go” atmosphere to them. It is important to understand that the typical location for people to purchase meat was attached to the idol temples. So even if they were eating at home, and not in an idolatrous assembly, they could still be eating meat that had been sacrificed to an idol. This was a common concern among believers. Paul addresses the topic here and in Romans 14 in greater detail.

1. “*Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies.*” (v.1) Give an example or two of how this statement is shown to be true today.
2. What are we to know? (v.2-3)
3. “*Not all men have this knowledge*” (v.7). What knowledge?

Some were “*accustomed to the idol until now*” (v.7). In Corinth the worship of idols was common place and widespread. Probably everyone had been in an idol temple, and likely had eaten food sacrificed to an idol. This was not something that troubled the conscience of the citizens, “until now”. Because of their new relationship in Jesus Christ, some were now troubled with the idea of eating food sacrificed to an idol. Acts 18:4 records Paul’s first attempts to convert believers from among the Jews in Corinth, but with no success. In Acts 18:8 we see Paul turning to the Gentiles. So the ones “accustomed to the idol till now” is a reference to the Gentiles.

4. How can the weak conscience be defiled (v.7)?
5. What does Paul say is the truth about food sacrificed to idols (v.8)?
6. How can our understanding of the truth become a stumbling block to the weak (v.9-11)? Try to give a different, modern application of the same principle.

Paul makes it clear that when we cause a weak brother to stumble we are in sin (v.12). We sin against Christ as well as the weak brother. There is good reason then to be concerned with these things and what our proper attitudes should be for our eternal abode may be determined on them.

7. What should be our proper attitude about such things? To what extent should we go in not causing a brother to stumble? (see also Matthew 18:6-7)

Chapter 9 is a good chapter break for Paul obviously begins discussing a different matter than causing a weak brother to stumble. He turns to his apostleship, a topic developed much more deeply in 2 Corinthians. All of his life Paul struggled in being accepted as an apostle due to his persecution against the church. So he says, “if to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you” (v.2). Specifically in this chapter he discusses the right of material support from brethren because he is an apostle. Evidently some were questioning his support because he says, “My defense to those who examine me is this” (v.3), and proceeds with many proofs.

1. How were the Corinthian Christians the seal of Paul’s apostleship (v.2)?
2. Were the apostles or preachers ever expected to remain celibate (v.5)? What problems are now evident from such an expectation from the wisdom of men?
3. What work was Paul “refraining” from (v.6)?

Paul claims the right of support because he is an apostle. He compares this right to that of a farmer who eats the fruit of his vineyard, and a shepherd who enjoys the milk of the flock (v.7). His examples indicate it was natural for the apostles to be supported by the brethren. But in case some rejected this “natural” reasoning, he turns to scriptural proofs to verify his assertion.

4. What conclusion does Paul make from Deuteronomy 25:4 in verses 9 and following?
5. What religious example does Paul make of idol priests?
6. How does verse 14 apply to modern preachers?

After clearly “proving” the right of support from brethren, Paul then says he has not exercised this right and is not asking them to send money (v.15). Paul felt compelled to preach the gospel. He did it voluntarily and felt it was a stewardship given him by Christ (v.16-17). His reward from God was for preaching the gospel. We know in other places he did accept support (Phil. 4:15), but from Corinth he did not. In connection to this he says he has made himself a slave to all.

7. Paul became “all things to all men” (v.22). Describe how he became like:
 - A. A Jew (v.20)
 - B. One under Law (v.20)
 - C. One without Law (v.21)
 - D. One who was weak (v.22)

8. Describe how we might “become” like the following in order to win them to Christ:

- A. A physical fitness director

- B. A farmer

- C. A doctor

- D. A lawyer

- E. A married person

- F. One who believes salvation is at the point of faith

9. Why did Paul do all things for the sake of the gospel (v.23)?

At the end of this chapter is a memorable metaphor of running a race. Many excellent truths are conveyed through this imagery. Most have heard many lessons from this text. You are encouraged to study verses 24-27 again.

10. Write down what you believe to be three important points made in these verses, or applications you see for us today.

A.

B.

C.

Depiction of Ancient Corinth



Paul begins by speaking of “our brethren” indicating that a majority of the intended readers may have been Jewish. We know initially the converts in Corinth were Gentiles (Acts 18:5-8). It seems much more likely that Paul is using a figurative sense in speaking of our “fathers”, meaning they were our forerunners having believed in God. This connection between the Old Law and the New is one of the things Paul wants us to be aware of.

1. Explain the historical reference of each of the following phrases:
 - A. “*Our fathers were all under the cloud*” (v.1)

 - B. “*Passed through the sea*” (v.1)

 - C. “*Baptized into Moses*” (v.2)

 - D. “*All ate the same spiritual food*” (v.3)

 - E. “*All drank the same spiritual drink*” (v.4)

 - F. “*They were laid low in the wilderness*” (v.5)

2. How were these “*drinking from the spiritual rock which followed them*” (v.4)?

Paul asserts these things happened to our “fathers” as examples for us (v.6). Paul is not saying that the punishment that came upon the Israelites was merely for our benefit. We recognize easily they were punished for their own sin. God would not allow or cause such things to happen to them just so we might be taught a lesson. It seems much more plausible to believe he is saying these things were recorded for our benefit. This certainly seems to be the point in verse 11. We know this was a negative example since Paul says, “*that we would not crave evil things as they also craved*” (v.6).

3. List the four specific negative examples the Israelites are for us which Paul mentions in verse 7-10.
 - A.

 - B.

 - C.

 - D.

4. What conclusion does Paul reach as a result of the reasoning found in the first 11 verses?
5. Please explain how verse 13 fits the context of the chapter? Does it fit more with what goes before or what comes after?

Verse 15 relates an important principle we must all abide by and expect from others we might be trying to teach. *"I speak to you as wise men; you judge what I say."* Paul expects the recipients of this letter to reason through the logic he uses in reaching his conclusion. They are to ascertain from scripture if what he says is true or not. They are to judge his words. We should not expect anyone to simply accept what we say is the truth. We should teach them as "wise men" (speaking of our attitude and demeanor toward their intellect) and encourage them to search the Bible to determine if what we have reasoned is true.

Most of the "reasoning" which Paul is calling on the reader to "judge" is about the remainder of the chapter, which is a return to the topic of chapter 8, that of eating meat sacrificed to idols. This topic surely must have been one of great concern, and one which he felt he needed to emphasize and be clear about. There are lessons for us also in this material.

6. Why are we "*one body*" (v.17)?
7. How might we become "*sharers in demons*" (v.20-21)? Are there any modern applications from this concept?

Verse 22 makes good sense if we remember that as Christians we are "married" to Christ. The church is the bride of Christ (Rev. 19:7-8; 21:2, 9). If we bow down to an idol we would provoke the Lord to jealousy as this would be seen as adultery (Jer. 2:2). As a figurative "husband", the Lord expects us to remain His and His alone. *"We are not stronger than He, are we"* (v.22)? Surely if we stir the jealousy of God He will seek retribution against us. He is stronger than us and we will surely die eternally. Therefore we must flee these things.

8. Give one modern application of the teaching in verse 23.
9. As in chapter 8, what conclusion does Paul teach about eating meat sacrificed to idols (v.25-27, 31)?
10. What if someone says "*this is meat sacrificed to idols*" (v.28)?
11. Some would contend that as Christians we are to never offend another person. They base this principle on verses 32 and 33. Yet, Paul is the same one who offended people to the extent they were stoning him and running him out of town. What then does Paul mean in these two verses?

The primary point in the first part of chapter 11 is that women are to be in subjection to their husbands. This was a problem in Corinth in the public worship. For many this passage is difficult, and causes great questions – specifically if a woman is to wear a veil while praying (v.4), and what that veil might be. From 11:1-14:40 Paul is discussing problems in the public worship assembly. Let us consider carefully what the text reveals.

1. Why does Paul first praise them (v.2) before giving the teaching on the head covering?
2. Relate Paul's teaching on subjection from verse 3.
3. What instruction regarding prayer is understood for men (v.4)?

Some will point to the head covering for the woman, as in verse 5, and says this “covering” is her hair. But does this make sense logically following this statement in verse 4? If so, then every man must go bald in order to pray appropriately or he would disgrace Christ. I don't know anyone who would agree with that logic. So we must conclude that a woman's hair is not really what is under discussion.

4. What was the stigma attached to a woman (at that time) who had her head shaved? What does our society think of this?

While we tend to focus on women's responsibilities from these verses, there is also much instruction given to men. By understanding the instruction to men, it helps in understanding the instructions to women. It is difficult to believe Paul would be flip-flopping back and forth between two different concepts.

5. Why should a man not have his head covered (v.7)? Is this talking about all the time, or merely at certain times?
6. “*Because of the angels*” a woman was to have what on her head (v.10)?

Verses 11-12 make a simple point – men and women need each other. We are not independent of each other. One sex is not better than the other. It was God's will to interconnect us. Woman came from man (in the beginning), but man is born of woman. From this statement it seems that some of the women in Corinth may have been usurping their authority, or claiming independence from their husbands which was inappropriate, especially in a public assembly of Christians. That Paul begins by emphasizing His relationship to Christ (v.1)

indicates the women struggling with these issues must have also been making claims of independence now that they were in Christ.

Now beginning in verse 13 Paul returns to seeking the “common sense” judgment from the reader, just as he did in 10:15. He asks “*is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered*”? this is the main question the text is trying to answer. In answering it remember Paul has also looked at men while they are praying. The word translated “proper” (NAS) is “comely” in the King James. It refers to “that which corresponds with propriety or decorum”. It is for this reason I believe the passage speaks of the societies tradition for a woman to wear a head covering which signified submission to her husband. The Corinthians should be able to judge for themselves whether or not the women being uncovered fit the decorum of their day.

7. What does nature teach us about the length of hair (v.14-15)?

8. Why does Paul bring this up now?

9. How might some have been “contentious” about this (v.16)? what was the “practice” in the churches of God (v.16)?

A new topic is presented beginning in verse 17 through the remainder of the chapter. This would have been an appropriate place for a chapter break. Paul has been speaking about prayer and prophecy in the assembly (v.4-5), and now turns to another abuse in the assemblies of the Corinthians surrounding the Lord’s Supper.

10. What was Paul condemning in their partaking (v.17-21)?

11. How do verses 22 and 34-34 relate to the question of a church having “fellowship halls” and meals paid for from the treasury (as many religious groups practice today)?

12. How did Paul know the things that took place in the upper room (v.23-26) when he was not present?

13. How do we “proclaim the Lord’s death”?

14. What is an unworthy manner for partaking (v.27)?

15. Why does Paul conclude many in Corinth were weak, sick and asleep (v.30)?

“*Now concerning spiritual gifts*” (v.1). From this abrupt change of subject, and several others in this letter, it is easy to see why many speak of a letter Paul received from Corinth asking questions on various topics. Perhaps Chloe’s people (1:11) sent a letter informing him of some of the problems existent in the local congregation. He now shifts to the subject of miraculous spiritual gifts and will continue on this subject through the end of chapter 14. This is therefore the longest block of material in the letter, and the longest in scripture on this subject. Of these things he did not want the brethren to be unaware (v.1).

The first guidelines are very straightforward and easily understood in verse 2-3. These are truths Paul explained when he converted them in the past. No one who is speaking “by the Spirit”, who is in fact under the influence of the Spirit of God, will say “*Jesus is accursed*”. This will be an indication of the falsehood of that person. Likewise if they say “*Jesus is Lord*”, then we can know they are being influenced by the Spirit.

1. Explain the principle related in verse 4-6 and 11 of “the same Spirit”, “the same Lord” and “the same God”.
2. Why were spiritual gifts given (v.7)?
3. List the miraculous spiritual gifts Paul speaks of in verses 8-10.

A great image of the church is next related figuratively through the comparison to the body. We are correct in making applications of these principles in many places, however we must remember the context is in regard to spiritual gifts. Evidently the problem in Corinth was an attempt to rank individuals by importance based on what spiritual gift they had been given. Paul clearly tells them they have the wrong idea.

4. Into what are we baptized (v.13)? How does this agree or disagree with Galatians 3:27?
5. Which part of the physical body is more important than others (v.14-17)?
6. What point is Paul reaching in verse 18? What modern application do we need to make from this?

As part of the Lord’s body we cannot say “*I have no need of you*” (v.21). Paul then begins to speak of parts of the body which seem to be weaker. He is speaking (in context) of a perceived ranking of spiritual gifts where some seem less strong than others.

7. From verses 22-24 describe what parts of the physical body Paul seems to have in mind. How does this apply to the Lord’s body?
8. What is the point made in verses 28-31?

1. What had the Corinthians forgotten in their zeal for spiritual gifts (v.1-3)?

Verses 4-7 are some of the most well-known verses in the entire letter, and for good reason. We are given an apostolic definition and description of love. The context is in regard to our fellow saints, but the applications can and should be made to all our relationships, particularly in the family.

2. For each of the traits describing love, relate how the Corinthians were not showing love in the current behaviors revolving around spiritual gifts.

A. Love is patient

B. Love is kind

C. Love is not jealous

D. Love does not brag and is not arrogant

E. Love does not act unbecomingly

F. Love does not seek its own

G. Love is not provoked

H. Love does not take into account a wrong suffered

I. Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth

J. Love bears all things

K. Love believes all things

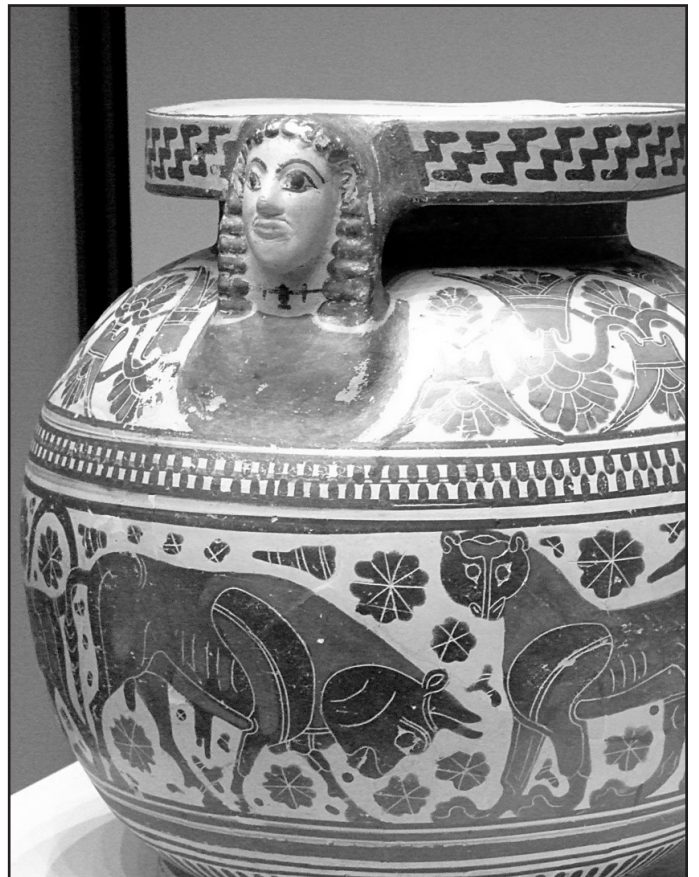
L. Love hopes all things

M. Love endures all things

The latter half of chapter 13 is also very important to our understanding, though many are not familiar with these verses at all. We must learn these truths about the ending of spiritual gifts. God never intended for them to be permanent within the church and this passage tells us when they would end.

3. Verses 9-10 speak of the “*part*” (or partial) and the “*perfect*” (or complete). What are these referring to?
4. When will miraculous spiritual gifts be done away with (v.10)?
5. What comparison does Paul use to illustrate his point (v.11)?
6. In context how do “*we see in a mirror dimly*” (v.12)?
7. When will we “*know fully*” (v.12)?
8. Why is the greatest of these love (v.13)?

Vessel in Corinthian Museum



Paul has just concluded the previous chapter teaching the miraculous gifts would cease and were never intended to last forever. Now in chapter 14 he is addressing a need within the church of the first century when miraculous gifts were still needed. The written word and full revelation of God had not yet been completed, so various gifts were present within the church to facilitate a knowledge of the truth. Many of these were designed to cause the unbeliever to believe.

From chapter 12 through 14 Paul is addressing the problem of people seeing the different miraculous gifts as being graded into categories of importance. Evidently they had placed 'speaking in tongues' at the top of their list. Paul now says to desire the gifts, "but especially that you may prophesy" (14:1).

1. Why does Paul say prophesying is greater than speaking in tongues (v.5)?
2. Will the one speaking in tongues know what he is saying (v.2)? If not, how will he edify himself (v.4)?
3. What was the purpose of interpreting tongues (v.5)?
4. What was the profit of speaking without interpretation (v.6ff)?
5. Who will be the "barbarian" (v.11)?

The instruction is to "*seek to abound for the edification of the church*" (v.12). They were zealous of gifts, which is not condemned, but they were in need of understanding the purpose of the gifts. Paul strongly teaches the need for interpretation of tongues in the assembly.

6. Why is interpretation needed (v.13-17)?
7. What was Paul's desire in using his ability to speak in tongues (v.18-19)?
8. Who were the gifts a sign for (v.22):
 - A. Tongues –
 - B. Prophecy –
9. Why would a visitor to the assembly think everyone is mad (v.23)?
10. Why would a visitor to the assembly become convicted (v.24-25)? Convicted of what?

In verses 26-33 Paul will establish some rules for the use of miraculous gifts in the public assembly. The overall understanding of all these verses is stated in verse 26, "*let all things be done for edification*".

11. List as many of the rules as you see in verses 26-33.

12. *Women are to keep silent in the churches*” (v.34).

A. What is the context about before and after this section?

B. To what are the women to “subject” themselves?

C. Why is it improper for a woman to speak?

D. Why the statement in verse 36? What bearing does this have on the teaching?

13. How do many in religion disobey this teaching in regards to women in the assembly?

To bring to a close the thoughts contained in chapters 12-14, Paul asserts his authority as an apostle. *“The things which I write to you are the Lord’s commandment”* (v.37). Those who fail to recognize that authority would not be recognized. This could mean they would not be recognized, or called upon to speak in the public assembly even if they had a miraculous gift; but I tend to think it speaks of them not being recognized as a faithful member of the local congregation. Church discipline was to be exercised toward those who would not obey this instruction.

Doing all things decently and in order (v.40) was an instruction given to help the church in Corinth with their miraculous gifts. Evidently they were not conducting an orderly assembly, but something much more hap-hazard and spontaneous. Their disorderly conduct was not appropriate, for *“God is not a God of confusion, but of peace”* (v.33). Consider how many today are also claiming miraculous abilities in speaking in tongues and prophesying.

14. How do these groups violate the instruction of verse 40?

15. Give some specifics of how they violate some of the “rules” listed in verses 26-33.

1. How does the gospel save us (v.1-2)?
2. A list of priorities is given in how Paul went about preaching Christ (v.3-8). Recreate the list in your own words.

Paul still considered himself to be the least of the apostles, not even fit to be called an apostle because of the way he persecuted the church earlier in his life. The only reason he was an apostle was “*by the grace of God*” (v.10). That grace was not proven to be vain, for Paul says he labored more than them all.

3. Was Paul pointing to how much more he worked than the other apostles (v.10-11)?

The remainder of chapter 15 deals with the subject of the resurrection of the dead. Evidently there was great misunderstanding and perhaps error being taught in Corinth on this subject. Paul will spend a great deal of time teaching on this, which enlightens us as well. He indicates that he taught about the resurrection of Christ (v.4ff) so “*how do some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead*”?

4. What is the point of religion and faith without the resurrection (v.12-19)

5. Explain verse 21. Who is being discussed?

6. What will happen to the kingdom at “the end” (v.23-24)?

7. What will be the last enemy to be abolished?

8. What was a baptism for the dead (v.29)? Can we be baptized for the dead today?

Paul continues his thought by asking why they are putting their lives in danger if there is no resurrection? If he was doing this only from “human motives” (v.32) then what is the point? If there is no resurrection we might as well live by this motto: “let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” (v.32).

9. How does “*bad company corrupts good morals*” (v.33) fit the context of the discussion about the resurrection?

10. “*Some have no knowledge of God*” (v.34) which was spoken to shame them. What does this phrase mean?

What kind of body do the raised have? Paul indicates this was a foolish question which he is trying to deal with. He compares the body that will be resurrected to that of the plant which results from a seed. We should not expect the resurrected body to be like this one.

11. List some of the kinds of “bodies” Paul mentions (v.39-41).

The extended metaphor is now applied. “*So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable*” (v.42). In order to be very clear on this Paul repeats himself several times using figures to describe the differences.

12. Create a side by side chart in the spaces below from verses 42-49.

Perishable Body

Resurrected Body

13. Who is the “*last Adam*” (v.45)? Why this name?

We will be changed! This perishable must put on the imperishable. This is a “*mystery*” (v.51) which all men long to understand: what will happen after we die? God has revealed some to us so that we can understand and face death without fear.

14. What will be the order of the resurrection (v.51-52)?

15. What is the “*victory*” over death (v.54-57)?

16. Explain the following phrases in verse 58:

A. *Steadfast, Immovable*

B. *Always abounding in the work of the Lord*

C. *Your toil is not in vain* – why not?

A new subject is begun in chapter 16, that of the collection for the saints. In many of his letters Paul is obviously taking up a collection for the needy saints in Jerusalem. He has much more to say about this in his second letter to the Corinthians. At this point he adds to the directions he gave the church in Galatia. This is a clear indication that the teaching in this letter (and other letters) was intended for all the congregations. This is one reason they are in the canon of scripture, and why we study them.

1. When are we to lay by in store?
2. What qualification is put on the amount we give? How does this compare to the Old Testament instruction to Tithe?
3. How did Paul plan to get the money to Jerusalem (v.3-4)?
4. Why might Paul desire to stay with the Corinthians for the winter (v.5-9)?

The conclusion to this letter is similar to others (like Romans) where Paul gives many personal greetings. Several individuals are named. Time will not permit a thorough study of each of these individuals, but you are encouraged to do so on your own. Embedded in these closing remarks are some general statements that are appropriate for all the saints to pay attention to.

5. Why might Timothy have been afraid while with the Corinthians (v.10-11)?
6. Who was Apollos? What was his reputation? What influence might he have in correcting some of the errors in Corinth?
7. Why the instructions in verse 13? How do we apply them today?
8. What pervading thought underlies all we do (v.14)? How had the Corinthians violated this principle?
9. How are we to be in subjection to ministers (v.15-16)?
10. What did the three men from Corinth bring to Paul (v.17-18)?
11. What interesting note is made about Aquila and Prisca in verse 19? Would this have been dangerous?