

1 CORINTHIANS

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1 CORINTHIANS 1:1-17

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1:1 Paul called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,–

This is the introduction of Paul's letter to the Corinthians. *Paul was called by God to be an apostle* which means he was appointed by God to be a messenger, a witness, a missionary to carry the gospel of Christ to the Gentiles. No man neither himself nor any other man puts him into the ministry. God alone chooses and calls him! This is Paul's declaration of his call. Paul is called to be a brother to other believers. Paul called Sosthenes our brother, which means he was a brother in Christ, and probably Paul's secretary, a former leader of the Corinthians synagogue who had become a brother of Christ.

1:2 Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their's and our's:–

Paul addresses his greeting/salutation to the church of God in Corinth. He's addressing the saved and sanctified saints of God in the church. He lets them know who they are. They are sanctified by Christ Jesus and so they are saints. The word "*saints*" means set apart, consecrated, sacred, and live a holy life—all for the glory of God. They were set apart for God's special use. Paul's aim in the Epistle is to bring the Corinthians "*state*" into closer alignment with their positional "*standing*." Since that Corinthians are claiming the family name, Paul expects them to live in conformity to the family of Christ. All believers in whatever place they might be, that call upon the Name of Jesus is included in this letter showing forth that Christ is the all-inclusive One and belongs to all believers. The emphasis of course is upon the unity of all who call upon the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1:3 Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the greeting Paul used in all his letters.

- The church and believers experiences grace and peace. "*Grace*" means the favor of God. "*Peace*" is the result or fruit of God's favor. This grace and peace comes from God who is identified as the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Father and the Son are shown to be of equal status, yet clearly distinguished.

1:4 I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ;– The direction of the thanks is directed to God with concerns on behalf of the Corinthians. Grace was a common Christian greeting and Paul was eternally grateful for the grace of God given by Christ Jesus. And because of His grace we see that it's something that's underserved and unmerited. We are blessed because of God's grace and for no other reason. Grace is the believer's resource and supply.

1:5 That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge;– God's grace enriched the Corinthian believers in everything where they experienced the favor of God in every area of life. They were blessed with the gifts of utterance and of knowledge. The church and its believers were enabled by God's grace to know and understand the truth of God's Word and to speak the truth to a lost and dying world.

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1:6 Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you:— This is a reference to the moment of salvation when the gospel was heard and believed and settled in their hearts. At that moment the enabling of verse 4 took place because one became a recipient of the grace of God. The gifts and grace of God confirmed the testimony of Christ in the hearts of believers.

1:7 So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:— Paul moves from the specific provisions of speech and knowledge to God's general provision of all gifts that a believer needs to serve Him. The gifts and grace of God brought full provision to the Corinthian believers. **As having the evidence of the message of Christ confirmed within them, they will lack no spiritual gift. The Corinthian church members had all the spiritual gifts they needed to live the Christian life and to witness for Christ.** God had already provided them with everything and continues to provide them with everything. They were to wait with eager anticipation for Christ's coming.

1:8 Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Since the Gospel had been faithfully preached and responded to by the Corinthian believers, they are now privileged to wait upon the Second Coming of Jesus Christ who in turn shall also confirm them in that day. In the day of our Lord's return He will confirm or establish us as blameless before His heavenly Father. In that day when we enter heaven, we will not have all our sins and shortcomings flashed before us for everyone to see. When the day of the Lord Jesus Christ comes, *"He is going to present to Himself "the church" in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing: but that she should be holy and blameless"* Eph.5:27.

1:9 God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. The believer's resource and supply is God Himself. This strengthens the thought with assurance of God's faithfulness. When God calls someone unto salvation, He is faithful to that call. If He called us when we were lost and wretched, He surely will not cease to be faithful to that call now that we have come into fellowship with His Son, Jesus. His glorious call has one specific purpose: to be in fellowship with His Son Jesus Our Lord! The longing of God's heart is for men to know his Son. And this is not on a temporary basis; it means eternal fellowship. That word *"fellowship"* means partnership and oneness, and includes both union and communion.

1:10 Now I beseech you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. The first major concern of the Apostle Paul as he addressed this letter to the Corinthians had to do with their divisive spirit. There is a difference between having opposing viewpoints and being *divisive*. The word *"division"* means to split, to rend, to tear apart, schism. This division was not outside but inside the church. A divisive church is seen fuming and fighting. Paul approaches the problem by first denouncing their factional spirit. He introduces his appeal for unity. He uses a significant way in which he addresses them. He *"beseeches"* them meaning *"I call you to my side, let's share together"*, talk the matter over; beg, plead, and then addresses them as *"brethren."* He does not have fire in his eyes or a spirit of rebuke and fight in his heart. He comes by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. He puts Christ in front, whom they reverence. The sole purpose is that they all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among them. They are to be in perfect union together— unity in speech and fellowship; having the same mind and judgment. The mind would involve thoughts, emotions, and reasonings. The judgment would involve conclusions, goals, and objectives.

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1:11 For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentious among you. The contention was so severe that some believer of the household of Chloe went to Paul about the matter. Paul is writing to Corinth from Ephesus. The word "*contentions*" mean strifes, quarrels, and factions. They were arguing and splitting into groups, contending and quarreling over something. There were even cliques in the church and it got back to Paul. *Contention* is one of the terrible "*works of the flesh*."

1:12 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. There appear to have been four rival parties.

1. Those who professed to follow Paul—gifted in church order and uplifting believers.
2. Those who professed to follow Appolos—gifted orator from Alexandria.
3. Those who professed to follow Cephas; Peter—one with Christ in His earthly ministry.
4. Those who professed to follow Christ—and not a man.

The three great teachers of early years, around whom people gathered to hear and receive the message of the Gospel were preachers united in their message, however, their personalities attracted different people. There was the problem in preaching ability and style; turning liberty into license. And some denied needing or receiving the help of any man. Now the church was in danger of dividing. The message should have been more important than the messenger.

1:13 Is Christ divided: was Paul crucified for you" or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?— Three things were asked of the Corinthians:

1. *Is Christ divided?* In other words, "*Is part of Christ over here with this group or clique or is Christ part of the other group? Which one rules; who is Lord; Is Christ within the church or is He in pieces?*"
2. *Was Paul crucified for you?* Paul was not the one crucified for the Corinthians! He was not the Savior for the Corinthians nor of any other body of believers! He did not hang on the cross to suffer in our place.
3. *Were you baptized in the name of Paul?* A believer is only to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose Name has all authority. Jesus did not baptize anyone personally (Jh.4:2), but His disciples did in the Name of Jesus.

Their allegiance should have been to Christ and their support to the servants of Christ. The believer confesses the Lord Jesus Christ and gives testimony that he is committing his life to follow the Lord.

1:14 I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius;— Paul adamantly denies that he ever attempted to secure a personal following of believers when he said thank God I didn't baptized any of you except (Crispus and Gaius). Crispus was the leading ruler of the Jewish synagogue at Corinth. He was led to Christ and baptized by Paul personally (Acts 18:8). Gaius was Paul's host when he was in Corinth (Rom. 16:23).

1:15 Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. For no believer can rightfully accuse him of seeking to form a following or clique and baptizing them in his (Paul's) name. He's not trying to cause any division.

1:16 And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. Paul now recalls another he has baptized, Stephanas. He is one of the three messengers who delivered the Corinthian letter to Paul. Paul baptized all members of his household (1Cor.16:5).

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1:17 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. Paul had a pacific assignment. It was not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel, adding, not with wisdom of words; not with eloquent speech; words. The message was to be about the cross lest the big words spoken overshadow Christ and make Him of none effect, empty or deprived of substance. The success of the Gospel relies in the plain doctrine of a crucified Lord. It was not about being a great orator with Greek philosophy. The truth needed no artificial dress-up. It alone carries with it the "*power of God unto salvation*" (Rom. 1:16). The Corinthians can be healed if they see the distinction of evangelizing the true mission of Christ on the cross, using God's wisdom more so than with speech that cannot be understood or received.

SUMMARY:

¹*Division* in the Corinthian church was the first problem addressed by Paul. He introduces the thoughts of this passage with an appeal for unity. Paul is emphasizing that as Christians we are a part of God's family and share a unity that runs deeper than that of blood brothers and sisters. To "speak the same thing, "allow for no divisions," and be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" does not require that everyone believe exactly the same. There is a difference between having opposing viewpoints and being *divisive*. It seems that quarrels had split them into factions and there appears to have been four rival parties within the Church (**1: 11-17**).

1. Those who professed to follow *Paul* who had founded the church.
2. Those who counted themselves to be followers of *Apollos*, a native of Alexandria.
3. Those who claimed to follow *Peter*, more favorable to Jewish forms and ceremonies.
4. Those who renounced all the others and claimed only *Christ*.

With the many churches and styles of worship available today, we could get caught up in this same game of "my preacher is better than yours". Paul makes it clear that God's message is much more important than any human messenger. In view of all these *divisions* Paul says that he is thankful that very few in Corinth were ever baptized by him (1: 14). Some speakers use a lot of impressive words but they are weak in content. Paul is stressing that solid content and practical help is what is important for the listener. The persuasive power should be in the story and not in the storyteller. Paul concludes his exhortation regarding the *divisions* in the church with a call to evangelize (1: 17).

APPLICATION:

I must never let my appreciation for any teacher, preacher or author cause me to follow a man rather than the message of God's Word. My allegiance must be to Jesus Christ.

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¹ <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/divisions-in-the-church/>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

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SYNOPSIS:

In the **5th Chapter**, Paul has introduced the subject of judging when dealing with immorally in the church; disorder in the church. A man was having an affair with his mother (or stepmother) and the church members were trying to ignore the situation. Paul shows them that the responsibility for judging, lies with the assembly. They had a responsibility to maintain standards or morality found in God's Word. We're not talking about judging everybody. We're talking about judging flagrant (*deliberate and brazen*) sin that opposes His holiness and has a dangerous influence on the lives of other believers. He said to "*remove the evil cancer*" because it will soon infect others. Paul goes on to say that it wasn't their job to judge outsiders, it's God's job; but as long as they were members of the church sinning in this manner, they were to deal with the members in such a way.

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I CORINTHIANS 6:4-20

NEXT 8:1-13

SYNOPSIS:

In **1 Corinthians 6:4-11** Paul now goes to show that even in matters of civil dispute, the responsibility for settling such matters lies with the leadership of the local church. Paul develops the matter by first introducing the problem—Christians suing one another, (v.1)—an inquiry. Then in verses 2 and 3—an interpretation, he shows the absurdity (*ridiculousness*) of stooping to a pagan judge to adjudicate (*settle; resolve*) some matter between two brethren in Christ. Believers being members of the Corinthian church are bringing *lawsuits* against each other. Finally, in verses 4-11, Paul traces the biblical principles underlying his instructions—an inconsistency.

1. Can they at least find one person wise enough to decide; settle these arguments?
2. Why not just accept mistreatment and leave it alone; it's far more honorable to the Lord!
3. Don't you know that the unrighteous shall not enter the kingdom of God?

They had to remember that there was a time when some of them were just like those they were judging—having immoral behavior and such... but now their sins were washed away; set-apart for God, and He accepted them because of what Christ and the Spirit has done for them.

6:12 All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Apparently the church was quoting and misapplying their understanding by saying frequently "*I can do anything if Christ has not said no or all things are lawful for me.*" Some Christians in Corinth were excusing many of their sins by saying 1) Christ had taken away all sin, and so they had complete freedom to live as they pleased or 2) what they were doing was not strictly forbidden by Scripture. Paul's answer to both these excuses were: 1) While Christ has taken away our sin, this does not give us freedom to go on doing what we know is wrong. Scripture specifically forbids many sins. 2) Some actions are not sinful in themselves, but they are not appropriate because they can control our lives and lead us away from God. Anything we do that hurts rather than help others are not right. All things are not wise, some things enslave; they do not build self-image and self-respect. No man is to become the slave to anything on this earth; he is to control all things and to be enslaved by none of these: not food, drink, drugs, substance, desire, urge, or anything else.

6:13 Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body. In the matter of eating, God has given us an appetite for food and stomachs to digest it. For example, it is helpful to eat fish; it is unprofitable to eat poison berries. And our appetites shouldn't control us. We should not eat more than we need. It is also advisable to keep active for the sake of the body; it is harmful to lie around and become inactive. Don't place so much importance on eating, because some day God will do away with both stomachs and food. The point is: the body is not to lose control and give in to indulgence. Now, concerning fornication and immorality of the body, it was an acceptable practice within Paul's day, and the practice was carried over into the church by some of its members. Just as the body desires food and must have food for normal functioning; the body was really made for the Lord, not for fornication and sexual gratification. Since God created the body of man, the body was designed for the Lord, and the Lord for the body, which means the body is the Lord's dwelling place. The present body is temporary, but the immortal body with the Lord is

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permanent and eternal. *"For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality"* 1Cor.15:53 ESV.

6:14 And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power. This relationship will never perish. Paul is referring to the believer's body to be changed, raised, gloried, and made heavenly. God is able to raise our bodies up by His power, just as He's done for the Lord Jesus Christ. *"He that raised Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you"* Rom.8:11.

6:15 Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid.²This verse is speaking of how bad it is for a Christian to commit a sin of the body, because it includes the house of the Holy Spirit in that sin. We have been bought with a price and therefore our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. All of us are individual parts making up the body of Christ. And while the believer's body is a spiritual temple in which the Spirit of Christ lives, the body is not designed to be the member of an harlot, nor of any other immoral partner. The goddess Aphrodite was in Corinth. It employed more than a thousand prostitutes, and sex was part of the worship ritual. Paul states that even if it was popular in that culture, it was forbidden if you were Christians! Sexual sin not only harms and controls, but also perverts God's plan and purpose for the bodies of His people! We are to be in union with the Lord!

6:16 What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. As if the Corinthians didn't know. Paul had to reaffirm the purpose of their bodies. Joining with an harlot was not alright. We are members of Christ; representatives of Him on this earth, therefore, we are not to be joined to an harlot, or any illicit partner. This sexual sin connects their bodies and they become one body, which makes it perverted and unholy. This is not like marriage when their body is joined to their mate. In marriage this kind of union would be a holy union stamped by God. Sexual relationship establishes a spiritual bond. The two become one flesh. Part of your being is given to that person, and it means that a Christian who commits sexual immorality involves his Lord.

6:17 But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. The connections of these two verses show that in the above verse, there is a connection of one body and this verse shows that there is a connection of one spirit; one is physical (above), the other is spiritual (latter). We are joined unto the Lord in salvation and it involves the Person of the Holy Spirit whom the believer receives. Our spirit connecting with His Spirit brings about the highest unity—with the Lord.

6:18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. Make it your habit to flee from *"fornication"* (*Sex outside of marriage is a sin against your own body*). One should not stay around to reason about it or debate the matter, to see if there is another maneuver around it. Don't entertain even the thought. You remember Joseph fleeing from Potiphar's wife? That's what this scripture is saying. Why? - Because, no other sin affects the body as this one does.

1. *It lowers the person to the level of an animal.* It declares that life is to be lived on the level of passion and instinct, ignoring the life of the spirit.
2. *It looks upon the other person only as an instrument—* A tool to satisfy urges and passions. It ignores the satisfaction and peace of heart and mind with the Lord.

² <http://www.lovetheLord.com/books/1corinthians/09.html>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

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3. *It corrupts the temple of God.* The body belongs to Christ, therefore, if a believer commits immorality, he is joining the very body of Christ with an harlot.
4. *Man's basic nature is affected and disturbed.* His love, loyalty, and life are not focused, they are scattered and it causes reactions in his body.
5. *He soon feels and senses guilt when he is all alone thinking about his life.* He may not call it guilt but may say I feel bad. Because God's Spirit lives there, he triggers that sense and awareness that things are not right.

Other sins (*like thievery and lying*) may profane only the outer courts of the temple (outside *the body*); but this sin penetrates with its deadly foulness into the very Holy of Holies (*the inner man living within; the Holy Ghost, bringing with it a peculiar type of filthiness that defiles the temple*). The sin is against your own body which is the temple of the Holy Ghost.

6:19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?— The Holy Ghost comes from God to live within our bodies. The price has been paid; the price of the blood of Jesus dying on the cross, which makes us not even own these bodies we live in. Our bodies belong to God when we accepted Him as Lord and Savior!

6:20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. Because of this price paid, we are to glorify God in our body and in our spirit which He (Jesus) so freely gave His life for; didn't ask us to pay anything. We are not to use our bodies as instruments of sin.

SUMMARY:

Paul had to tell the Corinthians that they could not do everything that was lawful for them because some things would not be beneficial for them. If you eat which you are free to do, but too much of a good thing brings you into bondage to that thing. Paul lets them know to have self-control. The meat is for the belly and the belly for the meat, but one day it will be destroyed by the Lord. As far as sexual immorality; fornication is concerned, it is not for the body, but the Lord is for the body. Although God is able to destroy the body, he is able to raise it up by His own power, just as He raised Christ from the dead. Paul wanted them to know that their bodies are members of Christ, not instruments of sin of an harlot! God forbids this! If they join to an harlot then their bodies become one in the flesh (**6:12-17**).

But when you are joined unto the Lord you become one in spirit, therefore, flee sexual immorality or fornication. The sin outside the body is not like the sin of committing fornication, because you are sinning against your own body. The body is to be the temple of the Holy Ghost who lives in you, from God. There was no greater price paid for our bodies than Jesus dying and shedding His blood on the cross, making these bodies His possession. And by Him living in our bodies, we are to glorify Him in our bodies and in our spirits which He possesses (**6:18-20**).

APPLICATION:

We harm our bodies in sexual sin. We glorify God by not harming our bodies in sexual sin! Where will you carry God?

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INTRODUCTION:

The Corinthian believers needed help; they needed answers to questions; guidelines that would help them as they lived in the midst of a sinful and pleasure-mad world. Therefore, someone wrote Paul and asked him about meat offered to idols, about the questionable pleasure and social functions of day to day life. Paul deals directly with the Corinthian problem, but he also uses the issue and expands it to include the whole question of Christian liberty and personal rights: Can a Christian do his own thing? Is a Christian honestly set free in Christ? If not, what restraints are put upon his liberty or freedom?

The sacrifices were food offerings, symbolically presented in worship to the god of whose temple they were given. The particular issue was that of eating food that had been offered in those sacrifices. The Greeks and Romans were worshiping many gods. They had a god, or a group of gods for every circumstance, every need, and every activity: god of war; god of travel; goddess of justice etc.; thereby, believing in many evil spirits. Idol offerings were divided into three parts:

1. One part was burned on the altar as the sacrifice.
2. The second part was given as payment to the priests who served at the temple and the feast that followed.
3. And the remaining part was taken home and kept by the offerer.

Because of the number of offerings, the priests were not able to eat all of their portion, so what they did not need was sold in the butcher shops and marketplaces. That meat was highly valued because it was cleansed of evil spirits, and was thus the meat served at feasts and to guests.

For the Christians, the meat symbolized the association with pagan gods and goddesses, having been part of an offering to them; and it was associated with the superstition that it had once been contaminated by evil spirits. This was an unavoidable and question for a believer who had any personal contact with Gentiles because of the social occasions of weddings and festivities of the sort that involved pagan worship held in the temples where idol food was always served. If a relative was getting married or a long-time friend was giving a banquet, a Christian either had to make excuses for not attending or if attended eat food that he knew had been part of an idol offering.

8:1 Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. This passage concerns them touching things sacrificed to idols. The ones making the claim had more than enough knowledge and understanding of God's Word. Knowledge makes us look good and feel important, but one can easily develop a prideful know-it-all attitude. Many people with strong opinions are unwilling to listen to and learn from God and others. The Corinthian Christians were arrogant. They had knowledge without love. They knew that pagan gods and idols were not real and that food sacrificed to them was still just food. They knew that eating the food could not contaminate them spiritually, that it had no affect on their Christian lives. They felt totally free to eat whatever they wanted, no matter what others thought. Those believers having the knowledge were not mature in love. Paul says we all have knowledge, but God's knowledge, the kind needed to build the church and to build others up can be

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obtained only by loving God! Love edifies, or builds up others, and that edification they did not have. They were solid in doctrine but weak in love. They were strong in self-love, but weak in brotherly love. What they knew, puffed them up and did not show the love to edify (build-up) others. It is love that edifies and grows people, not knowledge.

8:2 And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. Many behaviors are not commanded, commended, or forbidden in Scripture. They are neither black nor white, but gray. Such issues in one age or area may not be the same as those in other times or places, but every age and every place has had to deal with the gray area of Christian living. Knowledge is only partial. No matter what he knows, it's incomplete! ³The minute a person gets to the stage that he thinks he knows everything, he has stopped learning and probably does not know near as much as he thought he did.

8:3 But if any man love God, the same is known of him. Love unites a person to God. If a man loves God, he is known and accepted by God. Believers have a relationship with God, and Love is the key! Loving and being loved by God is everything!

8:4 As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. Paul now returns to the critical problem of the Corinthians: eating those things (*the meat*) offered in the sacrifice to idols. He agrees with those Corinthians who were taught well and knew that an idol was nothing. The stone, precious metal, or wood is real, but there is no god behind it. The image is not anything that really exists. It only reflects the imagination of the one who designed it, or the impersonation of the demon who deceives through it. Idols are not gods. There is no God but One.

- He is God Almighty; I AM; Jehovah, known by many names but One God who is the Supreme Majestic Being of the universe!
- He is the One of whom are all things. He is the Source of all creation!
- He is our life!—the One who stands supreme between God and man and is God!
- He is the One true God; He is a Spirit!

8:5 For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,)— In Egypt there had been thousands of false gods. Here in Corinth, there had been many false gods, as well. The problem with people who worship false gods is that they want a god that they can see with their eyes. They worship things from God's creation instead of worshipping the Creator.

8:6 But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. Paul reiterates that as far as being a Christian believer, there is just one God! Pagans believed that there were many gods. All things owe their existence to the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

8:7 Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. Paul asks how come every

³ <http://www.lovetheLord.com/books/1corinthians/12.html>
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man does not have this knowledge? Well, some of the Corinthian believers were immature. They had immature knowledge and were likely to fall back into sin and defile their consciences. Some took it as what it was with its false beliefs by eating the meat offered to idols. If they participated in the questionable pleasures and social functions, they would defile their consciences.

They were not spiritually strong enough to control their minds and beliefs—not yet—not totally.

8:8 But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. The fact is that food is immaterial to God. It does not make us spiritual or unspiritual. The meat is not what makes the sin. It is their attitude toward the meat. Eating or abstaining does not make us acceptable to God; neither one makes us better (*meaning to excel; to have an advantage*) or worse (*meaning to come short or behind*). ⁴Anything that we cannot do with a clear conscience is sin if we do it. If we are a Christian, God has placed His laws in our heart. Our conscience alerts us when something is a sin or not.

8:9 But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. A believer's liberty can cause a weak believer to fall into sin, that's why Paul gives this strong exhortation: *"take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block."* A stumbling block means a stone, an obstacle, an occasion, an offense—something that causes a person to fall. Therefore, in the case of the Corinthians, some believers were participating in the social functions where meat had been offered to idols and attending functions in the idol's temple. This caused some of the weaker believers to do the same, but they were not able to handle the situation.

8:10 For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols;—As they recline at the table in the idol's temple and the weak man sees the mature or knowledgeable man sitting and eating meat that's been offered to idols shall not the conscience of the weak man be encouraged and reassured to do the same?

8:11 And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?—Since the mature believer is usually looked upon as having knowledge; knowing what is right and wrong, he should not cause the weak brother to perish. The one supreme reason is that Christ died for him. Christ paid the ultimate price and sacrificed everything to save the brother. How much more should we? Will that really fortify or harden his weak conscience that he too will eat food offered to idols.

8:12 But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. To wound a brother's conscience is to sin against Christ Himself.

1. There is no greater sin than to damage a person's conscience and spirit. Why? Because...
 - a. a wounded conscience or spirit makes a person feel useless and helpless. It destroys all drive and initiative, will, and ambition.
 - b. a wounded spirit causes a person to give up, lie around, do nothing, and walk about defeated. A conscience or spirit that has been wounded deeply enough will destroy a person. Remember: Christ loves the weak person so much that He died for him. He gave His life for that person. Therefore, anyone who sins against a weak brother by leading him astray sins against Christ.

⁴ <http://www.lovetheLord.com/books/1corinthians/12.html>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

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2. Jesus Christ is identified with believers. He lives within the believer, even the weak believer. Therefore, to harm a believer is to harm Christ!

8:13 **Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.** Paul makes this clear declaration that if meat (food) causes his brother (*those younger and more immature in the faith*) to stumble or be offended, or be destroyed, he will not eat that food. ⁵Paul was willing to limit his own freedom. He would never make it difficult for another Christian. His action might be good in itself. But it would be wrong if it caused another believer to sin.

SUMMARY:

⁶The issue of whether to eat meat that has been associated with idol worship occupies three chapters of this letter. The problem is that most if not all meat available in the Corinthian marketplace and at public social gatherings would have fallen into this category. Should Christians buy such meat? Should they eat it if it is served at someone else's home? Should they participate in meals associated with pagan religious festivals?

Some in the community see nothing wrong with eating this meat because "*no idol in the world really exists*" (1 Corinthians 8:4). Paul agrees with this assessment of idols. Yet he argues that love is more important than knowledge, just as love is more important than the spiritual gifts of speaking in tongues or prophesying (see 1 Corinthians 13). Paul answers the questions about idol meat not with a new teaching on idolatry but by urging the Corinthians to consider how their actions will affect others and to refrain from any action that will cause others to stumble.

APPLICATION:

Considering others is forgetting about yourself. Allow God to fill you with His love so He can build the right attitude in us and we won't be puffed up.

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⁵ <http://www.easyenglish.info/bible-commentary/1-corinthians-lbw.htm>

⁶ <https://www.enterthebible.org/resourcelink.aspx?rid=852>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

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1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-22

NEXT 12:1-31

SYNOPSIS:

12:1-11 Paul uses Israel as an example of spiritual immaturity shown by their overconfidence and lack of self-discipline. ⁷Paul reminded the experienced believers not to become *overconfident* in their ability to withstand temptation. The five “alls” (**10:1-4**) emphasize the five downward steps in (**10:5-10**).

- I. “under the cloud” (**10:1**) - divine guidance
- II. “passed through the sea” (**10:1**) - divine deliverance
- III. “baptized unto Moses” (**10:2**) - divine leadership
- IV. “eat the same spiritual meat” (**10:3**) - divine provision
- V. “drink the same spiritual drink” (**10:4**) - divine intervention

Israel had the cloud of God’s presence and guidance. When the people passed through the Red Sea they were freed of the enslavements of Egypt (*baptism—both in sea and cloud* **10:2**). God gave Israel Moses, the leader it needed to reach the Promised Land. Israel partook of the food and water that God provided. He took care of their daily necessities. It was Jesus who was guiding and providing for Israel through its wilderness journey toward the Promised Land. (*Jesus was there with them as a mighty Rock of spiritual refreshment v.4*). However, what happened to most of the people is tragic. There were over two million Jews who stepped out to follow God to the Promised Land, but only two made it (**10:1-5**).

⁸Paul points out that the Corinthian church was guilty of the same sins that the Jews committed. (From this lesson we are warned that we must not desire evil things as they did, nor worship idols as they did **10:6, 7**).

- I. **Five downward steps of temptation for the Israelites (10: 6-10):**
 1. They lusted after evil things - (**10:6**, Num. 11:4) They wanted the things back in Egypt.
 2. They worshiped idols - (**10:7**, Ex. 32:6) - The golden calf worshiped in the wilderness.
 3. They committed immorality - (**10:8**, Num. 25:1-9) - Baal worship and sexual immorality.
 4. They tested God’s patience - (**10:9**, Num. 21:6) - Israelites spoke against God and Moses.
 5. They murmured - (**10:10**, Num. 16:41-49) - Complained about Moses and Aaron.
- II. Three conclusions about *temptation* in (**10: 11-13**):
 1. **Temptation will come**. It is not designed to make us fall but to make us stronger (**10: 11**).

Temptation or being tempted is not a sin. ⁹Temptation is a sign that we still live in a fallen world. It is how you respond to the temptation that makes the difference. We know our Lord Jesus was tempted. Therefore, all will be tempted and it comes when you least expect it! When everything is going your way ... when you just got a promotion ... when your dreams start to come true ... Watch out! Be careful! Today’s victories often lead on to tomorrow’s trials.

Verse 11 sums it up: **All these things happened to them as examples—as object lessons to us—to warn us against doing the same things; they were written down so that we could read about them and learn from them in these last days as the world nears its end** (TLB).

⁷ <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/the-dangers-of-overconfidence/>

⁸ <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/god-will-help-you-resist-temptation/>

⁹ <http://www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/1999-05-30-Faithful-to-the-Tempted/>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

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10:12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. Receive the warning—Heed lest you fall!

2. **Temptation comes to everyone.** Don't feel that you have been singled out (10:12).

Talking to the Corinthian believers that think he is strong and exercise his Christian liberty at the expense of the weaker brethren, he was to take heed lest he fall; not from salvation, not yet from his position of strength to that of weakness, but that he should suffer the judgment of God, as the Israelites, and "*fall in the wilderness.*"

- This age is what is known as the age of grace, grace being the way God now deals with men. The age of Christ or of grace is the last age of human history. Therefore, since we are living in the last age, we must heed the warning example of Israel.
- A person can fall, especially if he begins to think that he stands, that is, if he begins to feel safe and secure.

We must not think that because the Jews were under the Law that their sins were worse than ours and therefore dealt with more severely. Sin in the church today is far more serious, because we have Israel's example to learn from, and we are living "*at the end of the ages.*" To sin against the Law is one thing; to sin against grace is quite something else. The believer who thinks they can stand may fall, but the believer who flees will be able to stand! We're talking about temptation.

10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

3. Temptation can be resisted. God will help you resist it (10:13).

III. Five ways God will help you resist *temptation*:

1. Recognize the people and situations that give you trouble.
2. Run from anything that you know is wrong.
3. Choose to do what is right.
4. Pray for God's help.
5. Seek for friends who can help you.

Paul is about to show that trials and temptations will be proportionate to our strength. "*Common to man*" means normal problems. This means a wonderful thing: some men have already overcome it. Yes, many fell, caved in; but some demonstrated the will and energy to overcome it. God permits us to be tempted, but, still, whatever the problem, God is faithful! He knows what we can handle; what we can take; what we can bear; and exactly the time of escape from the problem. Therefore, He limits every single temptation within our limits. It will never be above what we are able to suffer. He's built us for perfection. Our frame may be frail but our inner man is stronger than we think. He always provides a way to escape. He always gives us the strength to turn and flee from it or else the energy and strength to overcome the temptation when it's persistent! Our way of escape is always in Him!

10:14 Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. Paul dearly loves the Corinthian believers, but gives them a direct command: "*flee idolatry!*" There is no other way around it! Don't ponder over...

- No one will know.
- I deserve this.
- Everyone does it.
- God knows my needs.
- They made me do it.

¹⁰Paul returns to the subject with which this letter began - the eating of meat offered to *idols*. In expressing their Christian liberty, some of the Corinthians were living dangerously close to *idolatry*. Paul says that it is true that an *idol* is nothing, but the ones behind every *idol* are very real (10:20).

I. **Concerning meat in the temple.** (10:14-22)

Most people are worshipping some god other than the Lord God Himself. The word "*idolatry*" means both the

¹⁰ <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/eating-meat-offered-to-idols/>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

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worship of false gods and the failure to have a right relationship with God. Any person who does not worship God is worshipping some idol. An idol can be: self, family, business, sports, possessions, sex, knowledge, religion, or power. It is anything that consumes a person's mind, heart, soul, and, body. Some of the Corinthian members were attending social functions held in the banquet halls of idolatrous temples; and also in their homes they placed these images to oversee their family.

10:15 I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say. I remind you that there is not a reward from the world when you say no. The one we are to please is God! He honors those who dare to say no. Remember Joseph? - from the pit; to the house; to the dungeon; to the palace. It took a while but God honored him. Paul here appeals to their sense of wisdom; men having intelligence, that what he is saying is true, at least they are to consider from their own judgment. In other words, he assumed he was addressing believers who were mature to consider for a moment the logic of his argument and to draw correctly their own conclusion of what he's said.

10:16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?— Paul used the Lord's Supper as an illustration. When believers partake of the cup and bread at the Lord's Table, he is having fellowship with the blood and body of Christ. By remembering Christ's death, the believer enters into a communion with the risen Lord! In remembering His death, burial, and resurrection, we bless the cup which represents the blood of Christ and we are thankful for the bread we brake which represents His body.

10:17 For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. Being many, we form one body of that One bread, Jesus Christ, whom we all partake of. When we properly share in Communion we spiritually participate in fellowship with Jesus Christ and with other believers.

10:18 Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?— Paul uses Israel as an illustration. When an animal was offered as a sacrifice to God, only a portion of the animal was actually consumed upon the altar. The rest of the meat was always kept and eaten by both the offerer, and the priest. The very fact that the Jewish worshipper partook of the same meat offered in sacrifice identified him as a worshipper of God.

10:19 What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing?— "*What say I then?*" means "*what am I trying to say?*"; "*What do I mean?*" He needed to make this thing clear about the idol itself to whom the heathen brought sacrifices; are they really alive and are real gods? or the meat offered in sacrifice to idols; does the meat have any real value? An idol is nothing and it has no existence; no soul, no spirit, no power. It is nothing more than the imagination and idea within a person's mind. And the thing (meat) offered to the idols has no spiritual power.

10:20 But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. The answer: the things which the Gentiles sacrificed have no real value because they sacrificed to devils and not to God. Well, here it is, point blank: "*I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.*" Demons are the spiritual force behind all idolatry. Don't fellowship with devils!

10:21 Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils. Paul goes on to inform his readers that there is a direct relationship between heathen

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feasts and demonic activity. To sit at an idol's table could mean fellowship (*communion; being a partaker*) with demons. Paul was again enforcing the important doctrine of separation from sin. It is not feasible to drink the Lord's cup and the devil's cup (*the cup of evil spirits*) at the same time, neither sit at the Lord's Table and the devil's table at the same time. If we practice setting up idols of any kind, we open ourselves up to demonic influence. Remember the golden calf? Moses asked who was on the Lord's side (Exo.32:26). And those that weren't, about 3,000 men were killed that day (Exo.32:27-28). Remember Ananias and his wife Sapphira opened themselves up to the spirit of greed and they were struck down because they lied to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3-6, 9-10). God has holy jealousy because He will have no competition. Are we trying to lead two lives: following the desires of both Christ and the crowd? The Word says you can't do both.

- ***"Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD"*** Joshua 24:14-15.
- ***"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon"*** Matthew 6:24.

10:22 Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?— The question to the Corinthians is: Are they trying to make the Lord jealous? Or are they trying to stir up God's anger? We and neither are the Corinthians are stronger than the Lord, and will not escape His judgment if we practice such idolatry. Do you think God would allow such to continue without Him doing anything? Deuteronomy 32:21 says *"They made me jealous by what is no god and angered me with their worthless idols. I will make them envious by those who are not a people; I will make them angry by a nation that has no understanding."* We should want God to be in His fullness in our lives and not have anything to cause us to be out of fellowship with Him.

SUMMARY:

¹¹**We can just as easily fall (10:12)**, though God is faithful to provide help in dealing with temptation (10:13). Therefore, flee from idolatry! (10:14). Paul speaks as to those capable of making wise judgments (10:15).

Partaking of the Lord's Supper is a communion of the Lord's body and blood (10:16-17). The priests of Israel who ate the sacrifices were sharing in the services offered on the altar (10:18).

Not to say that an idol is anything, nor that which is offered to the idol (10:19). But those who offer the sacrifices do so to demons, not God; and Paul would not want them to have fellowship with demons (10:20). They cannot eat and drink at the Lord's Table and then do the same at the tables of demons (10:21). Such would provoke the Lord to jealousy (10:22). (10:12-22).

APPLICATION:

Our strength in overcoming temptations should not be fleshly strength. It should be the inner strength to say no. When we place Christ first, we get that inner strength to overcome the temptation.

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¹¹ http://executableoutlines.com/1co/1co_10.htm
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

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I CORINTHIANS 12:1-31

NEXT 13:1-13

INTRODUCTION:

¹²The Corinthian church was facing several problems that were about to rip the church apart. One of the most serious problems was the issue of spiritual gifts. No gift, no ability, no endowment from God should ever be abused or cause a controversy. But the gifts of God's Spirit were being so abused by the Corinthian believers that the church was about to be torn apart. Note how critical the issue was: Paul devotes three whole chapters to the question of spiritual gifts. A quick look at the history of spiritual gifts will help in understanding this passage.

1. The Old Testament had foretold that God would send His Spirit to earth and gift His people in a special way. *"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit"* Joel 2:28-29.
2. Jesus Christ had promised and discussed the Holy Spirit with His followers in great detail:
 - The Person of the Holy Spirit or who the Holy Spirit is (Jh.14:15-26).
 - The work of the Holy Spirit (Jh.16:7-15).
 - The very special signs and protection that the Holy Spirit would provide for them.
 - *"And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover"* Mk.16:17-18.
 - The promise of the Spirit's permanent baptism and endowment of power.
 - *"For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth"* Acts 1:5, 8
3. All the promises made by God in the Old Testament and by Jesus Christ concerning the Holy Spirit and His special gifts of ministry were witnessed for the very first time on the day of Pentecost.
4. Before Christ, when God called a person for a particular work, God always provided the gifts and abilities needed to do the work. God has always equipped His people to do the work of the ministry. However, since Christ and the day of Pentecost, there is one great and remarkable difference: every believer is called and gifted by God to minister. That is what Pentecost was all about. God expects every believer to be a witness to the salvation of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. To be a witness is one of the primary reasons God gives the Holy Spirit to every believer, and it is certainly the reason He provides spiritual gifts. The gifts and abilities are given to be used—used in sharing Christ and in ministering to the desperate needs of the poor and suffering masses of this lost and dying world.

In conclusion: Scripture says unmistakably that there are spiritual gifts—special gifts and abilities given by the Holy Spirit to be used in the church and in the ministry to reach the world for Christ. However, as in the secular world, when a man receives a gift, he does not always use his gift wisely nor in a way it should be

¹² Taken from The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible
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used; so it is in the church. Christian believers do not always use their spiritual gifts wisely nor as God wants them used. This happened to the believers in the Corinthian church, and unfortunately, it happens to multitudes of believers in churches around the world in every generation. The misuse and abuse of God's gifts are the very reason the world has never been reached for Jesus Christ. This fact alone stresses the desperate need for a study of these chapters.

12:1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. The Corinthian church was about to be torn apart because of the controversy over spiritual gifts. Now, Paul, the author, turns to the issues raised in the Corinthians' letter to him—spiritual gifts. There are many gifts, but they are not all listed here. So, what are spiritual gifts? They are special abilities given to each person by the Holy Spirit and they are called "spiritual gifts" that become our spiritual power, always to help the church function more effectively; ministering to people, and in leading them to Christ; enabling the believer to serve Christ in the church and in the world, but not to divide. Paul says that he does not want them to be ignorant. ***There is a danger of being ignorant.*** Instead of building and unifying the Corinthian church, spiritual gifts were splitting it.

- A person can be ignorant that there is such a thing as spiritual gifts. He can fail to know that God endows the genuine believer with very special gifts.
- A person may not know that God gifts His people, but he may not know what special gifts God has given him; may not know what God wants him to do for Christ and the church.
- A person may know what his gifts are, but he may not know how to properly use them. It was at this point that the Corinthian church was having so much trouble. Many of the believers knew their spiritual gifts, but they were misusing them, failing to use them as God willed them to be used.

12:2 Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. At one time they were non-Christian pagans which led them to worship idols that couldn't speak.

- They had been "*Gentiles*"; now they were Christians; followers of Christ.
- They had been worshippers of idols who were dumb and voiceless, unable to communicate, and relate. But now they were worshippers of the only true and living God who could communicate and share with them.
- They had been "*carried away*" and "*led*" by some force, energy, or spiritual power to serve the dumb idols. But now they were under the power of God's Spirit; therefore, they were to be led by His Spirit.

The point is: Many of the believers in Corinth were converts from paganism. Therefore, they would have been familiar with the counterfeit gifts. Some of them would have practiced these gifts in their former religion before their conversion. *There is the danger of being carried away to false worship.* Apparently some of them...

- Had used a counterfeit gift to imitate the real gift.
- Had misused the gift and ended up not really worshipping God, but worshipping in a meaningless way.
- Had begun to feel and act super-spiritual, worshipping the gift and self, rather than focusing attention upon God.

12:3 Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. Some persons in the Corinth church apparently spoke by the Spirit and distorted the great truth that "*Jesus is Lord.*" The person took the truth that Paul had preached, that "*Christ was made a curse for us*" (Gal.3:13), and he said something to the effect that "*Jesus is accursed.*" ***There is the danger of speaking false messages.*** Two general principles to bear in mind:

1. No one speaking by the Spirit of God will call Jesus accursed (3a).

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There is the danger of speaking the truth apart from the Holy Spirit. They were professing truth, but had not really committed their lives to the truth. They are counterfeits and not really led by the Spirit of God. No spiritual truth can ever be used effectively by God apart from the leadership of His Spirit.

2. No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit (3b).

12:4 Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. God had blessed believers with an abundance of spiritual gifts so they could effectively minister in the church and to the citizens of pagan Corinth. Paul needed to get over the point that diversities of gifts had to be unified; united in service, not in misuse and abuse, not in arguments and debates, strife and division. And many of the believers had misunderstood and abusing the gifts. The diversities of gifts have three points to show...

1. ***There are different gifts, but they all come from the same Spirit.*** The choice is entirely the Holy Spirit's as He wills. It is not the believer's choice. They are not just for the benefit of the person who received the gift, but for others.

12:5 And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.

2. ***There are different ministries or office of serving (administrations), but they are all done by the authority of the same Lord.***

12:6 And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.

3. ***There are different activities and operations in carrying out the various ministries, but it is the same God.***

The point is: Spiritual gifts are given by the same Spirit; the same Lord; the same God referred to as the Trinity united in service; working in unity together; one is not without the other; gifts working in their different offices and actions!

12:7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. The gifts are not given to believers for their own gratification or for them to revel in a sense of self-importance and super-spirituality. The believer does of course, profit and benefit from the gift given him, but he is gifted primarily to edify and help others. This is seen in the word "*manifestation*." It means to be openly and publicly seen. The gifts of the Spirit are to be openly and publicly used to profit all. They are...

- to be manifested to the church, that is, used to edify the church.
- to be manifested to the world, that is, used to benefit the world (reaching the lost).

12:8 For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; The list of different gifts are given to show just how diverse the gifts of the Spirit really are. This verse begins nine powerful gifts given by the indwelling Spirit of God. Just as we have natural abilities inherited through our genes to function in the world, we have spiritual abilities or gifts inherited through the Spirit's power to function properly in the spiritual world. They are in three categories: (1) **The Revelation gifts**—the Word of Wisdom, the Word of Knowledge, and the Discerning of Spirits. (2) **The Vocal gifts**—Prophecy, Tongues, and Interpretation of Tongues. (3) **The Power gifts**—faith, healing, miracles.

1. As He wills, to one is given the "**Word of Wisdom**." ¹³Wisdom is clearly taught in the Word of God. it says, "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding*" (Psalm 111:10). With this wisdom, Solomon could understand what do in difficult decisions. "*Wisdom*" means the wise thoughts of God; the truth God revealed to man; to share in simple and understandable language.

¹³ <http://www.whatchristianswanttoknow.com/what-are-gifts-of-the-spirit-a-bible-study/>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

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2. To another the **"Word of Knowledge"** is given by the same Spirit. This is practical spiritual knowledge; insight as to what to do in day-to-day situations that arise and the Word to operate in the spirit. It does no good to know truth unless a person knows how to use the truth. ¹⁴Some people have such a gift of remembering scriptures. A **"Word of Knowledge"** would quickly come to distinguish which is biblical and which is not; what to pray for or how to minister to a need. The **"Word of wisdom"** and the **"Word of Knowledge"** are revelation gifts operating together in the Spirit.

12:9 To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;—

3. The Bible speaks of several different types of faith which increase from faith to faith (Romans 1:170. The **"Gift of Faith"** not only operates in healings and miracles, but in the realm of the impossible. This is not the usual faith that we mean when we speak about saving faith. This is a strong faith, a powerful faith, wonder-working faith that enables a believer to do great things for God and His people. It is a trust and confidence in God that allows them to live boldly for Him and manifest that faith in mighty ways, all by the same Spirit.
4. The Bible speaks of **"Gifts of Healing"** because there is physical, emotional, and spiritual healing. Healing can come through *the touch of faith* or *laying on of hands* (James 5:14-15; Mark 6:5; Luke 4:40) *speaking the Word of Faith* (Luke 7:1-10); *and the presence of God being manifested* (*Working of Miracles*) (Mark 6:56; Acts 19:11-12). All spiritual gifts are to be exercised in faith, but gifts of healings involve a special measure of it, all by the same Spirit.

¹⁵The Disciples were given authority to heal and cast out demons, but they were not always successful. The Apostle Paul was not able to heal himself and was told that God's grace was sufficient to carry him through his infirmity without removing it from him (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). This gift is given at various times and places to reveal the God of heaven to the sick and tormented. If healing is not granted, then we can conclude that God has greater plans for letting the person go through the illness or infirmity.

The spiritual gift of healing is an intimate one as it reveals the heart and compassion of God. Jesus is the Great Healer and Physician. During His ministry on earth He healed countless people and cast out demons (Matthew 4:23-24; 8:16; 9:35, Mark 1:34). Healings reveal that God is near to His people and He cares about their sufferings. Healings are meant to draw people to God through His Son Jesus Christ. God wants those healed to respond in faith with thanksgiving and love as the leper did in Luke 17:15-19, and as the demon-possessed man did in Mark 5:18-20. By God's grace, physical healing should lead to spiritual healing (faith in Jesus) and eternal life with Him in heaven.

Those who have this gift are compassionate toward the sick; interceding in pray over them. They have great faith trusting that God can and will heal. They are motivated knowing that God's revealed power will draw people to faith in Jesus. Their ultimate concern is the spiritual well-being of those being healed and their relationship with Jesus; not to boast in themselves.

12:10 To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:—

5. The **"Working of Miracles"** would refer to miracles other than that of healing. There are times when circumstances and situations arise, and believers need a miraculous deliverance of some sort. The word **"miracles"** comes from the Greek word **"dunamis"** which means power and might that multiplies itself. A **"miracle"** is the performance of something which is against the laws of nature. When it is in God's

¹⁴ <http://www.whatchristianswanttoknow.com/what-are-gifts-of-the-spirit-a-bible-study/>

¹⁵ <http://www.whatchristianswanttoknow.com/what-are-gifts-of-the-spirit-a-bible-study/>
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Will for a storm to cease—for an enemy to be temporarily blinded; for a fire to be turned or put out; or for an innumerable number of threats against believers to be altered—God raises up some believer and gifts him to work the needed miracle. Some other examples of this gift would be Christ stilling the storm; Paul smiting Elymas with blindness; Paul being delivered from a poisonous snake bite. Today, if any of those occurrences happened, God is able by His Spirit to use a believer with this divine gifting!

6. Sometimes God gives believers a glimpse into coming events in order to prepare and strengthen them to face the events. The **"Gift of Prophecy"** is ¹⁶a discourse emanating from divine inspiration and declaring the purposes of God, whether by reproving and admonishing the wicked, or comforting the afflicted or revealing things hidden; esp. by foretelling future events they had no clue of. The believer or prophet receives revelation to publicly speak in the church under the inspiration of God's Spirit or to an individual. The Word says, *"But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort 1 Corinthians 14:3."*
7. To another **"Discerning of Spirits"**, which means to separate, differentia; distinguish between spirits—the spirit of evil and the Spirit of God, the flesh and the spirit, error and truth. The church needs those with this gift to warn believers in times of danger or keep them from being led astray by false teaching.
8. To another **"Divers Kinds of Tongues."** This is the spiritual ability to speak forth...
 - a. from God or to God in an unknown tongue (1 Corinthians 14:2). This type of tongue...
 - *edifies you* (1Cor.14:4; Jude 20). • *assists you in prayer* (Rom.8:26-27). • *stirs up the prophetic ministry* (1Cor.14:5). • *refreshes your soul* (Is.28:11-12).
 - *gives victory over the devil* (Eph.6:18). • *helps you worship in the Spirit* (1Cor.14:14-15; Heb.2:12).
 - b. Some say it is a known language (1 Corinthians 14:2 and Acts 2:6).
 - c. Still others say it is a heavenly language. When we sing or pray in the Spirit, God joins in with us and *confuses and defeats the enemy* (Is.30:29-31). It *breaks the yoke of bondage* (Acts 16:25). It *brings you into the presence of God* (Ps.22:3); and it *aids in intercession* (Rom.8:26).
9. To another the **"Interpretation of Tongues"** is where some believers are able to interpret by the Spirit of God; a tongue that is understood through interpretation, edifies the church (1 Corinthians 14:15).

12:11 But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

All the gifts just covered are given by one and the same Spirit, not from any other source. The Spirit knows what gifts will edify the church most and what gifts can be most effective to reach the world and to minister to the desperate needs of all mankind. One believer has one gift and another believer has another gift, but both have come from the same Spirit of God.

12:12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. Paul uses the human body to illustrate many different parts all working together for the good of the whole. This passage is to stress the unity of the church. The church is said to be a body; a body of many parts or members. The church is compared to the human body throughout the whole passage. The human body is a picture of Christ and His church. The picture is practical and descriptive: one organism, one person, one being, one life, yet it has many members or parts to it enabling it to function, so also as Christ.

¹⁶ <http://www.studylight.org/lexicons/greek/gwview.cgi?n=4394>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

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12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free;— Paul reminds us that the gifts are given to unite us in our ministry in the one body and for the good of the whole church. The Holy Spirit bestows these gifts *"as He wills"* and not as we will. The human body and the body of Christ picture what the Holy Spirit does.

1. The Holy Spirit baptizes believers into one body, that is, into Christ Himself. When we really believe in Christ...
- The Holy Spirit immerses us into the death of Jesus Christ. God actually counts us as *"in Christ"*, as *"in the body of Christ."* God sees us as having already died *in the body of Christ*. Therefore, having died in Christ, we never have to die.
- The Holy Spirit immerses us into the resurrection of Christ. God counts and sees us as having already been raised from the dead *in the body of Christ*. Therefore, we already have the new life of Christ, both abundant and eternal life.
- The Holy Spirit immerses us into the purpose of Jesus Christ. God counts and sees us *in the body of Christ* working and carrying out the very same purpose as His son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

If we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit (one Spirit) takes us and baptizes us into the body of Christ (one body) whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free. God sees and accepts, counts and credits us as *in Christ*; as *in the body of Christ*. God has to see us *"in Christ"*, *in the body of Christ* in order to accept and approve us. When God looks at the body of Christ, He sees us in Christ; then God accepts and approves us—no matter who we are. Paul's point is that many different parts with different functions can work together in unity with a common purpose. The common baptism and the common indwelling of the Spirit made people one in spite of their different backgrounds; their different nationalities; whether slave or free; and in spite of their different gifts and functions in the church.

2. **...and have been all made to drink into one Spirit;** that is, the Spirit has entered our bodies; He dwells within the hearts and lives of all believers; He is immersed or placed into the lives and bodies of believers, therefore we are all filled with the *"living water"* of the Spirit.

12:14 For the body is not one member, but many. Some who are less gifted feel they are unimportant to the body of Christ. Some members of the Corinthian church were experiencing what so many believers experience—insignificant. The body is not one significant member by itself, but many members—every member being important. Some of the Corinthians felt so highly about their particular gift, that they thought the church needed no other gift. Others felt that their gift was so lowly that the body wouldn't miss it. The point is: the body has many members—all important and there's room for everyone!

12:15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?— Using the analogy of the body, Paul emphasizes the importance of each church member. If a seemingly insignificant part is taken away, the whole body becomes less effective. Thinking your gift is more important than someone else's is spiritual pride.

1. Each member is necessary. The foot may not be as gifted as the hand in handling things, but the foot is still part of the body.

12:16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?—

2. Each member has an essential function. The ear may not be able to envision things like the eye can, but the ear is still part of the body. The eye, the ear, and the nose—they all have their function. None can do the function of the other.

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12:17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?— If the whole body were only an eye, it would be a freak, inoperative, unfunctional, and useless; it would not be able to hear. It is the same if the whole body was for hearing, how would it smell? God gave the body the ability to hear and to smell in their distinguished parts. The same is true in the church. If everyone were tongue-speaking, who would discern spirits, prophecy, or work miracles? If everyone were the preacher, who would teach, heal, or interpret?

12:18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. "*Every one*" of them; "*every member*" has been set in the church by God and gifted by God for an essential function. Paul stresses the sovereignty of God in this process. The eye sees because God gave it the ability to see. The ear hears because God gave it the ability to hear. It is the same as in the church. The placement and gifts of each member are determined by the Lord, and no gift or placement is to be coveted by any other member.

12:19 And if they were all one member, where were the body?— If only one member existed, and all were one member doing its one gift, the body could not exist. Of course, there would be no body. So it is with the church. If there is only one member in the church and doing his gift, he would be the significant one; the most important person around. But where would the church be; the body be? The point is: the church is not one significant and important person. The church is many members—all significant and important, despite the diversity and roles they play. The church is still one body. The ability of the body to operate is determined by the number and efficiency of its members. The more the members of the body (church) function and function efficiently, the more the body (church) can do.

12:20 But now are they many members, yet but one body. All members work together as one. There should not be any imbalance, all using each other's strengths and even their weaknesses to provide God's determined goal. All need one another to prosper as one.

12:21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. The other problem is arrogance on the part of those who had the more impressive gifts or ministries. The eye can't say to the hand, I don't need you, and the head can't say to the feet, I don't need you. The feet carry the head where it needs to go, and the hands perform what the eye sees to do. Those who cut weeds around the parking lot or clean the restrooms are making possible the setting where the preacher can share the gospel. He needs them and they need him.

12:22 Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:— The word "*feeble*" means sick or sickly. The weaker members (less gifted) are actually more necessary. It shows that in appearance the lesser members may seem unimportant, but they are not; they are essential to the body of Christ. God probably sends such people to test our love as well as to minister to us in ways we never imagined. Congregations often respond to such a person with special love, protection, and affirmation.

12:23 And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. In fact, the average layman who serves as a personal worker, although he is never seen by the crowds, is much more essential to decisions as the evangelist who is in the center of the scene. The prayer warrior is much more essential to the strength to the church as the most eloquent preacher who fills the pulpit. The lesser functions; the less honorable are

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given plentiful respect. Those unrepresentable; uncomely parts of the body are treated with greater honor.

12:24 For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked. God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. The word "*tempered*" means to mix, combine, and blend together. And God has done that. He has tempered the body together in such a manner: the gifted, combined, and blended together that more honor really belongs to those who are not as gifted. Sometimes the more honorable are those who are never seen, those who go about their ministry for the Lord, using their gifts and functioning within the church as He has ordained.

12:25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. The word "*schism*" means division, split, or rift. There should be no jealousy, pride, or divisiveness within the church; for God has gifted every believer to complement the others. God has gifted all to function together in harmony.

1. God has tempered or blended the members together to keep them from clashing.
2. God has tempered or blended the members together to create a natural care for one another. The words "*same care*" means same concern should be shown to one member as shown to another member.

12:26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. If the team is in a relay race, they are accounted as one team. One member suffer, they all suffer; if they win, all win and are honored, so it is when a member of the human body suffers, the whole body suffers, and when a member of the human body is honored, the whole body rejoices. The church is one body, it suffers and rejoices together. The body is to walk through the experience of life together having the same concern—suffering and rejoicing with every member, looking after and caring for every member in the same way.

12:27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. Each believer is a member of the body of Christ; its make-up are members having his own place.

12:28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. God has set and gifted each member to step into their role as He administers.

1. *First apostles* – a representative, an ambassador, a person sent out into one country to represent another country. Three things about the apostle;
 1. He belongs to the One who has sent him out.
 2. He is commissioned to be sent out.
 3. He possesses all the authority and power of the One who sends him out.
2. *secondarily prophets* – receives revelation to publicly speak in the church under the inspiration of God's Spirit or to an individual.
3. *thirdly teachers* – the gift to instruct believers in the truth of God and His Word. It is the gift to root and ground people in doctrine, reproof, correction, and righteousness.
4. *after that miracles* – the performance of something which is against the laws of nature.
5. *then gifts of healings* – refer to physical, emotional, and spiritual healing.
6. *helps* – persons who are always ready to jump in to be of assistance to the needy, shut-ins, poor, and disabled.
7. *governments* – enjoy organizing, overseeing business matters, dealing with details and generally making sure the work of the local church runs smoothly.

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8. *diversities of tongues* –

12:29 Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?–

12:30 Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?– The answer is obvious – No! God has not gifted all believers with the same gift.

12:31 But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way. "*Covet*" means to desire, yearn for, crave. There is a legitimate covetousness—that is, the best gifts, which leads a person to more effectively serve the Lord. Yet, Paul says '*I show unto you a more excellent way; something much higher; a quality that surpasses all the gifts.*' This more excellent way is the subject of the next chapter.

SUMMARY:

Paul dealt with spiritual gifts in the Corinthian church because he didn't want them to be ignorant and misinformed because they were once Gentiles—by dumb idols—false worship—false messages—or even speaking the truth without the Holy Spirit's help. No spiritual truth can ever be used effectively by God apart from the leadership of His Spirit. The church needs the real spiritual gifts that are only given by the Holy Spirit. That's why we can't be ignorant of those counterfeit gifts, but stay united in our confession that Jesus is Lord by the true Spirit. Now, there are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit; different kinds of service, but the same Lord; and different kinds of working, but the same God united in service to work in all. The miraculous spiritual gifts are given to minister by the same Spirit as a means of helping and profiting all. There are nine spiritual gifts described here. To one is given and then another dividing to every man individually as He will. But the one and same Spirit accomplishes all (12:1-11).

Paul uses the human body to illustrate many different parts all working together for the good of the whole. He reminds us that the gifts are given to unite us in our ministry in the one body and for the good of the whole church whether bond or free, and have been given to drink at one Source, and the one Spirit. The body is not one member, but many. Though many members, yet one body, ¹⁷Paul illustrates his point by comparing the different parts of the human body—the foot, the hand, the ear, the eye—to the different parts of the church. God placed them as He willed in the body. It would not be a body if all the parts were the same. As it is, there are many parts, but there is only one body. The illustration with parts of the human body shows that each member needs the other members, and no member can afford to become independent. No member can say "*I have no need of thee.*" No member can say that others are not important. When a part of the human body becomes independent, you have a problem that often leads to sickness and death. The members of the body which seem to be weaker are very necessary. God has blended all the different members of the body into one body, and its members to have mutual concern for each other. A difference in care causes division. When one suffers, all suffer; and when one rejoices, all rejoice. You are the body of Christ, and individually are members of it. God has appointed various functions in the church. Paul uses rhetorical questions to illustrate that not everyone has the same function. Certainly it was proper to desire the best gifts, yet Paul will show them a more excellent way (12:12-31).

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¹⁷ <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/spiritual-gifts-that-unite/>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

13:1 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. Paul is writing to the Corinthians who were so distracted with contentions, divided by parties, and envious of each other's gifts, that unity was nearly destroyed. Therefore, gifts are explained to them. The phrase "*the tongues of men and angels*" may be the equivalent of saying he is able to speak in all languages, both human and divine. This person can speak to anyone anywhere about the gospel of Jesus Christ. There is no language barrier to him. Yet with that ability this man is able to produce nothing of value for God without love. If he is not careful, it says he becomes something else; he becomes useless in his life and ministry for Christ. All his language abilities are just noise; "*a tinkling cymbal*" apart from love. ¹⁸He is just "*as a sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.*" Unless it is done in love, ministering the gift of languages, or speaking in any other human or angelic way, amounts to no more than those pagan rituals. It is only meaningless gibberish in a Christian guise (*disguise*). Charity or love; that is "*agape*" love is the gift missing that goes with the other gifts.

This love is not natural. It is possible only if God supernaturally helps us set aside our own desires and instincts, so we can give love while expecting nothing in return.

13:2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. Paul speaks of three gifts here: 1) the gift of prophecy 2) the gift of understand all mysteries and all knowledge 3) the gift of faith. But we are nothing without love!

1. **The gift of prophecy:** A person may have the gift of speaking under the inspiration of God's Spirit, both predicting the future and proclaiming the truth of God's Word.
2. **The gift to understand all mysteries** means that Scriptures that have been hidden to you are revealed "**and all knowledge.**" Note the word "*all*." Imagine a person possessing "*all*", but the key to "*all*" will include Love. He may possess all the charisma, stature, eloquence, and descriptive language in the world, but if he does not have love, he nor his gift is nothing. One can always steer in the danger of feeling and acting superior because of one's prophetic gifting and eloquence; understanding all mysteries, and all knowledge. That danger is looking down upon others, feeling that one is more knowledgeable or better equipped than others. And lastly...
3. **The gift of all faith:** given by the Holy Spirit to remove mountains and to do great and miraculous things for God. Imagine a person possessing "*all faith*", yet, if he does not have love, he would be nothing. Love is necessary!

13:3 And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor,— Two acts of giving are mention. Both of these we would consider the supreme act of love. The first illustration of giving is giving everything that a person has— bestowing all my goods to feed the poor. There are several dangers here:

- Giving out of duty.
- Giving with contempt because one is forced to give.
- Giving with an air of superiority because one has and the needy do not have.
- Giving with a rebuke because one feels the needy are just irresponsible and ought to make their own way in life.

¹⁸ http://www.bereanbiblechurch.org/transcripts/1corinthians/loves_priority.htm
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

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- Giving unsacrificially.

We are to give from a free heart, expecting nothing in return. If he did not give it from a loving heart, he should have kept it. It will do him no good.

...and though I give my body to be burned, — The second illustration of giving is of martyrdom—of being burned alive at the stake. The danger is if done as a thing of glory and of pride. If a believer is ever called upon to die as a martyr, he is to die only out of love for Christ and for his fellow man.

...and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Neither volunteering for giving up all your possessions or being burned would produce any spiritual benefit if not done out of love for the body of Christ.

All we do is done for someone else, and if there is no love for others; if we miss out on that small detail, we have done it for naught in God's eyes. Love is greater than any spiritual gift. That's what Paul was saying at the end of Chapter 12—"*I'll show you a more excellent way.*" In this next verse, the acts of love are given—the very behavior of a person—the very way a person is to live among and with others.

13:4 Charity suffereth long,—Love suffers a long long time without resentment, anger, or seeking revenge. Love controls itself in order to win the person and to help him to live, work, and serve as he should.

- No matter the evil and injury done by a person.
- No matter the neglect or ignoring by a loved one.

...and is kind;—Love is kind; courteous, good, helpful, useful, giving, showing and showering favors. Love does not resent evil; it does not revel in the hurt and neglect.

- Love reaches out in kindness; in helpfulness, in giving, and in showering favors upon the person who neglects or hurts oneself.

...charity envieth not;—Love does not envy; does not want that which belongs to others.

- Love is not jealous; does not have feelings against others because of what they have, such as gifts, position, friends, recognition, possessions, popularity, abilities.
- Love does not begrudge or attack or downplay the abilities and success of others, but Love shares and joys and rejoices in the experience and good of others.

...charity vaunteth not itself,—Love does not vaunt itself; is not boastful; does not brag nor seek recognition, honor, or applause from others.

- On the contrary, love seeks to give; to recognize, to honor, to applaud the other person.

...is not puffed up,—Love is not puffed up; prideful, arrogant, conceited;

- Love does not think nor act as though oneself is better of above others.
- Love is modest and humble and recognizes and honors others.

¹⁹Whenever there is a division between a husband and wife, between a parent and child, between one believer and another believer, there is always a root cause, which is pride. And where there is pride, there is no love. Love is not proud.

13:5 Doth not behave itself unseemly,—Love does not behave itself unseemingly; unbecomingly, rudely, indecently, unmannerly, disgracefully.

- Love does nothing to shame oneself.
- Love is orderly and controlled, and it behaves and treats all persons with respect, honoring and respecting who they are.

...seeketh not her own,—Love does not insist upon its own rights; seeks not her own; is not selfish;

¹⁹ http://www.bereanbiblechurch.org/transcripts/1corinthians/loves_priority.htm
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

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- Love is not focused upon who one is nor upon what one has done.
- Love seeks to serve, not have others serving oneself.
- Love is acknowledging others, not insisting that others acknowledge oneself; it is giving to others, not insisting that others give to oneself.

...is not easily provoked,—Love is not easily provoked; not easily aroused to anger; does not become exasperated; not ready to take offense; not quick-tempered; or touchy.

- Love controls the emotions and never becomes angry without a cause.

...thinketh no evil;—Love does not think evil; does not consider the wrong suffered; is not resentful;

- Love (Christ in you) does not hold the evil done to oneself.
- Love (Christ in you) suffers the evil done to it and forgets it.

²⁰Do you know people who are keeping a record of everything that someone has done to hurt them? Why do they keep a record of wrongs done to them? So they won't forget the wrongs, so they will be sure that person gets the justice that is due them.

13:6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity,—Love does not take delight in iniquity; unrighteousness, evil, wrongdoing; that which is involved in sin.

- Love does not take pleasure in the unrighteousness and sin of others; it does not feed upon sin and wrong, nor does it pass along the stories of sin and wrong. Man's nature is too often fed the tragedy of evil, whether personal sin or natural disaster.

...but rejoiceth in the truth;—Love rejoices in truth; rejoices when the truth is known and when it prevails; rejoices when others are recognized and promoted for whom they are and for what they have contributed.

- Love rejoices when the truth is rooted and grounded in a person and among the people of the world.
- Love never covers nor hides the truth. Love is courageous in that it faces the truth.
- Love stands up under the weight and onslaught of things.

²¹What brings joy to your heart; the bad or the good? If you hear something bad about someone who is your enemy or whom you do not like, do you rejoice? Or does it make you sad to see your enemy in exposing the wrong and weaknesses of others. When you learn something unpleasant about another, you don't run and scatter it all over the church or neighborhood. Love does not take delight in some of the misdeeds of others. Love covers it over, keeps it silent. Have you ever noticed how easily you dismiss the faults of those you love? But how do you respond when someone you don't particularly like does something wrong? Do you cover it or expose it?

13:7 Beareth all things,— Love bears all things; the word "*bears*" means both to cover all things and to bear up under all things. Love does both.

- Love stands up under the weight and onslaught of all things, and it
- Love covers up the faults of others. It has no pleasure in exposing the wrong and weaknesses of others. It does not feed upon sin and wrong, nor does it pass along the stories of sin and wrong.
- Love bears up under any neglect, abuse, ridicule—anything that is thrown against it.

...believeth all things,—Love believes all things; is completely trusting.

- Love sees and understands the circumstances and accepts and forgives and believes the very best about a person.

²⁰ http://www.bereanbiblechurch.org/transcripts/1corinthians/loves_priority.htm

²¹ http://www.bereanbiblechurch.org/transcripts/1corinthians/loves_priority.htm

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

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...hopeth all things,—Love hopes all things; it never ceases to hope. Rather than having a negative and critical spirit, it should always be positive and hopeful.

- Love expects the good to eventually triumph and to gain the victory.
- Love refuses to accept failure; it always hopes for the best and for the ultimate triumph of the good—no matter how fallen or how tragic the fall or how difficult gaining the victory may seem.

...endureth all things. — Love endures all things; the word "*endures*" is a military word meaning to stand against the attack of an enemy.

- Love actively fights and endures all attacks.
- Love is strong, full of fortitude and fight, and it struggles against any and every assault. No matter what attacks love, named or unnamed, it endures the attack and continues to love.
- Love never quits; it never gives up on anyone. It cares too much to give up because it endures all things and continues to love. Love conquers and triumphs—always—because it endures all things.

These verses show that these are all the qualities that can be produced in a Christian life. We are to practice them.

13:8 This verse talks about three spiritual gifts of the Spirit called ²²the manifestation gifts which serve to reveal the power of God. These gifts are supernatural or spiritual in nature. They can be further subdivided into three groups: Utterance, Power (Faith—Healing—Miracles), and Revelation Gifts:

Charity never faileth:—"Charity" means Love and Love never fails, never ceases, and never vanishes. "*Never*" refers to time; the permanence; the longevity. And the longevity of Love is that it endures and lasts forever.

Love is far superior to the spiritual gifts. Unlike many of the spiritual gifts, love will never be outmoded, unnecessary, or eliminated. Love" never fades and will never fail. Spiritual gifts are only temporary tools for us to use in reaching and ministering to a lost and needy world. They also build up the body, but they are not permanent. Too many believers glory in their earthly gifts and abilities instead of serving and ministering in love.

...but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail— Prophecies" (the gift of prophecy) will fail.

Utterance - These gifts say something:

1. **•Prophecy** - This is the "*forth telling*" of the inspired Word of God primarily to the church, for the purpose of confirming the written Word and building up the entire body. The message is usually one of edification, exhortation or consolation; although it can declare God's will in a particular circumstance, and in rare cases, predict future events.

...whether there be tongues, they shall cease;— Tongues" (the gift of tongues) will cease.

2. **•Speaking in Tongues** - This is a supernatural utterance in an unlearned language which is interpreted so that the entire body will be edified. Tongues may also be a sign to unbelievers. Most believe they are uttering a heavenly tongue.

...whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. "Knowledge" (Word of knowledge) will vanish away.

Revelation - These gifts reveal something:

3. **•Word of Knowledge** - This is supernatural knowledge of facts and information that can only be revealed by God for the purpose of applying doctrinal truth.

²² <http://christianity.about.com/od/holyspirit/topicalstudy/a/spiritualgifts.htm>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

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"Prophecies" (the gift of prophecy) will fail; "tongues" (the gift of tongues) will cease; and "knowledge" (Word of knowledge) will vanish away, but "Love" never fades and will never fail. Spiritual gifts are not the same as Love, They are not permanent; therefore, they are far inferior to love. Note how believers become guilty of the very things they accuse the world of doing: focusing upon the temporary instead of the eternal. Too many believers glory in their earthly gifts and abilities instead of serving and ministering in love. When we stand in eternity before God, spiritual gifts will not be what God is looking for, but how did we reach and minister to a lost and needy world, did we minister in love? Love is far superior to the spiritual gifts.

13:9 For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. Knowledge and prophecy as we now know it are suited only to an imperfect state of existence. No person knows all the truth. We can proclaim and predict the truth only with partial certainty; only what God wants us to know. We prophesy in part; we speak in tongues in part; we give Word of knowledge in part. *"That which is in part"* refers to the gifts (vs. 8-9). Something better (the perfect) will replace them. All of our understanding and ability to minister here on the earth is limited. We are in flesh, and flesh has weaknesses.

13:10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. We know nothing perfectly, and we can proclaim and predict the truth only with partial certainty.

"Perfect" means complete and mature. So, that which is complete will come, and then what is not complete will disappear *"That which is in part shall be done away"* refers to spiritual gifts. These are the things spoken of in the above verses which are in part and shall be done away with. But it's here until the perfect comes. A day of perfection is coming, and when it comes, only that which is perfect will stand and endure; that which is in part disappears; it only pointed to the perfect to come. Love is the only lasting eternal gift. It is love through Jesus Christ that is perfect and that will bring the day of perfection to reality for man. Once the perfect has been achieved, there will be no need for that which is in part. A day is coming when we shall know God even as He knows us—perfectly.

- When is that day coming? The day love is perfected between God and man.
- What will bring the day about? Love—God's perfect love for man.

It is love that will be perfected and will bring the day of perfection to reality for man. It is love that will bring us into a face to face relationship with God and into a perfect knowledge of truth. Therefore, love is far superior to the spiritual gifts.

13:11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. A child's speech is undeveloped, his understanding crude, and knowledge incomplete. But when the child becomes a man, his speech becomes subject to his mind, his understanding is tempered, and his knowledge is not that of a child; it's that day of setting aside all the childhood understanding and thoughts to become a mature man. This is what Paul says the Corinthians should be striving for. Speaking as a child, understanding as a child, thinking as a child is what a child is expected to do, however, the day of maturity is when believers will become mature men, putting away childish things.

13:12 For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. Ancient mirrors were made from polished metal (such as bronze), and thus one's reflection was even more dim than in modern mirrors. Our present relationship with the Lord is comparable to the reflection we see through a dark mirror. We can faintly see the figure, but it is neither fully distinct nor clear, therefore, we only see God and the truth in part and we only know <http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

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God and the truth in part. I ask? When is that day coming? The day love is perfected between God and man. What will bring the day about? Love—God's perfect love, His Son Jesus. Love is being face to face with God.

13:13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

Faith and hope are great qualities and gifts, but love is far superior. How? Remember, Paul is contrasting love with the spiritual gifts and dealing with the tendency of people who center attention upon their gifts and accomplishments.

- **Faith** focuses upon the revelation of God, whereas love focuses upon God Himself.
- **Hope** focuses upon being eternally with God in a perfect world, but again, love is superior because it focuses upon God Himself. A person can have hope in someone without loving him, but a person who loves someone always hopes in him.
- **Love**—true love (agape love)—does not originate in the nature of man, but in the nature of God. God is love; love is the basic trait of His nature.
- **True love** is a gift of God. A man can know true love only as he comes to know the love of God. Faith arises from the heart of man, but love is deposited or given to man by God. It is shed abroad in the heart by God. Apart from God, man loves only those who love him; he either opposes or withdraws from those who hate him. A man can only love (agape love) his enemies through the love of God. Therefore love, being the very special gift of God, is far superior to faith and hope.

Faith and hope reach and grow people, but love reaches and grows people far more than any other gift or quality. A person can believe in God, yet feel he is above others. He can act prideful, arrogant, and super-spiritual. He may hope for an eternity to be with God, and with other believers, yet he can be cold and distant. But love—true love has no weaknesses or dangers.

SUMMARY:

The Corinthians were seeking the lesser gifts instead of the greater from God. The greater gift is Love. Therefore, Paul begins this chapter by contrasting the worth of the spiritual gifts with the worth of love. If one spoke with tongues of men and of angels, without love, the person would be like sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. Even if one had the gift of prophecy, to understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and the gift of faith sufficient to remove mountains, without love, such a person is nothing. Even if one gave all his goods to the poor...; were willing to be burned at the stake...Without love, it profits the person nothing (13:1-3).

Love never fails, but spiritual gifts will cease (13:8). Spiritual gifts cease when that which is perfect comes (13:9-10). Spiritual gifts are compared with "*childish things*", which are put away at maturity (13:11). Now we see in a mirror dimly, but it will be face to face, knowing Him up close and personal. Just as clearly as

God sees into our hearts right now, we shall understand as completely as we are understood (13:12).

Faith, hope, and love will abide after spiritual gifts, but the greatest of these is love (13:13). (13:8-13).

The great acts of love (13:4-7):

Love is:	Love isn't:
•Patient	•Envious
•Kind	•Proud
•Rejoices in truth	•Boastful
•Bears up under all problems / Protects	•Inappropriate / Rude
•Believes / Trusts	•Selfish
•Hopes	•Short-tempered
•Understands the faults of others	•Evil
•Never fails / Perseveres	•Accepting of sin

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1 CORINTHIANS 14:1-40

[NEXT](#) 15:1-22

Chapters 12-14 dealt with the spiritual gifts which God gives to His followers for the work of the ministry. At the beginning of **Chapter 14**, Paul teaches about the gifts of prophecy and tongues. But he says pursue; follow after love; let love be your greatest aim. It is when we love a person we meet the needs of a person. But still cultivate spiritual gifts, especially that of prophesy (**14:1**). Prophecy, the spiritual gift was to serve in a way that tongues could not, namely by edifying the entire church by speaking God's Word. However, when one spoke in tongues, no one understood them (**14:2-3**). Three things to remember:

1. Tongues are not understood by men, that is, grasps the meaning of what is being said (**14:2**).
2. The believer who prophesies edifies, exhorts, and comforts men (**14:3**).
3. Tongues are directed toward God, whereas prophecy is addressed to men (**14:4**).

The primary message upon our lips must be the gospel, and it must be understandable to all men, while focusing on the edification of others, not self-edification. Even though you may have the gift of tongues, it's still important in the ministry so much that Paul wished that all would speak in tongues, because their spirit is praying, praising and talking to God who builds and strengthens us up for the task; but if tongues is interpreted, it builds the church (**14:5**). Tongues edify self, whereas prophecy edifies the church.

Now Paul uses a variety of illustrations to teach that speaking in tongues without an interpretation does not edify others.

1. Paul himself, if visiting the church would not speak with tongues because his speaking in a tongue would not profit them (**14:6**).
2. Each musical instruments must have a distinctive sound or else their sound is meaningless, confused, and fails to inspire the listeners. When a soldier blows the trumpet, he must communicate the sound for the army to get ready for battle or they would be confused (**14:7-8**).
3. A person's own speech must speak words that are understood or else the listeners do not know what he is saying, or he would be doing nothing more than just speaking into the air (**14:9**).
4. Different foreign languages coming to you and you don't understand the language; then what is he saying? It's like a foreign language to the hearer. It does not edify you, strengthen, or comfort you (**14:10-11**).

If you must be zealous of spiritual gifts then seek after one that may excel to benefit the church (**14:12**) (**14:1-12**).

14:13 Wherefore let him that speaketh in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret. Tongues is a spiritual language unknown to man but know to God. There were many different languages, but this was unknown to man. If one is to speak in tongues out loud to the church (to edify them), others need to understand what is being said. The tongues needs to be interpreted, meaning, what is being said, is to edify, strengthen, and comfort the church. Therefore, Paul is saying when one speaks in an unknown tongue to the church, he is to pray that he or someone else can interpret what God is saying through him. Ask the Spirit for the other gift: *The Interpretation of Tongues*. Only God can give revelation. But, when one prays, or praise in an unknown tongue (*within himself*), it communicates to God, not to other people.

14:14 For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. When praying in an unknown tongue, your spirit is praying, connecting with God's Spirit. This is not the mind praying

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with understanding. This is the spirit praying in an unknown tongue that is only known by the Spirit of God. Therefore the mind would be unfruitful. The Holy Spirit knows what you're saying because He is the One leading and guiding the speech, and your inward man is being strengthened. Paul is not saying not to pray with the mind, but in the case of tongues, the mind is unfruitful and as the spirit prays, He, the Holy Spirit, pin-points on just what you need to say to God.

14:15 What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. Paul gives himself as an example, saying, *"no matter if I pray with the spirit, I will also pray with understanding; if I will sing with the spirit, I will also sing with understanding."* Again, it is important to use the mind as well as the spirit. God allows you to pray with the mind as well as the spirit. We can say some astounding words with our mind, but if our heart is not right, it will not be heard nor answered. But praying with our spirit is astounding in itself because you don't have anything to do with it. Now, if you really want to know what you're saying, God is able to give interpretation to you. I have been in meetings where they were praying or singing in tongues and I didn't understand them, but that didn't keep me from praying and blessing God in the only way I knew how at the time—praying with my mind (*regular language*) with my heart centered on Him; with the understanding I have of God; being sincere with God. To convey this to the Corinthians, Paul is insisting that both can be used. He's not excluding any, only its proper use of using the gift.

14:16 Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?—Paul is saying, *"For if you praise and thank God with the spirit alone, speaking in another language, how can those who don't understand you, be praising God alone with you?"* (TLB). Because they did not understand the praise and thanks, then they could not say Amen at the appointed time. "Amen" means *"so be it"* and *"you agree with the prayer."* Paul wanted others to understand and confirm what was prayed or sung.

14:17 For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified. It could have been a great blessing and giving of thanks in the room, from the person delivering in tongues, but others weren't edified. Why? Because they didn't understand what was being said. Paul wants all to be edified when the gift is given; that is, all to properly work well.

14:18 I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all:—Paul is not denying or forbidding the exercise of the gift of tongues. He also spoke with tongues even more than all of them.

14:19 Yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue. But, in the church, to proclaim the Gospel with understanding, he said I rather speak five words with his understanding, that his voice might be able to teach others, than ten thousand words in an unknown language. This is about all receiving what they need from God when they come to church. He probably spoke in tongues in his private worship but in and among others in the church, he spoke words with understanding that reached to edify them. Communication is the goal!

14:20 Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men. The earlier verses provided its intended use and procedure of the gift of tongues; now we are provided the guidelines for not judging tongues. No doubt speaking in unknown tongues fostered cliques—those who <http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

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could and those who could not. They were stricken with the different emotional and spectacular experiences. Some had the idea that speaking in tongues was an evidence of spiritual maturity, but Paul taught that it was possible to exercise the gift without being childish in their thinking. One thing that was important: that there be no divisions over their gifts. They were not to operate in malice. They needed to grow up and be as mature men in their thinking.

14:21 In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord. ²³Well, the quotation from Isaiah 28:11 makes it clear: Isaiah was speaking to the whole nation of Israel at a time when the Assyrians were knocking at the doors of Jerusalem, threatening to capture it. Through the prophet, God is warning the nation that, if they do not repent and turn from their evil and idolatrous ways, they are going to hear foreigners talking in the Holy City; they are going to hear Gentile tongues filling the streets of that city. It is a warning to Israel to face up to their relationship with God lest He turn from them to the Gentile world.

14:22 Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe. Tongues are for a sign. The sign was threefold:

1. A sign of Cursing

The northern kingdom of Israel had been conquered and taken captive by the Assyrians because of unbelief and apostasy. The southern kingdom of Judah had been warned of that same judgment by the hands of the Babylonians. ²⁴Now that was the scene and the setting of Isaiah's words. One hundred years later they were completely fulfilled when the Babylonians came in and did take over the city and the streets of Jerusalem were filled with foreigners speaking strange tongues. (*Also read Deut.58:49*).

If you read the Day of Pentecost in that light you will see how fully that accords with this prediction, for, on that day, when the streets of Jerusalem were filled with thousands and thousands of people, largely Jews, who had come from all the nations around, they heard the disciples speaking these strange Gentile languages they had never learned. It was a sign to unbelieving Jews that God was about to turn from Israel's favored position and go to the Gentile world. On that day, remember, Peter stood up and warned them that they were facing the judgment of God, being convicted in their hearts, that was why they said, "Men and brethren, what must we do?" (Acts 2:37), and three thousand of them turned to God because of that, while the rest of the city, the mass of the population, remained in unbelief.

2. A sign of Blessing

The sign of tongues was repeated when the Gentiles were included in the church as recorded in Acts

10:44-46. The gift of tongues would no longer work through one nation, and favor one people. The church of Jesus Christ was for all peoples of all nations, a church in which there are many languages but no barriers. Paul wrote in Galatians 3:28, *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."*

3. A sign of Authority

Those who preached the judgment and promised the blessing were the apostles and prophets whose authority was validated by signs and wonders and miracles. And signs and miracles are still happening today!

- Tongues are a sign, **not** for the believer, **but for the unbeliever**. It warns unbelievers (at that time for

²³ <http://www.raystedman.org/new-testament/1-corinthians/speaking-of-tongues>

²⁴ <http://www.raystedman.org/new-testament/1-corinthians/speaking-of-tongues>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

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unbelieving Israel). Tongues give personal and private edification. The believer who speaks in tongues has an exciting and exhilarating experience while in his prayer closet. This exciting experience enables him to become the kind of witness he ought to be for the Lord Jesus Christ. His gift of tongues edifies him personally, and he is quickened with a new fervor to warn the unbeliever of pending judgment.

But it says that Prophecy serves **for the believer, not** for the unbeliever. It edifies believers, therefore, giving public and open edification when gathered together. Because of their new nature of the indwelling Holy Spirit, they are able to understand spiritual truth.

14:23 If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?— Paul gives the example of everyone in the whole church assembled together speaking in tongues, and a stranger or unbeliever came in, they would think the whole church was insane or mad. This would really seem strange to the person coming into their midst. The point is that although tongues were to be a sign for unbelievers, they would need an Interpreter to understand the depth of the warning or they would be confused and become harden against those speaking in tongues or even the gospel.

14:24 But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all:— Paul contrasts tongues and prophecy; showing what will build up your neighbor. He says, on the other hand, if all had the gift of prophecy, meaning all are inspired to preach or proclaim God's Word (not all at once), and an unbeliever or unlearned person came in, it would be a difference. Why? Because the unbeliever would be able to understand everything going on in the church meeting, and be converted and judged on the basis of his response to the message.

14:25 And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth. The convicted person comes to see himself as he really is, because the secrets of his heart are made manifest (disclosed; made known). His sinful intentions and acts are revealed to him. Consequently, he will fall on his face and worship the Almighty God, declaring that God is certainly among them. The church's most powerful testimony is not in its speaking in tongues, but in its clear proclamation of the powerful Word of God. Hallelujah!

14:26 How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. Whether they had a psalm, a teaching, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation, they all wanted to participate at the same time. It had become disorderly and confusion prevailed in the Corinthian church. They were not interested in serving, or learning, or edifying, but only in self-expression and self-glory. Each person was struggling for the right to share his latest inspiration and spiritual insight. Everyone vied for attention and preeminence instead of love, respect, humility, unity, and edification.

- **A psalm** (*hymn*) may it be reading, a singing of one of the Old Testament psalms should be to the praise of God for giving Christ; giving His wisdom and power to us in our daily lives.
- **A doctrine** (*lesson; teaching*) should be presented and expounded upon that gives understanding of God's Word about Christ our Savior.
- A revelation (*a word from God's heart and mind*) written or revealed from God.
- **A tongue** (*a unknown language*) that should exhort and build-up your life.

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- **An interpretation** (*explanation*) translated after the gift of tongues were spoken.

The point is: because they have all these gifts in the church, they could not all be given at the same time. Could you imagine 100 or 1,000 people doing what they want at the same time? Everything that's done when they come together was for the edification (*the building up*) of someone else; it was not for the edification of self which was what they were doing.

SUMMARY:

Those who spoke with the gift of tongues were to pray that they would be able to interpret them (**14:13**); also be able to pray and sing with both the spirit and understanding. Why? - That all might be edified (**14:14-19**). Paul contrasted tongues and prophesying (**14:20-25**)

1. Tongues are a sign for unbelievers, while prophesying is for believers (**14:20-22**)
2. Tongues in the assembly (without interpreters) will give people the wrong impression (**14:23**)
3. But prophesying in the assembly can bless even the unbeliever and uninformed person (**14:24-25**)

The spiritual gifts had to be regulated. Paul said let all things be done for edification (**14:26**). ²⁵Paul insists that all the parts of worship should be conducive to instruction and edification. Tongues, prophecy, and other gifts were to be practiced under strict regulation (**14:26-33a**). Also, for the sake of decorum in the churches, women were not to speak in public worship (**14:33b-36**). Paul declares that what he is writing is the Lord's instruction (**14:37, 38**). He concludes by encouraging the Corinthian Christians to seek to prophesy and not to prohibit people from speaking in tongues, provided that the whole of the worship service is decorous and orderly (**14:39, 40**).

APPLICATION:

To build-up one's neighbor is to seek their good. To seek their good is to be led by the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit is concerned about their spiritual welfare—that they understand the gospel through the edification of the church (*taught, instructed, enlightened, educated, and improved*)! The church does this through the work of the Spirit.

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²⁵ <http://www.thywordistruth.com/corinth/less21cn.pdf>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>

15:1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;— Moreover, tells us that Paul had finished his answers to the Corinthians' questions and now goes on to a new subject. Paul says he declared the gospel to the Corinthian church, the same gospel which he had already preached to them and they received and stood on. Some in the church were in danger of not continuing the faith; some were denying the resurrection and undermining the gospel which the hope the Corinthian believers stood on. So, they desperately needed the gospel proclaimed and three things come to mind in verse 1 and 2: **1)** they received the gospel; **2)** they stood on the gospel; and **3)** they were saved by the gospel (**15:2**). The word "*declare*" (*gnorizo*) means *to make known*. Paul is not reminding the Corinthians of the gospel, he is again (**15:3-8**):

- Declaring it as though they had never heard it.
- Proclaiming it as though they had never sat before it.
- Making it known as though they had never known it.

15:2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. By this gospel he preached, they are saved if they hold firmly to the Word. Otherwise, if they turn from the gospel and deny the resurrection, they have believed in vain.

- They must keep the gospel in memory. A person must hold fast and continue to believe to be saved.
- They must not believe in vain. The idea is that some might believe, but believe in the wrong thing—believe in something that is vain, empty, worthless, useless.

What Paul preached is not to be believed in vain.

15:3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;—You can only testify of things you have received, and that's what Paul is doing.

1) The **first truth** of the gospel is that Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

- The word "**first of all**" *means* that the very first thing Paul ever preached to the Corinthians was the death of Jesus Christ. The death of Jesus Christ is so important that it must be the first thing preached. It is the very foundation of a person's salvation.
- The first truth Paul himself received was the death of Jesus Christ.
- Christ died for our sins. The word "**for**" (*huper*) means *for our benefit, for our sake, in our behalf, in our stead, as our substitute*.
 - Christ died as our sacrifice.
 - Christ died as our ransom.
 - Christ died as our propitiation.
- Christ died...according to the Scriptures. The truth of the gospel is not only important historically but prophetically as well. They had occurred as had been predicted.

15:4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures;— 2) The second truth of the gospel is that Jesus Christ was buried and arose from the dead according to the Scriptures.

- The burial of Jesus Christ is important, for it proves two significant things:
 - It proves that Jesus Christ died.
 - It proves that no man is put into a tomb with a sealed rock to enclose it unless he is dead. The

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resurrection. The empty tomb is evidence that Christ assures the believer that he too shall be raised from the dead.

- Jesus Christ rose again...according to the Scriptures.
 - Most Old Testament scriptures such as Isaiah 53 foretold Jesus' atoning death, and His fulfillment of those and other predictions is one strong evidence that He is the Christ, the Son of God—that He was buried and that He was raised again on the third day. The resurrection of Christ proves...
 - ...that God is; that He exists.
 - ...that Jesus is who He claimed to be, the Son of God Himself; that Jesus Christ was sent to earth to secure the Ideal righteousness for man and to die and to arise from the dead for man.
 - ...that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world, the very One whom God sent to earth to save men from death and to give them life.
 - ...that He is "the Spirit of life"; that Christ is the very energy and force of life, the very power and Being of life, and that He can give the same "*Spirit of life*" to men.

15:5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:— The **third truth** of the gospel is that there were eyewitnesses to Jesus' resurrection. He was seen of Cephas (Peter). Peter had failed the Lord miserably, having denied Him three times. Jesus definitely appeared alive after His resurrection to Peter, then to the twelve apostles of Christ. Although Judas, having committed suicide, the term twelve was a customary name to refer to the group, even though they were only eleven at the time. Matthias later replaced Judas.

15:6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. Afterwards, Jesus was seen by 500 of His brethren at the same time, of most of whom are still living, though some had fallen asleep (died). This may have been the appearance in Galilee (Matt.28:10, 16-20) where the larger number of Christ's followers were. The point is: five hundred believers could testify of God's love for men.

15:7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. Then He appeared to James—either the apostle the son of Zebedee, or James the brother of Jesus, who did not believe in Jesus until after the resurrection but later became prominent in the leadership of the Jerusalem church. The appearance of Christ was to equip the apostles to be eyewitnesses of the resurrection.

15:8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. The fourth truth of the gospel is that there was one strong eyewitness of Jesus Christ. Paul's most important credential to be an apostle was that he was an eyewitness of the risen Christ.

- Paul saw Christ after the Lord's ascension. The phrase "*one born out of due time*" (*to ektromati*) means a miscarriage, an abortion, a child born out of time. Paul is simply saying that he did not know and follow the Lord when the Lord walked upon the earth, but he saw the Lord after He had left the earth and ascended into heaven. Paul of course, referring to his experience on the Damascus road and perhaps to the visions granted him.
- You see Paul was very prideful in who he was and what he had achieved in his position and personal morality and righteousness. He was a rising young leader in Judaism; a promising career of looking forward in a place on the Sanhedrin high court. Yet, he turned 180° in a day, gave up his promising future and chose a life of suffering and sacrifice because he had seen the Lord! Nothing less than having actually seen Christ face to face could change a man so radically. Nothing less than having actually seen Christ face to face could make a man give up so much and pay so great a price for

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preaching the gospel.

15:9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. Paul could not forget the souls he had destroyed and the people he had wronged; or how he had fought against the Lord. Like Paul, we would give much to go back and redo the past; change some things, but we cannot. Paul was radically converted and changed against all odds. He had a deep sense of unworthiness.

- Paul says I am the least of the apostles.
- I am not meet (fit; unworthy) to be called an apostle.
- Because I persecuted the church of God.

15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

There's that word "*but...*" What we can't change, God's grace can. That's why God's grace had to come in for somebody like Paul. "**But by the grace of God**" meaning it was God working within and without. It was God's prevailing love moving when he didn't know what he was doing. The grace of God had to take over to make him what he was to be. It is by God's goodness and through no merit of our own of who we are today! For you see the grace God granted upon Paul was not useless; was not ineffective, but it effected his life so much that Paul lets us know that he labored, desperately driven more abundantly than them all (*being an instrument for God—laboring in the Word—preaching—enduring hardships—suffering than any other apostles*). Yet it was not him, but it was the grace of God in him (*that made him an apostle of Christ; a preacher of the gospel*). To Paul the greatest thing in all the world was the grace of God, because it was the fact that God loved him so much! Look at this:

- God forgave his terrible sins.
- God allowed him to follow and serve His dear Son.
- God allowed him to proclaim the glorious cure for the cancer of sin and death, even the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ!

All that Paul was and all that Paul did was by the "*grace*", *the undeserved favor of God!* — **the grace that was with him.**

15:11 Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed. The **fifth truth** of the gospel is desperately needed in the world: there is only one gospel that is preached and that has to be believed — The gospel of the death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior. Only His death and resurrection truly offers eternal life to men. The fact and truth is that God gave His only begotten Son for the world that they might believe. He allowed His Son to die, and then raised Him to life. It was to assure man that God truly loved us and will raise us up to live eternally with Him.

SYNOPSIS:

15:12-19 Paul has established first of all that *resurrection* is an essential fact of the gospel. He now tabulates the logical consequences of denying the *resurrection*. Most Greeks did not believe that a person's body would be resurrected after death. They thought the soul would enter some eternal state but not the body. Christianity, by contrast, affirms that the body and soul will be reunited after the *resurrection*. There were people in Corinth who were saying there was no *resurrection*. Paul presents logical consequences of denying the *resurrection*:

1. If there is no *resurrection*, then Jesus Christ is still in the grave (15:16).

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2. If He is not raised, there is no gospel to preach (15:17).
3. If there is no gospel, then you have believed in vain and you are still in your sins (15:17).
4. If there is no *resurrection*, then believers who have died have no hope (15:18).

Faith in a dead Savior means that our religious beliefs are of no value. If our hope in Christ does not take us beyond this life, then "we are of all men most miserable" (15:19). I SERVE A LIVING AND NOT A DEAD SAVIOR! If I do not believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the Bible teaches, my belief about everything else is meaningless. I SERVE A LIVING AND NOT A DEAD CHRIST!

15:20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. The words "**But now**" connect this passage to the former verses where some were arguing that Christ did not arise from the dead. If Christ did not arise from the dead, then the consequences are terrible:

- Our preaching is meaningless.
- Our faith is futile.
- We are liars and false witnesses
- we are still in our sins
- our loved ones who have already died have perished.
- we are of all men most miserable.

"**But now is Christ risen from the dead**" paints a different picture. He is not dead, He is alive, and He is become the first fruit, even of them that have died (*always speaking of a harvest*).

What is the best way for God to prove that He can raise the dead? The answer is obvious. He raised up the Man Christ Jesus. Because He arose, we too shall arise. Since Christ has risen, we know that God has the power to raise the dead (them that slept). It's guaranteed! No person could want for a greater hope nor for a greater promise than this! Two things:

1. Christ has risen from the dead.
2. Christ has become the firstfruit of them that slept. The term "*firstfruit*" refers to the harvest of a farmer's first crop. The Jewish farmer was to take part of his very first fruit and give it as an offering to God. The offering of the first fruit to God assures us of God's blessings upon the rest of the harvest that followed!

The point is: the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the firstfruit, and the first resurrection of a Man who would never die again. It guarantees that we, too, shall be raised from the dead. "*But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you*" Rom.8:11. That means us!

15:21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. Adam was the first man. The Second Man was Christ. Paul saw in Adam a type of Jesus Contrasting them: the first Adam fell and brought death into the world. But Christ, the Second Adam undid the damage by conquering death in His resurrection.

15:22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. Continuing in this contrast between Adam and Christ, it shows that in Adam all die. However, in Christ all will be made alive. The first Adam disobeyed God and brought sin and death into the world (Rom 5:12-21), but the last Adam (Jesus Christ) obeyed the Father and brought life and hope. Which do you want? Adam represented the disobedience; bringing sin into the world—the whole human race that follow him. Christ represents all who would belong to Him; follow Him and His obedience to the Father.

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SUMMARY:

Paul declared the gospel to the Corinthian church, the same gospel which he had already preached and they received, stood on, and were saved. (15:1-2). The Old Testament Scriptures declared Jesus was buried, and that he rose again the third day (15:3-4).

Peter saw Him, the disciples saw Him collectively (15:5). Five hundred plus people saw Him at the same time (15:6) and James, Jesus' half-brother saw Him (15:7). The greatest witness of the resurrection was Paul himself who had been one of the greatest persecutors the Church had ever known (15:5-11).

²⁶ *"Firstfruits"* refers to the Lord Jesus Himself (15:20). When Jesus was raised from the dead, it was God's sign (assurance) to us that we shall also be raised one day (at the rapture) to be with Him (15:21). In Adam all die, but in Christ all are made alive (15:22). (15:1-22).

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²⁶ <http://www.family-times.net/commentary/i-corinthians-1520/>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>