

## **PART 2: 1 Corinthians Chapter 9**

**<sup>1</sup> Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord? <sup>2</sup> Even though I may not be an apostle to others, surely I am to you! For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.**

There appears to be a change of tone here, and some have suggested that this is part of another letter. Or is Paul, having asserted the rights of others, now asserting his own rights? Or is this the beginning of his defence of his ministry against the “super Apostles” of 2 Cor.? To verse 1, the answer has to be “yes!” The Corinthians are the seal of Paul’s ownership of them. One translation reads “you are the certificate of my Apostleship.”

**<sup>3</sup> This is my defence to those who sit in judgment on me. <sup>4</sup> Don’t we have the right to food and drink? <sup>5</sup> Don’t we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord’s brothers and Cephas? <sup>6</sup> Or is it only I and Barnabas who lack the right to not work for a living?**

“**My defence**” - the Greek is “apologia”, a legal defence against a charge. To “**the right to food and drink we** could possibly add “at the churches expense.” The Apostles have the right to take a “**believing wife**” with them, again at the expense of the churches.

**<sup>7</sup> Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink the milk? <sup>8</sup> Do I say this merely on human authority? Doesn’t the Law say the same thing? <sup>9</sup> For it is written in the Law of Moses: “Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.” Is it about oxen that God is concerned? <sup>10</sup> Surely he says this for us, doesn’t he? Yes, this was written for us, because whoever ploughs and threshes should be able to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. <sup>11</sup> If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? <sup>12</sup> If others have this right of support from you, shouldn’t we have it all the more?**

These verses confirm our addition of “at the churches expense” in verses 3 to 5. Could it be that because Paul did not take his expenses, that he was in some way considered inferior to others? In the muddled thinking of the Corinthians, anything is possible!

**But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.**

I love this verse! So often, God's workers quote "The worker deserves his wages." as suggesting that they have rights to payment. (1 Tim.5:18) They are quite right of course, but we also have the right and privilege of foregoing those payments as we forward the work of Christ. Many claim the first privilege. Few claim the second, yet it is the cornerstone of my life, an immense privilege, and a way of proving God's faithfulness.

**<sup>13</sup> Don't you know that those who serve in the temple get their food from the temple, and that those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? <sup>14</sup> In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel. <sup>15</sup> But I have not used any of these rights. And I am not writing this in the hope that you will do such things for me, for I would rather die than allow anyone to deprive me of this boast. <sup>16</sup> For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! <sup>17</sup> If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me. <sup>18</sup> What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make full use of my rights as a preacher of the gospel.**

Another example of support comes from the Temples of false gods. If it is good enough for the pagan gods, it is good enough for God's workers. Paul says that such provision is commanded by the Lord, but finding such a verse is difficult, unless we go for the worker and his wage of Luke 10:7. However, the Apostle does not demand these rights. Rather he is compelled to preach the Gospel. If he doesn't, "**woe is me!**" He doesn't define the "woe." For him, the highest reward is to serve without reward!

**<sup>19</sup> Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. <sup>20</sup> To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. <sup>21</sup> To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. <sup>22</sup> To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to**

**all people so that by all possible means I might save some.<sup>23</sup> I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.**

What a lovely definition of God's workers. We become **"all things to all people."** This is not to suggest that we compromise or change our position, but, like good Ambassadors, we look for points of agreement and relationship, and then use them to develop opportunity for showing Jesus.

**<sup>24</sup> Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.<sup>25</sup> Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.<sup>26</sup> Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air.<sup>27</sup> No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.**

Corinth held the Isthmian games every three years, so teaching from sport would be very understandable by them. The athletes train hard for a fleeting prize. The Christians of Corinth, getting a **"crown that lasts forever"** should also go into strict training, renouncing those things which would harm them, and developing those things which will aid them in the race. Flabby and half-hearted Christians are not what the gospel needs. There is a goal - aim for it!

So the Apostle keeps in training. **"make a slave to"** is from the boxing vocabulary, and means "to give a black eye to" - which translates as "keep under harsh control, make a slave of." Paul's fear is not that he will lose his salvation, but rather his crown. (See 3:15) This verse has troubled some Christians, but there is no need for fear. Get stuck into the race, and then there will be no question of losing the crown.

## **1 Corinthians Chapter 10**

1 Corinthians is a long letter. It is quite a challenge to hang on and read it to the end! It seems to move from one theme to another, and is often answering questions of which we do not have any trace. Paul moves from the personal and practical to the theological and back again at high speed. We have to be alert, or we will miss the point. But by now we are seeing, I hope, that this is a very

practical letter, designed to help and encourage the church to grow on good foundations. We are about to launch out into more of this, as we move to the climax of the letter, in chapters 12 to 15.

**<sup>1</sup> For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. <sup>2</sup> They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. <sup>3</sup> They all ate the same spiritual food <sup>4</sup> and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. <sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.**

Paul continues to rebuke the Corinthians for their complacency. He points out that their predecessors had high privileges, yet this did not guarantee them the final blessing – most of them perished in the desert.

**“All” (v.1)** This tiny word is of vital importance for theology. God sees nations as a totality, not just the individuals and groups that make it up. The experiences of the nation were for all, whether they were aware of it or not. And in the end “all” perished, even those few who presumably did try to keep to the path of holiness. Only Moses, Joshua and Caleb survived. In our 21<sup>st</sup> century world, we easily forget this vital truth. The consequences of this error can be enormous for our national destiny.

**“Baptism” (v2).** This is not easy for us to grasp, as we are baptised into Jesus Christ. We have to see the Israelite baptism in terms of their uniting with the power and vision of Moses. Is Moses a type for Christ here?

**“Rock” (v.4)** In the O.T., Yahweh is the rock. (Deut.32:15) Paul transfers this title to Christ. I don’t expect Father minded! For Paul, Jesus was the source of the water, physical and spiritual, that the nation needed. How we need such an understanding in our day.

**<sup>6</sup> Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. <sup>7</sup> Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: “The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.” <sup>8</sup> We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. <sup>9</sup> We should not test Christ, as**

**some of them did—and were killed by snakes.<sup>10</sup> And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel.**

From challenging any involvement with idols, Paul moves to sexual immorality - always a big issue in the pagan world, and which was part of idol worship. Examples are quoted - a mass death (Numbers 25:9), and the snakes (Numbers 21:5). "Test" is an interesting word. (Gk "peirazo") A secondary interpretation is "tempt". We should not tempt God, to see how far we can go before he responds – a dangerous game if ever there was one!

**<sup>11</sup> These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come. <sup>12</sup> So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! <sup>13</sup> No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.**

From these examples comes some deeply encouraging teaching on temptation.

\* If you think you are OK, be careful -this might lead to your fall

\* There is no temptation which is unique to you - we all face the same issues daily.

\* God is faithful. He will not abandon us in hard times, nor abandon us when we fall to those temptations which are common to all of us

\* God provides the way out of temptation, so that we can stand the strain of resisting.

**<sup>14</sup> Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry. <sup>15</sup> I speak to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. <sup>16</sup> Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? <sup>17</sup> Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf.**

**"Flee"** – "Run away from." In other words, actively separate yourselves from idolatry.

**“The cup of thanksgiving”** - I came across some words from Chrysostom: “A cup of blessing he called it; since, holding it in our hands, in this way we singing praises to him.”

**“Participation in”** - The Greek word is “koinonia”, which some may be familiar with, as it is the word used to speak of the close relationship which should exist within the Church.

No doctrine of transubstantiation can be deduced from this verse. It is we who are changed as we share in the blood and the body.

What is this verse doing here in the middle of a teaching, not yet complete, on idols? It is here as a contrast. We either koinonia in the fellowship of Christ’s sacrifice, or we koinonia with the idols. Corinthians make your choice!

**<sup>18</sup> Consider the people of Israel: Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar? <sup>19</sup> Do I mean then that food sacrificed to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? <sup>20</sup> No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. <sup>21</sup> You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord’s table and the table of demons. <sup>22</sup> Are we trying to arouse the Lord’s jealousy? Are we stronger than he?**

On we go with more about idols. The meat offered to them is unaffected, because in one way, the idols are nothing. O.K., but the idols cannot be treated as nothing, because of what is behind them - the demonic. If this is true, Christians can have nothing to do with idols, because they cannot koinonia with the Lord and with the demonic.

**“Are we trying?”** Presumably, the Corinthians, or the sensible among them, must already know this. So if they are still participating in idol worship, then they are provoking the Lord - a piece of teaching we have already encountered.

**<sup>23</sup> “I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything”—but not everything is constructive. <sup>24</sup> No one should seek their own good, but the good of others. <sup>25</sup> Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience, <sup>26</sup> for, “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it.”**

We can hear the Corinthian reply “I have the right to do everything”, but Paul has already warned against this attitude. It is true, but it easily leads the weaker brethren astray. In the market place however, buy the food you need. Praying over it will cleanse it of any idol influence.

**<sup>27</sup> If an unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience. <sup>28</sup> But if someone says to you, “This has been offered in sacrifice,” then do not eat it, both for the sake of the one who told you and for the sake of conscience. <sup>29</sup> I am referring to the other person’s conscience, not yours. For why is my freedom being judged by another’s conscience? <sup>30</sup> If I take part in the meal with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of something I thank God for? <sup>31</sup> So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. <sup>32</sup> Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God— <sup>33</sup> even as I try to please everyone in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved. (11:1) Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.**

So how do we behave when asked for a meal? Paul’s advice, the product of experience, is quite clear - eat, unless you are told it is sacrificial meat. Then it cannot be eaten.

**“Do not cause anyone to stumble”** - this sums up the whole of this teaching about idols. At all times, we must keep in mind the weaker brethren, and the purity of the Lord’s Table. This may not look like such a big problem to us, but for the pagan world, this was a massive issue, which the Apostle had to address.

## **1 Corinthians Chapter 11**

**<sup>2</sup> I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the traditions just as I passed them on to you. <sup>3</sup> But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. <sup>4</sup> Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonours his head. <sup>5</sup> But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonours her head—it is the same as having her head shaved. <sup>6</sup> For if a woman does not cover her head, she might as well have her hair cut off; but**

**if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, then she should cover her head.**

Before we tackle this notoriously controversial passage, take a look at **“every woman who prays or prophesies.”** Here in 1 Cor., Paul allows the women to take part in public worship - in this case in prayer and prophecy. Let’s not allow head covering to obscure this powerful teaching for women. Now let’s see what the Apostle teaches. (Not necessarily what we think he teaches!)

That Paul teaches that the man is the head, and the woman to be subordinate is clear. The covering is a sign of authority, and the authority of the man is Christ, whereas the authority of the woman is man. So in worship, a woman should cover her head. Not to do so brings shame on the woman.

**<sup>7</sup> A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. <sup>8</sup> For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; <sup>9</sup> neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. <sup>10</sup> It is for this reason that a woman ought to have authority over her own head, because of the angels. <sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. <sup>12</sup> For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God.**

The man has his glory from God. (Gen.1:26-27). Paul sees this Genesis passage as applying to the man, although biblically, this cannot be supported. The man has his glory directly. The woman stands in a unique relationship to man, which no other part of creation does, and she receives her glory from this position. She is the **“glory of man”**. The angels were considered to be watchers, watching over and viewing the affairs of creation. They must not be offended.

The controversies of this passage have come about because the symbols - the authority of men and the covering of women – have been dragged from their context. Paul stresses the unique value of each sex, and their inter-dependence: **“Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. <sup>12</sup> For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman.”** O.K., so many find this passage difficult, not just for the head covering but for the authority teaching. But underneath it, the Bible is stressing the value of women, in a time and culture that devalued them. And, says the Apostle, this is God’s plan – everything comes from God.

**<sup>13</sup> Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? <sup>14</sup> Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, <sup>15</sup> but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering. <sup>16</sup> If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God.**

Among the Ancients, long hair was, generally, not an acceptable practice for men, but for the woman, it was her glory. I think we can leave this discussion here - we have, I hope, got the general drift of it.

**<sup>17</sup> In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. <sup>18</sup> In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. <sup>19</sup> No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. <sup>20</sup> So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, <sup>21</sup> for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk. <sup>22</sup> Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? Certainly not in this matter!**

We have seen before, and will see again, that the Corinthian church was a very big muddle! Now we read of the public celebration of the Lord's Supper. It's hard to get the picture.

Paul issues a **"directive"** (Gk: "parangello"), which is a serious command. So the tone is going to be tough. Things are wrong, and have to be put right. There were "divisions" (Gk "schismata"). Such divisions should not be part of worship, and especially of the Lord's Supper. This event was a meal - a serious meal and not a token one, to which all brought food. This was not a love-feast, but a display of gluttony, where some had abundance and some none. Drinking in excess seemed to be acceptable. This kind of event shames the Church, which we can see clearly, but they could not see clearly.

**<sup>23</sup> For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, <sup>24</sup> and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." <sup>25</sup> In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the**

**new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”<sup>26</sup> For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.**

This letter was written before any of the Gospels. Here we have possibly the earliest account of the Lord’s words and actions at the Last Supper.

**“Received”** and **“delivered”** are almost technical terms. We receive the tradition from others, and we pass it on to the next generation. But what of **“I”**? Are we reading the tradition here, or a personal revelation to Paul? Personally, I go for the former explanation, but Paul was familiar with receiving direct revelation.

The body was broken for us. The blood is the sacrificial seal on the new covenant. There is no **“take, eat”** here, nor is there any support for transubstantiation. The body was for us - for the community, a sacrifice made available for God to use. Each time the community breaks the bread, it proclaims the death and resurrection of the Lord.

**<sup>27</sup> So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup> Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. <sup>29</sup> For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves. <sup>30</sup> That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. <sup>31</sup> But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment. <sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world.**

So the Corinthians must come in a **“worthy”** manner. In one sense we are all unworthy, but we must come in faith, in quietness of mind and in reverence to this sharing. Any other attitude dishonours the Lord, the church, and, according to Paul, brings weakness, sickness and even death.

**<sup>33</sup> So then, my brothers and sisters, when you gather to eat, you should all eat together. <sup>34</sup> Anyone who is hungry should eat something at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment.**

**And when I come I will give further directions.**

Paul concludes with simple instructions – eat together, in order. If you are really hungry, eat somewhere else! **“And when I come.”** Paul could have had no idea of the terrible nature of this coming visit, known as the “painful visit.” No matter how hard we work as God’s leaders, we can never be sure of our reception by the Church.

## **1 Corinthians Chapter 12**

**<sup>1</sup> Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. <sup>2</sup> You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. <sup>3</sup> Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed,” and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.**

This seems to be another subject that the Corinthians had asked Paul about. Spiritual experiences were common in the Ancient world. But in this chapter, the Apostle spells out with great clarity the Christian position. He starts off by making it clear that spiritual gifts come from the Lord. They are in his ownership, and he gives them to whom he chooses and as he chooses. The radical edge is that he distributes them to all his people.

Beginning to teach the Christians of Corinth, with their limited experience, he defines a spirit filled man by the quality of his speech. A Christian cannot say “Jesus is cursed”. This seems obvious to us, but we live in different times. But in the same way, no Christian can confess “Jesus as Lord” without the inspiration of the Spirit. Again, this seems obvious to us, but not to the young Christians of Corinth, living in confused and pagan times.

**<sup>4</sup> There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. <sup>5</sup> There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. <sup>6</sup> There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.**

“**Gifts**” comes from the same root as the word “Grace.” The gifts are the free gifts of God to his people, because he loves us. Only God can give the gifts, so there can be no cause for a personal sense of superiority over others.

<sup>7</sup> Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. <sup>8</sup> To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, <sup>9</sup> to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, <sup>10</sup> to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. <sup>11</sup> All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

There is a great deal of teaching in these few verses, and in this brief commentary, it's not possible to give too much detail.

Everyone receives some gift. This may look obvious to us, but it was a startling teaching for Corinth, who were priding themselves in their gifts, and looking down on others who, apparently, had nothing. Even today, many of God's people have not grasped this precious truth. But it goes like this- before the foundation of the world, God planned what gift he would give us, and when we opened our lives to Jesus, it became active.

The gifts listed here can be expanded by the lists in Romans and references elsewhere. Here we have:-

- \* **Wisdom.** (Gk: "Sophia") This comes, by the Spirit, from those who have long experience of faith, and can give insight from that experience.
- \* **Knowledge.** (Gk: "gnosis") This is insight into situations given by the Spirit.
- \* **Faith.** (Gk "pistis") This is easily confused with the faith which we have to have to be Christians. In this context, "faith" is that divine compulsion which enables us to do great and amazing things.
- \* **Healing.** Fairly straight forward gift to understand - not so easy to exercise and evaluate!
- \* **Miraculous powers.** (Gk "dunameon") A difficult gift to define, especially in the light of the faith gift. We define it as "mighty works."
- \* **Prophecy.** This includes explaining the present and past, as well as prophesying into situations.

\* **Distinguish between spirits.** A vital gift. John tells us to “test the spirits” (1 John 4:1)

\* **Tongues.** Fairly common in our churches today.

\* **Interpretation of tongues.** Vital to keep out false tongues.

All these gifts come from God, and he gives them to us as he chooses. We can ask, seek and desire a gift. Only the Spirit can decide if we’re to get it. This is the only way to protect the Christian Faith. Otherwise, we quickly become a works based faith. For us, all things come from God.

<sup>12</sup> Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup> For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. <sup>14</sup> Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. <sup>15</sup> Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. <sup>16</sup> And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. <sup>17</sup> If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? <sup>18</sup> But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. <sup>19</sup> If they were all one part, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup> As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

<sup>21</sup> The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” <sup>22</sup> On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, <sup>23</sup> and the parts that we think are less honourable we treat with special honour. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, <sup>24</sup> while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honour to the parts that lacked it, <sup>25</sup> so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. <sup>26</sup> If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.

As with the human body, so with Christ, there is unity within diversity.

<sup>27</sup> Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. <sup>28</sup> And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers,

then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. <sup>29</sup> Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? <sup>30</sup> Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? <sup>31</sup> Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.

**“Now you are the body of Christ”**. What a statement to make and it has lost its power because we are so familiar with it! When the Lord ascended, his “body” remained in the form of his church, his people. We are the expression of the Lord to the world. What is the structure of the body? This is not the only place Paul outlines the ministries of the body. In Ephesians 4 he has Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and teachers.

Apostles release ministry, and are the holders of the tradition, from which they can give good guidance. Prophets share the heart of God with us, as it affects past, present and future events. Teachers help us absorb and apply the teaching of the lord. Miracles and healing have already been defined. **“Helping and guidance”** are not easy to define. “Helping” has been seen as a ministry of assistance, and could almost be that of the diaconate. “Guidance (Gk: “kuberneseis”) is used of the man who pilots a vessel through dangerous waters. We have already met tongues. Finally Paul hammers home again the diversity of the Spirit filled ministry, and then points us to the greatest gift to be desired - agape. (Love)

## **1 Corinthians Chapter 13**

**<sup>1</sup> If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup> If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.**

This chapter is not a digression from the gifts teaching, which will continue. But Paul wants to put all this teaching under the one greater theme - agape. A.V. translates agape as “charity.” This probably originates from the problem with the Latin “amor”, which is an unsuitable word for agape. To grasp this passage, let’s take it verse by verse.

## V.1

No language on earth or in heaven can compare with the practice of agape.

## V.2

No gifts of the Spirit, great though they are, can compare with the practice of agape. This may look surprising, but how can any gift of the Spirit compare with God's agape at Calvary? Seen from the cross, this verse makes sense.

## V.3

If we give all we have to the poor, (an aorist, which means a once and for all action) in a grand gesture, it is as nothing compared to the practice of agape.

These 3 verses are stunning in their implications. Agape is a greater gift than anything else God can give us. It does not require wealth or gifts, so it is available to all, of whatever wealth or ability. The Christian faith rests not on our abilities or property, but on our acceptance of, reflection of and exercise of agape.

**<sup>4</sup> Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup> It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup> Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.**

What is this agape which is so precious? Now the Apostle begins to explain it.

## V.4

\* **"Patient."** – agape has the capacity to endure, and not give up, especially towards people.

\* **"Kind."** - agape always thinks the best, hopes for the best, is supportive, encouraging towards people.

\* **"does not envy, does not boast, is not proud."** – agape is a servant heart, putting the needs of other first, and never being aggressive towards them

**<sup>8</sup> Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. <sup>9</sup> For we know in part and we prophesy in part, <sup>10</sup> but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears.**

## **V.8**

“Love never fails.” The verb here is used to describe the collapse of a wall. Agape does not do that, because it is strong and dependable. Gifts pass away, and this is Paul trying to get the attention of the Corinthians as they exalt themselves in their gifts. “If you want something to exalt in” says Paul “then exalt in a gift which never passes away.”

## **V.9**

All gifts are partial. We see things as though a dark glass. But love is revelatory of all things - it shows us the heart of God. It is permanent, and will last to the end, and beyond. So learning to agape is the best thing we can ever do. We are investing in eternity.

**<sup>11</sup> When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. <sup>12</sup> For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.**

## **V.11**

Another example of “partial” - the difference between a child’s thinking and that of an adult.

## **V.12**

One translation reads “For now we see things as in a mirror, and are puzzled.” One day, all will be clear to us. It’s worth noting that “**as I am fully known**” is another aorist. In other words, it’s not God’s knowledge of us which grows. He knows us fully and completely from the outset. It’s our knowledge of him which grows, and one day will be complete.

**<sup>13</sup> And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.**

**“pistis”, ( faith) “elpis” ( hope) and “agape” (love.)** The magnificent trinity of the Christian walk. But the greatest of all is agape.

## **1 Corinthians Chapter 14**

**<sup>1</sup> Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy. <sup>2</sup> For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to God. Indeed, no one understands them; they utter mysteries by the Spirit. <sup>3</sup> But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort. <sup>4</sup> Anyone who speaks in a tongue edifies themselves, but the one who prophesies edifies the church. <sup>5</sup> I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongue unless someone interprets, so that the church may be edified.**

We can **“desire”** the gifts. The Greek word has the emphasis on pursuit with persistence. But most of all, desire prophecy - the gift of sharing the heart of God for events, past, present and future, and for revealing God’s plans and ways to the people of God. “Tongues” are inferior to prophecy, because of the unintelligibility of the words. Prophecy, on the other hand, **“strengthens, encourages and comforts”**. “Prophecy builds up Christian character, strengthens God’s people, and gives them comfort in their distress.” Paul wants both gifts, but finds in prophecy something greater, because it builds up the church. This is good teaching, but is probably inspired by the situation at Corinth, where tongues appeared to be running riot.

**<sup>6</sup> Now, brothers and sisters, if I come to you and speak in tongues, what good will I be to you, unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or word of instruction? <sup>7</sup> Even in the case of lifeless things that make sounds, such as the pipe or harp, how will anyone know what tune is being played unless there is a distinction in the notes? <sup>8</sup> Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle? <sup>9</sup> So it is with you. Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air. <sup>10</sup> Undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world, yet none of them is without meaning. <sup>11</sup> If then I do not**

grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and the speaker is a foreigner to me. <sup>12</sup> So it is with you. Since you are eager for gifts of the Spirit, try to excel in those that build up the church. <sup>13</sup> For this reason the one who speaks in a tongue should pray that they may interpret what they say. <sup>14</sup> For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. <sup>15</sup> So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my understanding; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my understanding. <sup>16</sup> Otherwise when you are praising God in the Spirit, how can someone else, who is now put in the position of an inquirer, say “Amen” to your thanksgiving, since they do not know what you are saying? <sup>17</sup> You are giving thanks well enough, but no one else is edified.

<sup>18</sup> I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. <sup>19</sup> But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.

<sup>20</sup> Brothers and sisters, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults. <sup>21</sup> In the Law it is written:

“With other tongues  
and through the lips of foreigners  
I will speak to this people,  
but even then they will not listen to me,  
says the Lord.”

Most of this is the Apostle repeating what he has already said. Tongues were obviously a big issue in Corinth, and in his mind.

<sup>22</sup> Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is not for unbelievers but for believers. <sup>23</sup> So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and inquirers or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind? <sup>24</sup> But if an unbeliever or an inquirer comes in while everyone is prophesying, they are convicted of sin and are brought under judgment by all, <sup>25</sup> as the secrets of their hearts are laid bare. So they will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, “God is really among you.”

This is quite a challenging passage. Tongues, says the Apostle, are a sign for unbelievers. It’s not easy to evaluate exactly what Paul means here, nor is the

next statement **“prophecy is for believers.”** We, in our day have not found this exclusivity helpful. Tongues do help believers, and prophecy does challenge unbelievers. Perhaps again, the Apostle is speaking to a specific situation in Corinth – subsequent verses make this a little clearer.

**<sup>26</sup> What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up. <sup>27</sup> If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. <sup>28</sup> If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and to God. <sup>29</sup> Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. <sup>30</sup> And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. <sup>31</sup> For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. <sup>32</sup> The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. <sup>33</sup> For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord’s people.**

This is an interesting passage, as it gives us an idea of how the church in Corinth conducted its services. Was there a liturgical order, or did members suggest things to make up the worship? If so, who controlled the flow of these things? The guiding principle seems to be that everything must build up the church. “One at a time” suggests that there was little order in the way things were being done. All tongues should be interpreted, or not given. Prophets are also encouraged to be disciplined, and their words must be tested. Prophecy **“in turn”**, so that there is some decency and order in the assembly. God is not a God of disorder.

**<sup>34</sup> Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. <sup>35</sup> If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.**

These verses are a puzzle. They would be clear enough if it was not for **“But every woman who prays or prophesies.” (11:5)** The generally accepted position is that things were so lax in Corinth, that Paul had to take a hard line. But this hard line is not universal. We have to make of this what we want to make of it. The arguments and discussion could fill a hundred books - and have!

**<sup>36</sup> Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? <sup>37</sup> If anyone thinks they are a prophet or otherwise gifted by the Spirit, let them acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command. <sup>38</sup> But if anyone ignores this, they will themselves be ignored. <sup>39</sup> Therefore, my brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. <sup>40</sup> But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way**

Ouch! The Corinthians are getting a slap on the hand here, for thinking that their chaotic behaviour is God's will. Paul insists that they listen to him, and asks the prophets to affirm that what he is saying is right. Unfortunately, the Corinthians did not take kindly to this kind of thing. When Paul gave them the "slap of all slaps" in the "painful letter" (which is lost to us) they reacted very harshly against him. But despite their response, Paul is right - God is a God of order, and our worship patterns must reflect this truth, whatever denomination or group we are, and however free we want to be.

## **1 Corinthians Chapter 15**

If you have been following this commentary, then I have good news - the end is in sight! What a long and complex document this letter is, but how exciting and relevant. Its greatest joy is that it is written to a live church - to real people who are struggling to find the way to live for Christ in a very hostile environment. But before we come to rest at 16:24, we must climb the biggest mountain of all. It's a tough climb, but the view from 15:58 is fantastic.

**<sup>1</sup> Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. <sup>2</sup> By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.**

He begins by "**reminding them**" of the Gospel "**you received.**" (Another aorist – they had received it and there was no going back.) The Corinthians were a chaotic group, and Paul calls them back to the foundation on which they stand. From this position, he is going to make his appeal to them.

**<sup>3</sup> For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. <sup>6</sup> After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. <sup>7</sup> Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, <sup>8</sup> and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.**

This is a very early piece of writing, taking us back to the period close to the death of Jesus. It shows us that the gospel was already well formed – this kind of formulation is called the “kerygma” of the Early Church. Paul is passing on to us what he has received – and the heart of it is the death of Christ for our sins. This was, from the earliest times, the centre of faith, and **“according to the scriptures”** assures us that it wasn’t an afterthought by the Father, but part of his plan.

The appearances confirm the resurrection. For those who opposed the resurrection, this was a serious problem. There were, it seems, still plenty of eye witnesses around to support Paul. These people made it impossible for the Jews to disprove the resurrection. Cephas (Peter) and the Twelve can be identified, but the appearance to the five hundred is not so easy to verify. **“James”** could be the Lord’s brother, although we have no way of verifying it. His family showed little interest in him while he was alive. Interestingly, Paul places his revelation on the Damascus Road in the same category as the other appearances he has quoted.

**<sup>9</sup> For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. <sup>10</sup> But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. <sup>11</sup> Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.**

Paul had a constant problem with his claim to be one of the Apostles. Originally, this band was confined to those who had seen Jesus and been his disciples during his lifetime. But Paul claims that the group is wider - it also included him. In this letter, he has made the group even larger, by his teaching on apostleship. By his claim to apostleship, he ensured, perhaps by accident, that the gift continued

within the body of Christ. His unworthiness was, in effect, one of his qualifications to this calling.

**<sup>12</sup> But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? <sup>13</sup> If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. <sup>14</sup> And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. <sup>15</sup> More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. <sup>16</sup> For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. <sup>17</sup> And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. <sup>18</sup> Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. <sup>19</sup> If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.**

Some at Corinth were preaching that there was no resurrection. They probably believed in the immortality of the soul, but not in a bodily resurrection. So that means they are denying the resurrection of Jesus, and if that is not a fact, then the whole Gospel is not a fact, and our preaching is “useless”. (Greek word means “empty”) We are liars when we preach about the saving power of Jesus, our faith is a waste of time, and those who have died are lost. We become a pathetic sight – preaching a gospel which is not true.

**<sup>20</sup> But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. <sup>21</sup> For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.**

Paul’s answer is simple, and needs no explanation. **“been raised”** is a perfect tense. Done, and unchangeable!

**<sup>23</sup> But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. <sup>24</sup> Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. <sup>25</sup> For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. <sup>26</sup> The last enemy to be destroyed is death. <sup>27</sup> For he “has put everything under his feet.” Now when it says that “everything” has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. <sup>28</sup> When he has done**

**this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.**

There is an order in resurrection. First the Lord, and then, when he comes, those who have given their lives to him. After this, comes the **“end.”** (Gk: “Telos.”) When all other powers have been **“destroyed”**, (Gk: “put down, render null and void.”) he gives all to his Father. Death will be robbed of all power over us. **“Made subject”** has caused some to question, as it appears to go against our Trinitarian theology. But in fact, it is the work of Christ which is subject to the Father, not the Lord himself. Then our Trinitarian God can be **“all in all.”** Calvin comments “all things will be brought back to God, as their beginning and end, that they may be closely bound to him.”

**<sup>29</sup> Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them? <sup>30</sup> And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour? <sup>31</sup> I face death every day—yes, just as surely as I boast about you in Christ Jesus our Lord. <sup>32</sup> If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus with no more than human hopes, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”**

**<sup>33</sup> Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.” <sup>34</sup> Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame.**

Baptism for the dead has, as can be imagined, caused a lot of discussion. Apparently Christians at Corinth were being baptised for those who have already died and were not baptised. Paul does not approve of this practice, but is quite willing to use it as part of his discussion and teaching. If the dead are not raised, why do you perform this meaningless and useless ritual? He quickly moves on from this practice to his own experience. Why, he asks, would I endure all I endure for the sake of a lie?

**“I fought wild beasts in Ephesus.”** We have no knowledge of this incident, although the aorist tense points to a specific occasion. We could take this metaphorically - “Witnessing for Christ in Ephesus was like fighting wild beasts!” We cannot be certain about this expression, but the Corinthians would have known of the many occasions when, for the sake of the gospel, he was in great danger. **“Come back to your senses”** has the meaning of becoming sober after

drunkenness. They have lost their senses says Paul. Now stop this foolishness. In the cold light of day, see what I am saying, trust it and let's move on.

**<sup>35</sup> But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?" <sup>36</sup> How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. <sup>37</sup> When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. <sup>38</sup> But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. <sup>39</sup> Not all flesh is the same: People have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. <sup>40</sup> There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendour of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendour of the earthly bodies is another. <sup>41</sup> The sun has one kind of splendour, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendour.**

Paul is trying to answer those who do not believe in a resurrected body. The next question they will ask is "What's this body like?" They were probably imagining a rotting corpse or a skeleton! He reminds them that there is an example to hand - seed is sown, it dies, and something related but new comes to life. All this is under the sovereignty of God. There are "heavenly bodies." It was assumed that there were heavenly beings, and their bodies are different from our earthly bodies, as fits their function. The earthly body may be glorious, but the heavenly body is more glorious.

We are slowly working our way along a linear argument here. From seeds, we have come to heavenly bodies, and their greater glory. Now on to the physical heavenly bodies, all of which are different, and reflect different amounts of glory.

**<sup>42</sup> So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; <sup>43</sup> it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; <sup>44</sup> it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.**

**If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. <sup>45</sup> So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. <sup>46</sup> The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. <sup>47</sup> The**

**first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven.<sup>48</sup> As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven.<sup>49</sup> And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.**

Verses 42 and 43 depend on our accepting the whole of the argument of the previous verses. If we do, they are beautiful. We are raised **“imperishable.”** This is the quality of our lives when we are raised. The Greek view was that the body was corruptible, subject to decay. Paul says “Quite right as far as it goes, but go further!”

**“Dishonour”** from the Greek word meaning having no rights. A corpse has no rights, but Paul replies “It doesn’t need any - we are not talking about corpses but the fruit of them!”

“Natural” means that our bodies are well adapted for life here on earth. But something different is needed for resurrection - spiritual bodies, which are adapted for the spiritual world.

**<sup>50</sup> I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.<sup>51</sup> Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—<sup>52</sup> in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.<sup>53</sup> For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.<sup>54</sup> When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”**

**<sup>55</sup> “Where, O death, is your victory?  
Where, O death, is your sting?”**

**<sup>56</sup> The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.<sup>57</sup> But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

So the inevitable conclusion – however much we build our faith and hope here on earth, our “flesh and blood” cannot enter in to that which is waiting for us. We have to be changed. Those who are living cannot enter the kingdom in bodies of flesh and blood. We shall all be changed - and this is a mystery, and a joy. The

trumpet and the change in a “flash” are O.T and N.T. teachings. Once the Lord returns, it will all happen very fast, and we will “put on” our spiritual bodies. Then it is all over. Sin is “swallowed up. Jesus has fulfilled all the conditions of the law, and we are free to take on immortality and reign with him. Wow!

**<sup>58</sup> Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain**

Death and sin cannot trouble us, so we can “stand firm.” Nothing is wasted.

What a fantastic chapter. It started out as a proof of the resurrection, and finishes up with deep and lasting encouragement for all who love the Lord.

## **1 Corinthians Chapter 16**

**<sup>1</sup> Now about the collection for the Lord’s people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. <sup>2</sup> On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. <sup>3</sup> Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup> If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me.**

From the outset there were tensions between the Jewish Christian church in Jerusalem, and the Gentile church. The Jerusalem church was small and poor, and was eventually to lose its influence to Antioch, Rome, Alexandria and Constantinople. Apostle Paul had the idea of the collection, to try and bridge the gap between Jerusalem and the gentiles. So he collected money from the Gentile churches to help the Jerusalem church. This caused him a lot of problems, and didn’t really solve the issue. Paul was standing against the flow of history.

**<sup>5</sup> After I go through Macedonia, I will come to you—for I will be going through Macedonia. <sup>6</sup> Perhaps I will stay with you for a while, or even spend the winter, so that you can help me on my journey, wherever I go. <sup>7</sup> For I do not want to see you now and make only a passing visit; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. <sup>8</sup> But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, <sup>9</sup> because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.**

Paul's travelling plans, as we have already seen elsewhere, caused a lot of problems for him. He made them, and then, his opponents said, he didn't keep them. He is going to visit them on a Macedonian tour, but wants to spend longer with them. Knowing of the touchiness of his opponent, he has to dispel the idea that Corinth will just be another on the itinerary. Rather they were chosen and singled out for a longer visit. Currently the opportunities in Ephesus are very good, although not unopposed.

**<sup>10</sup> When Timothy comes, see to it that he has nothing to fear while he is with you, for he is carrying on the work of the Lord, just as I am. <sup>11</sup> No one, then, should treat him with contempt. Send him on his way in peace so that he may return to me. I am expecting him along with the brothers.**

**<sup>12</sup> Now about our brother Apollos: I strongly urged him to go to you with the brothers. He was quite unwilling to go now, but he will go when he has the opportunity.**

Timothy was young, and inexperienced. Paul urges the Corinthians to treat him with care and respect, despite his years. **"Treat him with contempt"** suggests that this is what Paul feared, and knowing the Corinthians as we now do, he was probably right to be apprehensive. Apollos was highly regarded by the Corinthians, and they want to see him again.

**<sup>13</sup> Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. <sup>14</sup> Do everything in love.**

**"Be on your guard"** is a challenge to permanent wakefulness, and **"stand firm in your faith"** is a challenge to a faith firmly grounded in Christ. In both of these virtues the Corinthians have been shown to be lacking.

**<sup>15</sup> You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the Lord's people. I urge you, brothers and sisters, <sup>16</sup> to submit to such people and to everyone who joins in the work and labours at it. <sup>17</sup> I was glad when Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus arrived, because they have supplied what was lacking from you. <sup>18</sup> For they refreshed my spirit and yours also. Such men deserve recognition.**

**"First converts"** is a problem, because Paul had a few converts in Athens. But it was Stephanas and his family which warmed Paul's heart most, and promised a

future harvest, flowing though Corinth and not Athens. This family devoted themselves to the Lord's family – something which has been lacking in Corinth, and a good example of how to live. This is God's way, and the church in Corinth should seek to follow it. Sadly, as 2 Corinthians shows, they chose a different and more divisive way. "Lacking from you" could be financial support, or their love and concern. Knowing them, probably both!

**<sup>19</sup> The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house. <sup>20</sup> All the brothers and sisters here send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.**

**<sup>21</sup> I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand.**

**<sup>22</sup> If anyone does not love the Lord, let that person be cursed! Come, Lord!**

**<sup>23</sup> The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.**

**<sup>24</sup> My love to all of you in Christ Jesus. Amen.**

So, with a string of personal greetings, the assurance that he was the author of the letter, a challenge to anyone who doesn't love the Lord, the "grace" and a greeting of love, this vast and incredibly valuable epistle comes to its quiet end.

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