

# FREE BIBLE COMMENTARY

**YOU CAN UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE!**

## ***Paul's Letters to a Troubled Church: 1 & 2 Corinthians***

By Dr. Bob Utley, retired professor of hermeneutics (Biblical interpretation)

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# ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS COMMENTARY

AB	Anchor Bible Commentaries, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman
ABD	Anchor Bible Dictionary (6 vols.), ed. David Noel Freedman
AKOT	Analytical Key to the Old Testament by John Joseph Owens
ANET	Ancient Near Eastern Texts, James B. Pritchard
BDB	A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament by F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs
IDB	The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (4 vols.), ed. George A. Buttrick
ISBE	International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (5 vols.), ed. James Orr
JB	Jerusalem Bible
JPSOA	The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text: A New Translation (The Jewish Publication Society of America)
KB	The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament by Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner
LAM	The Holy Bible From Ancient Eastern Manuscripts (the Peshitta) by George M. Lamsa
LXX	Septuagint (Greek-English) by Zondervan, 1970
MOF	A New Translation of the Bible by James Moffatt
MT	Masoretic Hebrew Text
NAB	New American Bible Text
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEB	New English Bible
NET	NET Bible: New English Translation, Second Beta Edition
NRSV	New Revised Standard Bible
NIDOTTE	New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis (5 vols.), ed. Willem A. VanGemeren
NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
OTPG	Old Testament Passing Guide by Todd S. Beall, William A. Banks and Colin Smith
REB	Revised English Bible
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SEPT	The Septuagint (Greek-English) by Zondervan, 1970
TEV	Today's English Version from United Bible Societies
YLT	Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible by Robert Young
ZPBE	Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia (5 vols.), ed. Merrill C. Tenney

# A Word From the Author: How Can This Commentary Help You?

Biblical interpretation is a rational and spiritual process that attempts to understand an ancient inspired writer in such a way that the message from God may be understood and applied in our day.

The spiritual process is crucial but difficult to define. It does involve a yieldedness and openness to God. There must be a hunger (1) for Him, (2) to know Him, and (3) to serve Him. This process involves prayer, confession and the willingness for lifestyle change. The Spirit is crucial in the interpretive process, but why sincere, godly Christians understand the Bible differently is a mystery.

The rational process is easier to describe. We must be consistent and fair to the text and not be influenced by our personal or denominational biases. We are all historically conditioned. None of us are objective, neutral interpreters. This commentary offers a careful rational process containing three interpretive principles structured to help us overcome our biases.

## First Principle

The first principle is to note the historical setting in which a biblical book was written and the particular historical occasion for its authorship. The original author had a purpose, a message to communicate. The text cannot mean something to us that it never meant to the original, ancient, inspired author. His intent—not our historical, emotional, cultural, personal or denominational need—is the key. Application is an integral partner to interpretation, but proper interpretation must always precede application. It must be reiterated that every biblical text has one and only one meaning. This meaning is what the original biblical author intended through the Spirit's leadership to communicate to his day. This one meaning may have many possible applications to different cultures and situations. These applications must be linked to the central truth of the original author. For this reason, this study guide commentary is designed to provide an introduction to each book of the Bible.

## Second Principle

The second principle is to identify the literary units. Every biblical book is a unified document. Interpreters have no right to isolate one aspect of truth by excluding others. Therefore, we must strive to understand the purpose of the whole biblical book before we interpret the individual literary units. The individual parts—chapters, paragraphs, or verses—cannot mean what the whole unit does not mean. Interpretation must move from a deductive approach of the whole to an inductive approach to the parts. Therefore, this study guide commentary is designed to help the student analyze the structure of each literary unit by paragraphs. Paragraph and chapter divisions are not inspired, but they do aid us in identifying thought units.

Interpreting at a paragraph level—not sentence, clause, phrase or word level—is the key in following the biblical author's intended meaning. Paragraphs are based on a unified topic, often called the theme or topical sentence. Every word, phrase, clause, and sentence in the paragraph relates somehow to this unified theme. They limit it, expand it, explain it, and/or question it. A real key to proper interpretation is to follow the original author's thought on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis through the individual literary units that make up the biblical book. This study guide commentary is designed to help the student do that by comparing modern English translations. These translations have been selected because they employ different translation theories:

1. The United Bible Society's Greek text is the revised fourth edition (UBS4). This text was paragraphed by modern textual scholars.

2. The New King James Version (NKJV) is a word-for-word literal translation based on the Greek manuscript tradition known as the Textus Receptus. Its paragraph divisions are longer than the other translations. These longer units help the student to see the unified topics.
3. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is a modified word-for-word translation. It forms a mid point between the following two modern versions. Its paragraph divisions are quite helpful in identifying subjects.
4. The Today's English Version (TEV) is a dynamic equivalent translation published by the United Bible Society. It attempts to translate the Bible in such a way that a modern English reader or speaker can understand the meaning of the Greek text. Often, especially in the Gospels, it divides paragraphs by speaker rather than by subject, in the same way as the NIV. For the interpreter's purposes, this is not helpful. It is interesting to note that both the UBS4 and TEV are published by the same entity, yet their paragraphing differs.
5. The Jerusalem Bible (JB) is a dynamic equivalent translation based on a French Catholic translation. It is very helpful in comparing the paragraphing from a European perspective.
6. The printed text is the 1995 Updated New American Standard Bible (NASB), which is a word for word translation. The verse by verse comments follow this paragraphing.

### **Third Principle**

The third principle is to read the Bible in different translations in order to grasp the widest possible range of meaning (semantic field) that biblical words or phrases may have. Often a Greek phrase or word can be understood in several ways. These different translations bring out these options and help to identify and explain the Greek manuscript variations. These do not affect doctrine, but they do help us to try to get back to the original text penned by an inspired ancient writer.

This commentary offers a quick way for the student to check his interpretations. It is not meant to be definitive, but rather informative and thought-provoking. Often, other possible interpretations help us not be so parochial, dogmatic, and denominational. Interpreters need to have a larger range of interpretive options to recognize how ambiguous the ancient text can be. It is shocking how little agreement there is among Christians who claim the Bible as their source of truth.

These principles have helped me to overcome much of my historical conditioning by forcing me to struggle with the ancient text. My hope is that it will be a blessing to you as well.

Bob Utley  
June 27, 1996

# **A GUIDE TO GOOD BIBLE READING: A PERSONAL SEARCH FOR VERIFIABLE TRUTH**

What follows is a brief explanation of Dr. Bob Utley's hermeneutical philosophy and the procedures used in his commentaries.

Can we know truth? Where is it found? Can we logically verify it? Is there an ultimate authority? Are there absolutes which can guide our lives, our world? Is there meaning to life? Why are we here? Where are we going? These questions—questions that all rational people contemplate—have haunted the human intellect since the beginning of time (Eccl. 1:13-18; 3:9-11). I can remember my personal search for an integrating center for my life. I became a believer in Christ at a young age, based primarily on the witness of significant others in my family. As I grew to adulthood, questions about myself and my world also grew. Simple cultural and religious clichés did not bring meaning to the experiences I read about or encountered. It was a time of confusion, searching, longing, and often a feeling of hopelessness in the face of the insensitive, hard world in which I lived.

Many claimed to have answers to these ultimate questions, but after research and reflection I found that their answers were based upon (1) personal philosophies, (2) ancient myths, (3) personal experiences, or (4) psychological projections. I needed some degree of verification, some evidence, some rationality on which to base my worldview, my integrating center, my reason to live. I found these in my study of the Bible. I began to search for evidence of its trustworthiness, which I found in (1) the historical reliability of the Bible as confirmed by archaeology, (2) the accuracy of the prophecies of the Old Testament, (3) the unity of the Bible message over the sixteen hundred years of its production, and (4) the personal testimonies of people whose lives had been permanently changed by contact with the Bible. Christianity, as a unified system of faith and belief, has the ability to deal with complex questions of human life. Not only did this provide a rational framework, but the experiential aspect of biblical faith brought me emotional joy and stability.

I thought that I had found the integrating center for my life—Christ, as understood through the Scriptures. It was a heady experience, an emotional release. However, I can still remember the shock and pain when it began to dawn on me how many different interpretations of this book were advocated, sometimes even within the same churches and schools of thought. Affirming the inspiration and trustworthiness of the Bible was not the end, but only the beginning. How do I verify or reject the varied and conflicting interpretations of the many difficult passages in Scripture by those who were claiming its authority and trustworthiness? This task became my life's goal and pilgrimage of faith. I knew that my faith in Christ had brought me great peace and joy. My mind longed for some absolutes in the midst of the relativity of my culture and the dogmatism of conflicting religious systems and denominational arrogance. In my search for valid approaches to the interpretation of ancient literature, I was surprised to discover my own historical, cultural, denominational and experiential biases. I had often read the Bible simply to reinforce my own views. I used it as a source of dogma to attack others while reaffirming my own insecurities and inadequacies. How painful this realization was to me!

Although I can never be totally objective, I can become a better reader of the Bible. I can limit my biases by identifying them and acknowledging their presence. I am not yet free of them, but I have confronted my own weaknesses. The interpreter is often the worst enemy of good Bible reading! Let me list some of the presuppositions I bring to my study of the Bible so that you, the reader, may examine them along with me:

## I. Presuppositions

1. I believe the Bible is the sole inspired self-revelation of the one true God. Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of the intent of the original divine author through a human writer in a specific historical setting.
2. I believe the Bible was written for the common person—for all people! God accommodated Himself to speak to us clearly within a historical and cultural context. God does not hide truth—He wants us to understand! Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of its day, not ours. The Bible should not mean to us what it never meant to those who first read or heard it. It is understandable by the average human mind and uses normal human communication forms and techniques.
3. I believe the Bible has a unified message and purpose. It does not contradict itself, though it does contain difficult and paradoxical passages. Thus, the best interpreter of the Bible is the Bible itself.
4. I believe that every passage (excluding prophecies) has one and only one meaning based on the intent of the original, inspired author. Although we can never be absolutely certain we know the original author's intent, many indicators point in its direction:
  - a. the genre (literary type) chosen to express the message
  - b. the historical setting and/or specific occasion that elicited the writing
  - c. the literary context of the entire book as well as each literary unit
  - d. the textual design (outline) of the literary units as they relate to the whole message
  - e. the specific grammatical features employed to communicate the message
  - f. the words chosen to present the message

The study of each of these areas becomes the object of our study of a passage. Before I explain my methodology for good Bible reading, let me delineate some of the inappropriate methods being used today that have caused so much diversity of interpretation, and that consequently should be avoided:

## II. Inappropriate Methods

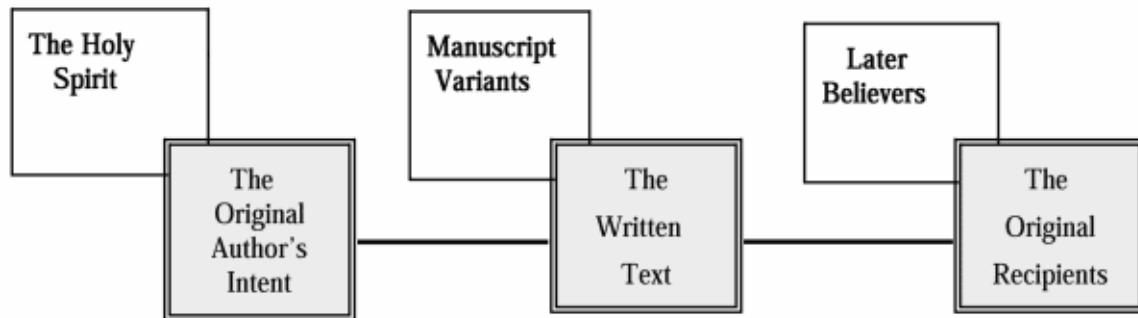
1. Ignoring the literary context of the books of the Bible and using every sentence, clause, or even individual words as statements of truth unrelated to the author's intent or the larger context. This is often called "proof-texting."
2. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by substituting a supposed historical setting that has little or no support from the text itself.
3. Ignoring the historical setting of the books and reading it as the morning hometown newspaper written primarily to modern individual Christians.
4. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by allegorizing the text into a philosophical/theological message totally unrelated to the first hearers and the original author's intent.
5. Ignoring the original message by substituting one's own system of theology, pet doctrine, or contemporary issue unrelated to the original author's purpose and stated message. This phenomenon often follows the initial reading of the Bible as a means of establishing a speaker's authority. This is often referred to as "reader response" ("what-the-text-means-to-me" interpretation).

At least three related components may be found in all written human communication:



In the past, different reading techniques have focused on one of the three components. But to truly affirm

the unique inspiration of the Bible, a modified diagram is more appropriate:



In truth all three components must be included in the interpretive process. For the purpose of verification, my interpretation focuses on the first two components: the original author and the text. I am probably reacting to the abuses I have observed (1) allegorizing or spiritualizing texts and (2) "reader response" interpretation (what-it-means-to-me). Abuse may occur at each stage. We must always check our motives, biases, techniques, and applications. But how do we check them if there are no boundaries to interpretations, no limits, no criteria? This is where authorial intent and textual structure provide me with some criteria for limiting the scope of possible valid interpretations.

In light of these inappropriate reading techniques, what are some possible approaches to good Bible reading and interpretation which offer a degree of verification and consistency?

### III. Possible Approaches to Good Bible Reading

At this point I am not discussing the unique techniques of interpreting specific genres but general hermeneutical principles valid for all types of biblical texts. A good book for genre-specific approaches is *How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth*, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, published by Zondervan.

My methodology focuses initially on the reader allowing the Holy Spirit to illumine the Bible through four personal reading cycles. This makes the Spirit, the text and the reader primary, not secondary. This also protects the reader from being unduly influenced by commentators. I have heard it said: "The Bible throws a lot of light on commentaries." This is not meant to be a depreciating comment about study aids, but rather a plea for an appropriate timing for their use.

We must be able to support our interpretations from the text itself. Five areas provide at least limited verification:

1. historical setting
2. literary context
3. grammatical structures (syntax)
4. contemporary word usage
5. relevant parallel passages
6. genre

We need to be able to provide the reasons and logic behind our interpretations. The Bible is our only source for faith and practice. Sadly, Christians often disagree about what it teaches or affirms. The four reading cycles are designed to provide the following interpretive insights:

1. The first reading cycle
  - a. Read the book in a single sitting. Read it again in a different translation, hopefully from a different translation theory
    - (1) word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
    - (2) dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
    - (3) paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)

- b. Look for the central purpose of the entire writing. Identify its theme.
  - c. Isolate (if possible) a literary unit, a chapter, a paragraph or a sentence which clearly expresses this central purpose or theme.
  - d. Identify the predominant literary genre
    - (1) Old Testament
      - a) Hebrew narrative
      - b) Hebrew poetry (wisdom literature, psalm)
      - c) Hebrew prophecy (prose, poetry)
      - d) Law codes
    - (2) New Testament
      - a) Narratives (Gospels, Acts)
      - b) Parables (Gospels)
      - c) Letters/epistles
      - d) Apocalyptic literature
2. The second reading cycle
- a. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify major topics or subjects.
  - b. Outline the major topics and briefly state their contents in a simple statement.
  - c. Check your purpose statement and broad outline with study aids.
3. The third reading cycle
- a. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify the historical setting and specific occasion for the writing from the Bible book itself.
  - b. List the historical items that are mentioned in the Bible book
    - (1) the author
    - (2) the date
    - (3) the recipients
    - (4) the specific reason for writing
    - (5) aspects of the cultural setting that relate to the purpose of the writing
    - (6) references to historical people and events
  - c. Expand your outline to paragraph level for that part of the biblical book you are interpreting. Always identify and outline the literary unit. This may be several chapters or paragraphs. This enables you to follow the original author's logic and textual design.
  - d. Check your historical setting by using study aids.
4. The fourth reading cycle
- a. Read the specific literary unit again in several translations
    - (1) word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
    - (2) dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
    - (3) paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
  - b. Look for literary or grammatical structures
    - (1) repeated phrases, Eph. 1:6,12,14
    - (2) repeated grammatical structures, Rom. 8:31
    - (3) contrasting concepts
  - c. List the following items
    - (1) significant terms
    - (2) unusual terms
    - (3) important grammatical structures
    - (4) particularly difficult words, clauses, and sentences
  - d. Look for relevant parallel passages
    - (1) look for the clearest teaching passage on your subject using a) "systematic theology" books b) reference Bibles c) concordances



- (2) look for a possible paradoxical pair within your subject. Many biblical truths are presented in dialectical pairs; many denominational conflicts come from proof-texting half of a biblical tension. All of the Bible is inspired, and we must seek out its complete message in order to provide a Scriptural balance to our interpretation.
- (3) look for parallels within the same book, same author or same genre; the Bible is its own best interpreter because it has one author, the Spirit.
- e. Use study aids to check your observations of historical setting and occasion
  - (1) study Bibles
  - (2) Bible encyclopedias, handbooks and dictionaries
  - (3) Bible introductions
  - (4) Bible commentaries (at this point in your study, allow the believing community, past and present, to aid and correct your personal study.)

#### **IV. Application of Bible Interpretation**

At this point we turn to application. You have taken the time to understand the text in its original setting; now you must apply it to your life, your culture. I define biblical authority as "understanding what the original biblical author was saying to his day and applying that truth to our day."

Application must follow interpretation of the original author's intent both in time and logic. We cannot apply a Bible passage to our own day until we know what it was saying to its day! A Bible passage should not mean what it never meant!

Your detailed outline, to paragraph level (reading cycle #3), will be your guide. Application should be made at paragraph level, not word level. Words have meaning only in context; clauses have meaning only in context; sentences have meaning only in context. The only inspired person involved in the interpretive process is the original author. We only follow his lead by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. But illumination is not inspiration. To say "thus saith the Lord," we must abide by the original author's intent. Application must relate specifically to the general intent of the whole writing, the specific literary unit and paragraph level thought development.

Do not let the issues of our day interpret the Bible; let the Bible speak! This may require us to draw principles from the text. This is valid if the text supports a principle. Unfortunately, many times our principles are just that, "our" principles—not the text's principles.

In applying the Bible, it is important to remember that (except in prophecy) one and only one meaning is valid for a particular Bible text. That meaning is related to the intent of the original author as he addressed a crisis or need in his day. Many possible applications may be derived from this one meaning. The application will be based on the recipients' needs but must be related to the original author's meaning.

#### **V. The Spiritual Aspect of Interpretation**

So far I have discussed the logical process involved in interpretation and application. Now let me discuss briefly the spiritual aspect of interpretation. The following checklist has been helpful for me:

1. Pray for the Spirit's help (cf. I Cor. 1:26-2:16).
2. Pray for personal forgiveness and cleansing from known sin (cf. I John 1:9).
3. Pray for a greater desire to know God (cf. Ps. 19:7-14; 42:1ff.; 119:1ff).
4. Apply any new insight immediately to your own life.
5. Remain humble and teachable.

It is so hard to keep the balance between the logical process and the spiritual leadership of the Holy Spirit. The following quotes have helped me balance the two:

1. from James W. Sire, *Scripture Twisting*, pp. 17-18:  
 "The illumination comes to the minds of God's people—not just to the spiritual elite. There is no guru class in biblical Christianity, no illuminati, no people through whom all proper interpretation must come. And so, while the Holy Spirit gives special gifts of wisdom, knowledge and spiritual discernment, He does not assign these gifted Christians to be the only authoritative interpreters of His Word. It is up to each of His people to learn, to judge and to discern by reference to the Bible which stands as the authority even to those to whom God has given special abilities. To summarize, the assumption I am making throughout the entire book is that the Bible is God's true revelation to all humanity, that it is our ultimate authority on all matters about which it speaks, that it is not a total mystery but can be adequately understood by ordinary people in every culture."
  
2. on Kierkegaard, found in Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, p. 75:  
 According to Kierkegaard the grammatical, lexical, and historical study of the Bible was necessary but preliminary to the true reading of the Bible. "To read the Bible as God's word one must read it with his heart in his mouth, on tip-toe, with eager expectancy, in conversation with God. To read the Bible thoughtlessly or carelessly or academically or professionally is not to read the Bible as God's Word. As one reads it as a love letter is read, then one reads it as the Word of God."
  
3. H. H. Rowley in *The Relevance of the Bible*, p. 19:  
 "No merely intellectual understanding of the Bible, however complete, can possess all its treasures. It does not despise such understanding, for it is essential to a complete understanding. But it must lead to a spiritual understanding of the spiritual treasures of this book if it is to be complete. And for that spiritual understanding something more than intellectual alertness is necessary. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and the Bible student needs an attitude of spiritual receptivity, an eagerness to find God that he may yield himself to Him, if he is to pass beyond his scientific study unto the richer inheritance of this greatest of all books."

## **VI. This Commentary's Method**

The Study Guide Commentary is designed to aid your interpretive procedures in the following ways:

1. A brief historical outline introduces each book. After you have done "reading cycle #3" check this information.
2. Contextual insights are found at the beginning of each chapter. This will help you see how the literary unit is structured.
3. At the beginning of each chapter or major literary unit the paragraph divisions and their descriptive captions are provided from several modern translations:
  - a. The United Bible Society Greek text, fourth edition revised (UBS4)
  - b. The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update (NASB)
  - c. The New King James Version (NKJV)
  - d. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)
  - e. Today's English Version (TEV)
  - f. The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB)

Paragraph divisions are not inspired. They must be ascertained from the context. By comparing several modern translations from differing translation theories and theological perspectives, we are able to analyze the supposed structure of the original author's thought. Each paragraph has one major truth. This has been called "the topic sentence" or "the central idea of the text." This unifying thought is the key to proper historical, grammatical interpretation. One should never interpret, preach or teach on less than a paragraph! Also remember that each paragraph is related to its surrounding paragraphs. This is why a paragraph level outline of the entire book is so important. We must be able to follow the logical flow of the subject being addressed by the original inspired author.

4. Bob's notes follow a verse-by-verse approach to interpretation. This forces us to follow the original author's thought. The notes provide information from several areas:
  - a. literary context
  - b. historical, cultural insights
  - c. grammatical information
  - d. word studies
  - e. relevant parallel passages
5. At certain points in the commentary, the printed text of the New American Standard Version (1995 update) will be supplemented by the translations of several other modern versions:
  - a. The New King James Version (NKJV), which follows the textual manuscripts of the "Textus Receptus."
  - b. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), which is a word-for-word revision from the National Council of Churches of the Revised Standard Version.
  - c. The Today's English Version (TEV), which is a dynamic equivalent translation from the American Bible Society.
  - d. The Jerusalem Bible (JB), which is an English translation based on a French Catholic dynamic equivalent translation.
6. For those who do not read Greek, comparing English translations can help in identifying problems in the text:
  - a. manuscript variations
  - b. alternate word meanings
  - c. grammatically difficult texts and structure
  - d. ambiguous texts Although the English translations cannot solve these problems, they do target them as places for deeper and more thorough study.
  - e. At the close of each chapter relevant discussion questions are provided which attempt to target the major interpretive issues of that chapter.

# INTRODUCTION TO 1 CORINTHIANS

## (PRACTICAL ADVICE TO A TROUBLED CHURCH)

### I. THE UNIQUENESS OF 1 CORINTHIANS

- A. It is quoted more often and earlier by the early church fathers than any other writing of Paul which shows its importance and usefulness.
- B. In the Muratorian Fragment, which was a list of canonical books from Rome (a.d. 200), it is listed as the first of Paul's writings which also shows its importance.
- C. Paul makes a distinction in this practical letter between his personal opinion and the Lord's commands. However, this is based on his knowledge of Jesus' teachings on any given subject. If he could he would pass on Jesus' words. He believed his opinions were also inspired and authoritative (cf. 1 Cor. 7:25, 40).
- D. Paul's guiding principle for church fellowship is that the freedom of individual believers, but also their commensurate corporate responsibility, is based not on law, but on love. The health and growth of the whole church supercedes any personal preference or privilege (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7).
- E. This letter (along with 2 Corinthians) gives us an early look into the NT church, its structure, methods, and message. However, it must also be remembered that this church was a problematic, non-typical congregation.

### II. THE CITY OF CORINTH

- A. Winter shipping lanes around the southern most point of Greece (i.e., Cape Malea) were very dangerous. Therefore, a land route of the shortest possible length was crucial. The geographical location of Corinth on the four-mile isthmus between the Gulf of Corinth (i.e., Ionian Sea) and the Saronic Gulf (i.e., Aegean Sea) made the city a major commercial shipping, trading (specializing in types of pottery and a special type of brass), and military center. In Paul's day this was literally where the cultures of the East and West met.
- B. Corinth was also a major cultural center of the Greco-Roman world because it hosted the bi-annual Isthmian Games which began in 581 b.c. (at the Temple of Poseidon). Only the Olympic Games in Athens, every four years, rivaled them in size and importance (Thucydides, *Hist.* 1.13.5).
- C. In 146 b.c. Corinth was involved in a revolt (i.e., the Achaean League) against Rome and was destroyed by the Roman General Lucius Mummius and the Greek population dispersed into slavery. Because of its economical and military importance it was rebuilt in either 46 or 48 b.c. by Julius Caesar. It became a Roman colony where Roman soldiers retired. It was a mimic of Rome in architecture and culture and was the administrative center of the Roman (i.e., Senatorial) province of Achaia in 27 b.c. It became an Imperial Province in a.d. 15.
- D. The acropolis of Old Corinth, rising more than 1880 feet above the plain, was the site of the temple to Aphrodite. To this temple were attached 1,000 prostitutes (Strabo, *Geography*, 8.6.20-22). To be called "a Corinthian" (i.e., *Korinthiazesthai*, coined by Aristophanes [450-385 b.c.]) was synonymous to loose, riotous living. This temple, as most of the city, was destroyed in an

earthquake about 150 years before Paul arrived, as it was again in a.d. 77. It is uncertain if the fertility cult continued in Paul's day. Since the Romans, in 146 b.c., destroyed the city and killed or enslaved all of its citizens, the Greek flavor of the city was superseded by its Roman colonial status (Pausanias, II.3.7). This Roman cultural context instead of Greek culture, makes a significant difference in interpreting 1 Corinthians.

### III. THE AUTHOR

- A. It was to this city that Paul the Apostle came on his second missionary journey; the account is found in Acts 18:1-21. Through a vision the Lord revealed to Paul that many would believe and that there would be no successful opposition to his ministry (cf. Acts 18:9-10).
- B. Paul's missionary strategy was to plant a church in the major cities of his day, knowing that converted visitors, traveling salesmen, and sailors would spread the gospel as they went. It was up to the local church to take responsibility for the evangelism and discipleship of their area.
- C. Paul found Aquila and Priscilla, also believing Jewish tent-makers or leather workers, in Corinth. They were forced out of Rome in a.d. 49 by Claudius' edict (Orosius, *Hist.* 7:6:15-16) against any Jewish rites or rituals (cf. Acts 18:2). Paul had come to Corinth alone. Both Silas and Timothy were on assignments in Macedonia (cf. Acts 18:5). He was very discouraged (cf. Acts 18:9-19; 1 Cor. 2:3). However, he persevered and stayed in Corinth eighteen months (cf. Acts 18:11).
- D. Paul's authorship of this book is attested to by Clement of Rome, who wrote a letter to Corinth in a.d. 95/96 (*1 Clement* 37:5; 47:1-3; 49:5). Pauline authorship of this letter has never been doubted, even by modern critical scholarship.

### IV. THE DATE

- A. The date of Paul's visit to Corinth has been ascertained by an inscription of the Emperor Claudius found at Delphi, which dates the proconsulship of Gallio as beginning in July a.d. 51 through July, 52 (cf. Acts 18:12-17), which would make the date of Paul's arrival about a.d. 49-50.
- B. The date of Paul's letter would then be sometime in the mid-50's. He wrote it from Ephesus where he ministered between two years (cf. Acts 19:10) and three years (cf. Acts 20:31).
- C. A possible chronology of Paul's writings following F. F. Bruce and Murry Harris with minor adaptations:

	<u>Book</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Place of Writing</u>	<u>Relation to Acts</u>
1	Galatians	48	Syrian Antioch	Acts 14:28; 15:2
2	1 Thessalonians	50	Corinth	Acts 18:5
3	2 Thessalonians	50	Corinth	
4	1 Corinthians	55	Ephesus	Acts 19:20
5	2 Corinthians	56	Macedonia	Acts 20:2
6	Romans	57	Corinth	Acts 20:3
7-10	Prison Letters			
	Colossians	early 60's	Rome	
	Philemon	early 60's	Rome	

Ephesians	early 60's	Rome	
Philippians	late 62-63	Rome	Acts 28:30-31
11-13 Fourth Missionary Journey		Ephesus (?)	
1 Timothy	63 (or later,	Macedonia	
Titus	63 but before		
2 Timothy	64 A.D. 68)	Rome	

## V. RECIPIENTS OF THE LETTER

- A. The recipient of the letter was the fledgling church made up mostly of Gentiles. The population of Corinth was racially and culturally mixed. We know from archaeology and Scripture (cf. Acts 18:4-8) that there was a synagogue in Corinth.
- B. Roman soldiers were retired there after they completed twenty years of military service. Corinth was a free city, a Roman colony, and capital of the Roman province of Achaia.
- C. The letter seems to reflect several groups in the church:
1. intellectual Greeks who were still very proud of their philosophical traditions and were trying to wed Christian revelation to these old customs and intellectual traditions
  2. Roman patrons and the socially elite
  3. a believing Jewish contingent made up mostly of "god-fearing" Gentiles, who attended the synagogue
  4. a large number of converted slaves

## VI. THE PURPOSE OF THE LETTER

- A. Paul heard of the problems that had developed at Corinth from four sources
1. Chloe's people, 1 Cor. 1:11
  2. a letter from the church asking questions, 1 Cor. 7:1,25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1,12
  3. a personal visit from Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, 1 Cor. 16:17
- It is possible that the letter (#2) was brought by these men (#3).

It is interesting that Murry Harris has outlined the book of 1 Corinthians based on Paul's received information about the church.

1. oral report from members of Chloe's household, resulting in Paul writing chapters 1 Cor. 1-4
  2. oral report from church representatives (i.e., , Stephanus, Fortunatus, and Achaicus), resulting in chapters 1 Cor. 5-6
  3. written questions from the church, resulting in chapters 1 Cor. 7-16
- B. The church had become factious, advocating different leaders: Paul, Apollos, Peter, and possibly a Christ party (cf. 1 Cor. 1:12). Not only was the church divided over leadership types, but also over several moral issues and the use of spiritual gifts. A main point of contention was Paul's Apostolic authority (especially 2 Corinthians)!

## VII. PAUL'S CONTACTS WITH THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH-A TENTATIVE PROPOSAL

- A. How many letters did Paul write to Corinth?
1. just two, 1 and 2 Corinthians
  2. three, with one letter being lost
  3. four, with two letters being lost
  4. some modern scholars find parts of the two lost letters in 2 Corinthians

- a. previous letter (1 Cor. 5:9) in 2 Cor. 6:14-17:1)
- b. severe letter (2 Cor. 2:3-4,9; 7:8-12) in 2 Cor. 10-13)
- 5. five, with 2 Cor. 10-13 being the fifth letter, sent after Titus' report relating the further bad news

B. Theory #3 seems to fit best

- 1. previous letter, lost (1 Cor. 5:9)
- 2. 1 Corinthians
- 3. severe letter, lost (possibly part of which is recorded in 2 Cor. 2:1-11; 7:8-12)
- 4. 2 Corinthians

C. A proposed reconstruction

DATE	VISIT	LETTER
a.d. 50-52 Paul's Second Missionary Journey	a. On Paul's Second Missionary Journey he stayed in Corinth eighteen months (cf. Acts 18:1-11)	
a.d. 52 Gallio was proconsul from a.d. 51 (cf. Acts 18:12-17)		a. 1 Cor. 5:9-11 seems to refer to a letter about an immoral situation in the church. This letter is unknown unless: (1) as some suppose, that 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1 is part of it or (2) that 2 Cor. 2:3,4,9 are epistolary aorists and refer to 2 Corinthians.
a.d. 56 (Spring)	b. Paul hears about problems in the church while he is in Ephesus from two sources: (1) Chloe's people, 1 Cor. 1:11 and (2) Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, 1 Cor. 16:17. They apparently brought a letter from the Corinthian house churches containing questions	
a.d. 56 (Winter) or a.d. 57 (Winter)		b. Paul answers these questions (cf. 1 Cor.

7:1,25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1,2)  
by writing 1 Corinthians.  
Timothy (cf. 1 Cor. 4:17)  
takes the response from  
Ephesus (cf. 1 Cor. 16:8)  
to Corinth. Timothy was not  
able to solve the problems  
in the church.

c. Paul made an  
emergency, painful visit to  
Corinth (not recorded in  
Acts, cf. 2 Cor. 2:1). It was  
not successful, but he  
vowed to return.

c. Paul wrote a severe  
letter (cf. 2 Cor. 2:3-4:9;  
7:8-12) to the Corinthian  
house churches which was  
delivered by Titus (cf. 2  
Cor. 2:13; 7:13-15). This  
letter is unknown, unless,  
as some suppose, part of  
it is in 2 Cor. 10-13.

d. Paul planned to meet  
Titus in Troas, but Titus  
did not come, so Paul  
went to Macedonia (cf. 2  
Cor. 2:13; 7:5,13),  
possibly Philippi (cf. MSS  
B<sup>c</sup>, K, L, P).

d. He found Titus and  
heard that the church had  
responded to his  
leadership and he then  
wrote 2 Corinthians in  
great thanksgiving (cf.  
7:11-16). It was delivered  
by Titus

a.d. 57-58 (Winter)

e. Paul's last recorded  
visit to Corinth seems to  
be referred to in Acts  
20:2-3. Although it does  
not mention Corinth by  
name, it is assumed. He

e. The marked mood  
change between chapters  
1-9 and 10-13 is explained  
by some scholars as more  
bad news (possibly the  
revitalization of old



stayed there during the winter months.

opponents and the addition of new opponents) from the Corinthian house churches after chapters 1-9 had been written (F. F. Bruce).

## VIII. CONCLUSION

- A. In 1 Corinthians we see Paul, a pastor, dealing with a problem church. In this letter and in Galatians, we see him apply universal gospel truth in different ways, based on the need of the church: freedom for the Galatian churches/limits to the Corinthian church.
- B. This book is either a series of "cultural dinosaurs" or a wealth of principled truth applied to a particular historical/cultural setting. We must be careful not to confuse truth and cultural applications of that truth. For a good discussion of this very important hermeneutical issue see Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart's *How To Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, pp. 65-76 and Gordon Fee, *Gospel and Spirit*.
- C. This book will push you to the limit of your spiritual ability to interpret the Bible. It will force you to rethink aspects of your theology. It will open a window to God's will for our day, practically speaking, as few other biblical writings.

## IX. BRIEF OUTLINE OF 1 CORINTHIANS

- A. Introduction 1 Cor. 1:1-9
  - 1. Greeting, 1 Cor. 1:1-3
  - 2. Thanksgiving, 1 Cor. 1:4-9
- B. Reported problems at Corinth, 1 Cor. 1:10-6:20
  - 1. Factions within the church because of the misunderstanding of Christian leadership's (i.e., Paul, Apollos, Peter) motives and message, 1 Cor. 1:10-4:12
  - 2. Shocking immorality, 1 Cor. 5:1-13
  - 3. Christian lawsuits, 1 Cor. 6:1-11
  - 4. Christian freedom limited by responsibility, 1 Cor. 6:12-20
- C. A letter from Corinth asking the nagging questions, 1 Cor. 7:1-1-16:4
  - 1. Human sexuality, 1 Cor. 7:1-40
  - 2. Relationship to an idolatrous culture and Christian freedom, 1 Cor. 8:1-11:1
  - 3. Christian worship and spirituality, 1 Cor. 11:2-14:40
  - 4. Insights on eschatology, especially the resurrection, 1 Cor. 15:1-58
  - 5. The contribution for the mother church in Jerusalem, 1 Cor. 16:1-4
- D. Concluding remarks
  - 1. Paul's (and his fellow ministers) travel plans, 1 Cor. 16:5-12
  - 2. Final exhortation and greetings, 1 Cor. 16:13-24

## X. SUGGESTED READINGS ON PAUL'S THOUGHT

- A. *The Mind of St. Paul*, William Barclay, published by Harper & Row

- B. *Paul, Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, F. F. Bruce, published by Eerdmans
- C. *The Origins of Paul's Religion*, J. Gresham Machen, published by Eerdmans
- D. *Paul, An Outline of His Theology*, Herman Ridderbos (translated by John De Witt), published by Eerdmans
- E. *Epochs in the Life of Paul*, A. T. Robertson, published by Baker
- F. *A Man In Christ*, James S. Stewart, published by Harper & Row
- G. *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, published by IVP
- H. *Paul in the Roman World, The Conflict at Corinth*, Robert M. Grant, published by Westminster, John Knox Press
- I. *Philo and Paul Among the Sophists*, Bruce W. Winter, published by Eerdmans
- J. *After Paul Left Corinth*, Bruce W. Winter

## READING CYCLE ONE

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the entire biblical book at one sitting. State the central theme of the entire book in your own words.

1. Theme of entire book
2. Type of literature (genre)

## READING CYCLE TWO (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the entire biblical book a second time at one sitting. Outline the main subjects and express the subject in a single sentence.

1. Subject of first literary unit
2. Subject of second literary unit
3. Subject of third literary unit
4. Subject of fourth literary unit
5. Etc.

# 1 CORINTHIANS 1

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS\*

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Greetings and Thanksgiving	Greeting	Salutation	Greetings	Address and Greetings
1:1-3	1:1-3	1:1-3	1:1 1:2 1:3	1:1-3
1:4-9	Spiritual Gifts at Corinth	Thanksgiving	Blessings in Christ	Thanksgiving
Divisions in the Church	1:4-9	1:4-9	1:4-9	1:4-9
1:10-17	Sectarianism is Sin	Divisions at Corinth	Divisions in the Church	Dissensions Among the Faithful
Christ the Power and Wisdom of God	1:10-17	1:10-17	1:10-13 1:14-17	1:10-16 The True Wisdom and the False
1:18-25	Christ the Power and Wisdom of God	Christ Crucified (1:18-2:5)	Christ the Power and Wisdom of God	(1:17-3:4) 1:17-25
1:26-31	1:18-25	1:18-25	1:18-20 1:21-25	1:18-25
	1:26-31	1:26-31	1:26-31	1:26-31

\* Although they are not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraphs. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth, or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own distinct way. As you read the text, ask yourself which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions.

In every chapter we must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs), then compare our understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation can we truly understand the Bible. Only the original author is inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility of applying the inspired truth to their day and their lives.

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in the following documents: [Brief Definitions of Greek Grammatical Structure](#), [Textual Criticism](#), and [Glossary](#).

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 1:1

<sup>1</sup>Paul, *called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,*

**1:1 "Paul"** Most Jews of Paul's day living outside of Palestine had two first names, one Jewish one Roman (cf. Acts 13:9). Paul's Jewish name was Saul. He, like the ancient King of Israel, was of the tribe of Benjamin (cf. Rom. 11:1; Phil. 3:5). His Roman or Greek name, Paul, meant "little." This referred either

1. to his physical stature, which was alluded to in a second century non-canonical book, *The Acts of Paul*, in a chapter related to Thessalonika called "Paul and Thekla"
2. to his personal sense of being the least of the saints because he originally persecuted the Church (cf. 1 Cor. 15:9; Eph. 3:8; 1 Tim. 1:15)
3. simply to the name given by his parents at birth

▣ **"called"** See Special Topic following.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: CALLED

▣ **"an apostle"** This is a common Greek word for "send" (i.e., *apostellō*). See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 4:9. This term has several theological usages.

1. The rabbis used it as one called and sent as an official representative of another, something like our English "ambassador" (cf. 2 Cor. 5:20).
2. The Gospels often use this term of Jesus being sent by the Father (cf. Matt. 10:40; 15:24; Mark 9:37; Luke 9:48). In John the term takes on Messianic overtones (cf. John 4:34; 5:24,30,36,37,38; 6:29,38,39,40,57; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3,8,18,21,23,25; 20:21). It is used of Jesus sending believers (cf. John 17:18; 20:21).
3. The NT used it for disciples.
  - a. the original Twelve who were an inner circle of disciples (cf. Luke 6:13; Acts 1:21-22)
  - b. a special group of Apostolic helpers and co-workers
    - (1) Barnabas (cf. Acts 14:4,14)
    - (2) Andronicus and Junias (KJV, Junia, cf. Rom. 16:7)
    - (3) Apollos (cf. 1 Cor. 4:6-9)
    - (4) James, the Lord's brother (cf. Gal. 1:19)
    - (5) Silvanus and Timothy (cf. 1 Thess. 2:6)
    - (6) possibly Titus (cf. 2 Cor. 8:23)
    - (7) possibly Epaphroditus (cf. Phil. 2:25)
  - c. an ongoing gift in the church (cf. 1 Cor. 12:28-29; Eph. 4:11)
4. Paul uses this title for himself in most of his letters as a way of asserting his God-given call and authority as Christ's representative (cf. Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:1; 2 Tim. 1:1; Titus 1:1).

▣ **"Jesus Christ"** These terms are part of the fuller title "the Lord Jesus Christ" (cf. 1 Cor. 1:2,3,7,8,9,10). These three titles all have individual significance.

1. "Jesus" is the name given to the baby in Bethlehem by the angel (cf. Matt. 1:21). It is made up of two Hebrew nouns: "YHWH," the covenant name for deity, and "salvation" (i.e., Hosea). It is the same Hebrew name as Joshua. When used alone it often identifies the man, Jesus of Nazareth, son of Mary (e.g., Matt. 1:16, 25; 2:1; 3:13,15,16).
2. "Christ" is the Greek translation of the Hebrew *Messiah* (i.e., an Anointed One). It asserts Jesus' OT title as YHWH's promised One sent to set up the new age of righteousness.
3. "Lord" (used in 1 Cor. 1:1 in KJV) is the translation of the Hebrew term *adon*, which meant "owner, husband, master, or lord." The Jews became afraid of pronouncing the sacred name YHWH lest they take it in vain and break one of the Ten Commandments. Whenever they read the Scriptures, they substituted *Adon* for YHWH. This is why our English translations use all capitals Lord for YHWH in the OT. By transferring this title (*kurios* in Greek) to Jesus, the NT authors assert His deity and equality with the Father.

■ **"by the will of God"** This is the first of several emphatic statements in this introduction relating to Paul's authority (i.e., "called an Apostle," 1 Cor. 1:1, "by the will of God," 1 Cor. 1:1, and "by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. 1:10). Paul's Apostolic authority is the major theological issue in the Corinthian letters, especially 2 Corinthians.

This same introductory phrase is used in Col. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; and 2 Tim. 1:1. Paul was convinced that God had chosen him to be an Apostle. This special sense of calling began at his Damascus road conversion (cf. Acts 9:22,26).

■ **"Sosthenes"** This was possibly the Jewish leader mentioned in Acts 18:17, who was beaten by the mob and possibly later became a believer and a local church leader. It is possible that he was Paul's (1) helper; (2) scribe; (3) source of information about the church or; (4) someone the church knew well.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 1:2**

**<sup>2</sup>To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their *Lord* and ours:**

**1:2 "to the church"** See Special Topic below.

#### **SPECIAL TOPIC: CHURCH (EKKLESIA)**

- **"of God which is at Corinth"** This phrase expresses two distinct senses about "the church."
1. It is a local body of born again, baptized believers. Most of the places in the NT that the word *ekklesia* is used reflect this local sense.
  2. It is also the universal expression of the body of Christ. This is seen in Matt. 16:18 (i.e., the first of the rare usage of this term by Jesus, cf. Matt. 18:17 [twice]); Acts 9:31 uses the singular "church" for all the local congregations in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria; and finally the use of the term in Ephesians, which is a cyclical letter to the churches of Asia Minor (cf. Eph. 1:22; 3:10,21; 5:23-32). There is one large body of Christ made up of all believers (some now dead, some alive) and there are local expressions of that universal body.
- **"to those who have been sanctified"** This is a perfect passive participle, which means they have been and continue to be declared holy by the work of Jesus through the agency of the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 6:11). This term (*hagiazō*) is related to the word "holy" (*hagios*) and "saints" (i.e., "holy ones" *hagioi*). It speaks of our separation to God for service. Here it refers to our position in Him as 1 Cor. 1:3 does, but other places in the NT believers are to strive toward "holiness" (e.g., Matt. 5:48). It is a position to be possessed. Paul encourages this factious, prideful church by calling them "saints" even amidst their failures and sins!

## SPECIAL TOPIC: NEW TESTAMENT HOLINESS/SANCTIFICATION

■ **"in Christ Jesus"** This grammatical form is designated as a locative of sphere. Believers are sanctified by the Father (i.e., the source, cf. John 17:7; 1 Thess. 5:23) through Jesus (i.e., the grounds, cf. 1 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 5:26). Both aspects come together in Heb. 2:11. It is normally the Holy Spirit to which this is attributed (i.e., the agency, cf. Rom. 15:16; 2 Thess. 2:13).

This is Paul's favorite way to designate believers. A good example of this is Eph. 1:3,4,7,9,10,12,13. See William Barclay, *The Mind of St. Paul*, pp. 121-132. It means vital, personal union with Jesus (cf. Acts 17:28).

It is interesting to note how scribes sometimes have

1. "in Christ Jesus" - MSS P<sup>46</sup>, B, D, F, G
2. "in Jesus Christ" - MSS  $\kappa$ , A

These kinds of variations occur often in the process of reading and copying. They do not affect the meaning, but do show that the early scribes were more concerned with the basic meaning of a text and not rigid literacy.

■ **"by calling"** This is a present middle participle. As Paul was called an Apostle, so too the Corinthian Christians were called saints (cf. Rom. 1:7). Notice the heavy emphasis on the doctrine of election in this chapter in 1 Cor. 1:9,24,26,27,28. This construction refers to the initial act of God calling them and their subsequent calling on Jesus in prayer for salvation, which resulted in ongoing prayer, worship, and obedience. Salvation is both an initial faith/repentance response and a continuing faith/repentance response. See Special Topic: Calling at 1 Cor. 1:1.

■ **"saints"** "Saints" (*hagioi*) is theologically related to the OT term "holy," (*kadosh*) which means "set apart for God's service" (cf. 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Rom. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:2). It is plural in the NT except for one time in Philippians (4:21), but even there, it is used corporately. To be saved is to be part of the covenant community of faith, the family of believers, the body of Christ.

God's people are holy because of the imputed righteousness of Jesus (cf. Romans 4; 2 Cor. 5:21; Galatians 3). It is God's will that they live holy lives (cf. 1 Cor. 1:4; 4:1; 5:27; Col. 1:22; 3:12). Believers are both declared holy (positional sanctification) and called to lifestyle holiness (progressive sanctification). Justification and sanctification must be affirmed together!

## SPECIAL TOPIC: SAINTS

■ **"with all who in every place"** Paul uses this phrase to remind the Corinthian believers that they are part of a larger church family. They do not have the right to uniqueness or special treatment. They must conform to the whole body of Christ in doctrine and practice (cf. 1 Cor. 4:17; 7:17; 11:16; 14:33).

■ **"call on the name of our Lord"** This refers to becoming a Christian (cf. Acts 2:21; 22:16; Rom. 10:9-13), but also to continuing worship (i.e., the OT use of the name, cf. Gen. 4:26; 12:8; 26:25). Here it is a present middle participle, which describes a moment-by-moment faith relationship with Christ (i.e., similar theologically to Paul's "in Christ") and an emphasis on an individual's volition. See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:10.

■ **"their Lord and ours"** This is another phrase that implies the unity of all believers and churches. Jesus is Lord of all the Christian congregations, which includes Corinth. Paul identifies himself and Sosthenes with the believers at Corinth in this phrase. They need to be reminded that (1) they are one of many congregations and (2) that Paul is one of them and for them!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 1:3**

**<sup>3</sup>Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

**1:3 "Grace"** Paul has changed the normal Greek letter opening term "greetings," *charein*, to a uniquely Christian one which sounds similar, *charis* (cf. Rom. 1:7; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3 Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; 2 Thess. 1:2; Philemon 1:3).

■ **"peace"** It is possible that as grace reflected a typical Greek greeting so "peace" reflected the typical Hebrew greeting, *shalom*. The term *shalom* is both a Hebrew greeting and farewell. It implies not only the absence of problems, but the presence of goodness and well-being. It is just possible that Paul's standard greeting comes from Num. 6:25-26, where both grace and peace appear. Theologically grace always precedes peace, but both are found only in a faith relationship with Christ (i.e., both corporately and individually).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: PEACE (SHALOM)**

■ **"from God our Father AND THE Lord Jesus Christ"** Both "grace" and "peace" come from the Father and the Son. The Father and Jesus are linked grammatically as one unit (i.e., one preposition, but two objects). This is a common way for NT authors to assert Jesus' deity (cf. 1 Thess. 1:1; 3:11; 2 Thess. 1:2,12; 2:16). The use of the OT titles of God applied to Jesus is another way to assert the same truth (i.e., Lord); also an OT event "Day of our Lord," now attributed to Jesus ("the day of our Lord Jesus Christ," cf. 1 Cor. 1:8).

For the title "the Lord Jesus Christ" see note at 1 Cor. 1:1.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: FATHERHOOD OF GOD**

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 1:4-9**

**<sup>4</sup>I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, <sup>5</sup>that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, <sup>6</sup>even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, <sup>7</sup>so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>8</sup>who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup>God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.**

**1:4 "I thank my God always concerning you"** This is a present active indicative, which expresses ongoing action. Verses 4-9 are an expansion of the things Paul thanks God for in the life of this troubled church. An introductory thanksgiving was a culturally expected element in first century letters. There is no thanksgiving in the introduction to 2 Corinthians (nor Galatians).

There are two ancient Greek uncial manuscripts (i.e.,  $\kappa^*$  and B) which omit the pronoun "my." However, the Greek manuscripts of P<sup>61</sup>,  $\kappa^2$ , A, C, D, F, G, as well as the Vulgate, Syriac, Coptic, and Armenian translations do include it. The UBS<sup>4</sup> Greek text gives its inclusion an A rating (i.e., certain).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THANKSGIVING**

■ **"for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus"** Paul emphasizes that their standing and gifts were by the grace of God through the finished work of Jesus Christ and not by their personal merit (i.e., aorist passive participle, cf. Eph. 2:8-9). This was the focus needed to offset their spiritual pride in

1. their gifted leaders
2. their individual spiritual gifts
3. their intellectual background (i.e., Greek culture)
4. their social standing (i.e., Roman culture)

**1:5 "in everything you were enriched in Him"** This aorist passive indicative matches the theological

emphasis of 1 Cor. 1:4 (i.e., God's grace given in Christ). In all the passive verbs in 1 Cor. 1:4-9 the implied agent is God. The Triune God has provided believers everything they need (i.e., all the spiritual gifts, cf. 1 Cor. 1:7). See Special Topic: The Trinity at 1 Cor. 2:10.

Notice Paul's use in this verse of three *pas* (i.e., "all" or "everything"). God is a complete provider. He does not need the ingenuity, intellect, or social standing of human beings.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"in all speech and all knowledge"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"in all utterance and all knowledge"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"in speech and knowledge of every kind"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"in all things including all speech and all knowledge"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"in every kind of utterance and knowledge"</b>

The Phillips translation has "from the words on your lips to the understanding in your hearts." These were two aspects of the Greek-oriented (i.e., later Gnostic) spiritual pride which was developing in the Corinthian church (cf. 1 Cor. 13:1-3). They were glorying in their gifts and performance instead of in Christ. It was God who gave them these very gifts. There was/is no room for human pride (cf. Eph. 2:9). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: BOASTING](#) at 1 Cor. 5:6.

The knowledge Paul is alluding to is not theoretical knowledge, nor academic knowledge, but Christian truth and how it applies to life (cf. 1 Cor. 1:8-10; Rom. 14:1-15:13). Human knowledge builds up, but God's knowledge edifies and leads to peace and harmony in the Christian fellowship. Oh how we need God's gift of knowledge in the church today!

**1:6 "even as the testimony concerning Christ"** The Apostolic preaching of the gospel, energized by the Spirit, enriched these believers in spiritual giftedness. Like all of God's blessings and gifts, these flow through Christ to needy, responsive human hearts.

<b>NASB, NKJV</b>	<b>"was confirmed in you"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"has been strengthened among you"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"has become firmly fixed in you"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"has taken root in you"</b>

This is the Greek term *bebaios*, which has three connotations.

1. that which is sure, certain, or able to be relied on (cf. Rom. 4:16; 2 Cor. 1:7; Heb. 2:20; 3:6,14; 6:19; 2 Pet. 1:10,19).
2. the process by which something's trustworthiness is shown or established (cf. Rom. 15:8; Heb. 2:2, cf. Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Vol. 1, pp. 340,377,670).
3. in the first century Koine papyri found in Egypt it became a technical term for a legal guarantee (cf. Moulton and Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, pp. 107-8).

Here it refers to God's power demonstrated among them (i.e., spiritual gifts). It could refer to other manifestations of the Spirit, because it is another aorist passive indicative paralleled to 1 Cor. 1:5 (and also the aorist passive participle in 1 Cor. 1:4), it could also refer to God's actions through the Holy Spirit in their conversions.

<b>1:7</b>	
<b>NASB, NJB</b>	<b>"so that you are not lacking in any gift"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"so that you come short in no gift"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"that you have not failed to receive a single blessing"</b>

The term "gift" is *charisma*. This word is related to the term "grace," *charis*, which emphasizes that the spiritual gifts are given by God for the common good (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7,11). They are meant to glorify Christ, not the Spirit or the individual Christian (cf. chapters 12-14). All of the gifts needed were present in the Corinthian church as they are in every church (cf. 1 Cor. 1:5). God has abundantly provided (i.e., strong



double negative connected with "lacking") for His people during the interim between Christ's two comings through the Holy Spirit's ministry.

▣ **"awaiting eagerly"** This Greek term can mean

1. patiently waiting for an expected future event (cf. Heb. 10:13; 1 Pet. 3:20)
2. eagerly expecting a future event (cf. Rom. 8:19,23,25; Phil. 3:20; Heb. 9:28)

The NKJV, NASB, and NIV translations follow #2, while NRSV, TEV, and NJB translations follow #1.

▣ **"the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ"** This is the Greek term *apocalupsis*. It is often translated "revelation." The term basically means to draw back a curtain so as to reveal something. It is the title of the last book of the NT. Here it refers to the return of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 1:8). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: NT TERMS FOR CHRIST'S RETURN](#) at 1 Cor. 15:23.

**1:8**

**NASB, NKJV "who will also confirm you to the end"**

**NRSV "He will also strengthen you to the end"**

**TEV "He will keep you firm to the end"**

**NJB "he will continue to give you strength till the very end"**

Throughout 1 Cor. 1:4-9 the active agent of the passive verbs has been God. However, 1 Cor. 1:8 is ambiguous. Some commentators think that for the first time in this section Christ is the referent of "who." It seems contextually better to assume that God the Father is still the active agent who sustains believers and establishes their acceptableness.

The term "confirm" was used in 1 Cor. 1:6. This church needed to be stabilized, to be constant and unwavering. This is one of the main purposes of Paul's letters to them. Christ's gospel was confirmed (i.e., 1 Cor. 1:6) and they will be confirmed by God's help (i.e., 1 Cor. 1:8). In 2 Cor. 2:8 Paul wants their love for him to be confirmed.

The Bible has two seemingly paradoxical truths about the believer's relationship with God.

1. It is covenantal in nature; therefore, it involves an initial and an ongoing faith and repentant response. We must be diligent to maintain our relationship.
2. It is secure in God's faithfulness (cf. Jude 24). No one can steal our relationship from us (cf. John 6:37,39; 10:28; Rom. 8:38-39). Security and perseverance are both biblical (cf. Eph. 2:8-9,10 and Phil. 2:12-13). They are the two necessary aspects of "covenant."

▣ **"blameless"** See Special Topic following.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: BLAMELESS, INNOCENT, GUILTLESS, WITHOUT REPROACH](#)

▣ **"in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ"** The NT authors have taken the OT "Day of YHWH" and applied it to Jesus' Second Coming. Jesus Christ is YHWH's surrogate in creation, redemption, and judgment.

**1:9 "God is faithful"** The term "faith" in the OT is a metaphorical extension of a stable or firm stance. It came to denote metaphorically that which is sure, trustworthy, dependable, and faithful. None of these describe even redeemed fallen mankind. It is not mankind's trustworthiness, or faithfulness or dependability, but God's (cf. Deut. 7:9; Ps. 36:5; 40:10; 89:1,2,5,8; 92:2; 119:90; Isa. 49:7; Rom. 3:3; 1 Cor. 10:13; 2 Cor. 1:18; 1 Thess. 5:24; 2 Tim. 2:13). We trust in His trustworthy promises, not our trustworthiness! Covenant obedience flows from gratitude! The biblical focus has always been on His faithfulness, not the believers' faith! Faith cannot save anyone. Only grace saves, but it is received by faith (cf. Eph. 2:8-9). The focus is never on the amount of faith (cf. Matt. 17:20), but on its object (Jesus). Our hope is in the unchanging character of the God who calls and promises (cf. Mal. 3:6; 2 Cor. 1:20).

Faith receives God's free gift in Christ (cf. Rom. 3:22,25; 4:5; 6:23; 9:30; Gal. 2:16; 1 Pet. 1:5). Mankind must respond (i.e., initially and continuously) to God's offer of grace and forgiveness in Christ (cf. John 1:12; 3:16-17,36; 6:40; 11:25-26; Rom. 10:9-13).

God deals with fallen humanity by means of covenant. He always takes the initiative (cf. John 6:44, 65) and sets the agenda and the boundaries (cf. Mark 1:51; Acts 20:21). He allows fallen mankind to participate in their own salvation by responding to His covenant offer. The mandated response is initial and continuing faith, repentance, obedience, service, worship, and perseverance.

Michael Magill, *New Testament TransLine*, p. 577, #24, has a great comment:

"Note the past tense in 1 Cor. 1:5-6, present tense in 1 Cor. 1:7, future tense in 1 Cor. 1:8. God is faithful in all three senses."

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: Believe, Trust, Faith, and Faithfulness in the Old Testament \(μν\)](#)

■ **"through whom you were called"** This is the continuing emphasis on God's election of the Corinthian believers (cf. 1 Cor. 1:2,9,24,26; Acts 18:9).

■ **"fellowship with His Son"** This is the Greek term *koinonia* which means joint participation in. God has called us to be in union with His Son both positionally (See Special Topic: Sanctification at 1 Cor. 1:2) and relationally. The goal of Christianity is Christlikeness (cf. Rom. 8:29; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; 2:10).

Believers' lifestyles after they meet Christ are evidence of their salvation (cf. the NT books of James and 1 John). They are saved by grace through faith unto works (cf. Eph. 2:8-9,10)! They are saved to serve (cf. Rom. 6:11)! Faith without works is dead, as are works without faith (cf. Matt. 7:21-23 and James 2:14-26). The goal of the Father's choice is that believers be "holy and blameless" (cf. Eph. 1:4; Matt. 5:48).

Paul was often attacked for his radically free gospel because it seemed to encourage godless living. A gospel so seemingly unconnected to moral performance might lead to abuse. Paul's gospel was free in the grace of God and the finished work of Christ and the wooing of the Holy Spirit, but it also demanded an appropriate response, not only in initial repentance, but in ongoing repentance. Godly living is the result, not lawlessness. Good works are not the mechanism of salvation, but the result. This paradox of a completely free salvation and a cost-everything response is difficult to communicate, but the two must be held in a tension-filled, paradoxical, dialectical balance. One dare not separate justification and sanctification.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: KOINŌNIA](#)

■ **"His Son"** Jesus as the Son of God is a recurrent theme in Paul's writings (cf. Rom. 1:3,4,9; 5:10; 8:3,29,32; 1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 1:19; Gal. 1:16; 2:20; 4:4,6; Eph. 4:13; Col. 1:13; 1 Thess. 1:10). He is not "son" in time only, but "Son" in eternity (cf. Heb. 1:2; 3:6; 5:8; 7:28). There has never been a time when Jesus was not the Son. Jesus' exaltation by the resurrection and at the ascension merely restores and magnifies His pre-existent, pre-incarnate glory.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE SON OF GOD](#)

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 1:10-17**

**<sup>10</sup>Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. <sup>11</sup>For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. <sup>12</sup>Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ." <sup>13</sup>Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? <sup>14</sup>I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, <sup>15</sup>so that no one would say you were baptized in my name. <sup>16</sup>Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other. <sup>17</sup>For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void.**

**1:10 "Now"** This is an adversative. Paul begins the main body of the letter.

■ **"I exhort you"** This phrase was both tender and tough. It was a call to appropriate living as well as an authoritative challenge. Paul often used this term (cf. 1 Cor. 1:10; 4:16; 16:15; 2 Cor. 2:8; 5:20; 6:1; 10:1; 12:1,8; 15:30; Eph. 4:1; Phil. 4:2; 1 Thess. 4:10; 1 Tim. 1:3; Philemon 1:9-10). See full note at 2 Cor. 1:4-11.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: COMFORT

■ **"brethren"** Paul uses the term "brethren" or "brother" often. Even though Paul had to exhort this congregation with strong words they still are his brothers and sisters in Christ.

Paul often uses this term to signal a new subject, but in this book he also uses it to signal the oneness of this church with both Paul and the other churches.

■ **"by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ"** In Jewish life the name represented one's character and authority. Here the Phillips translation caught the essence "by all that our Lord Jesus Christ means to you."

### SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NAME OF THE LORD

■ **"that you all agree"** There are two present active subjunctives in Paul's purpose (i.e., *hina*) clause.

1. that there may not continue to be dissensions (present active subjunctive)
2. that they may (present active subjunctive) be having been knit together (i.e., perfect passive participle, which makes this a periphrastic).

These subjunctives add a note of contingency. There were divisions and these factions were not knit together. The necessary attitudes and actions to maintain unity are listed in Eph. 4:2-3.

Paul's desire for this church reflects Jesus' prayer in John 17:11,21-23, "that they may be one, even as We are." This is also the thrust of Eph. 4:1-6. Unity (not uniformity) is crucial for a healthy, growing, Great Commission church (cf. Phil. 1:27). Lack of unity results in blinded minds (cf. 2 Cor. 3:14; 4:4; 11:3).

■ **"there be no divisions among you"** This term (i.e., *schismata*) was used in Koine Greek of factious political parties (cf. Acts 14:4; 23:7). We get the English word, "schism," from this Greek term. This was one of the major problems in this church (cf. 1 Cor. 11:18-19; 12:25). These divisions were based on

1. believers' personal preference for certain leadership skills (i.e., rhetoric)
2. believers' pride and jealousy over spiritual gifts
3. believers' recognition of economic categories (i.e., rich and poor)
4. believers' prejudice over social rank (i.e., slave and free)
5. believers' racial pride (i.e., Jew and Gentile)
6. believers' jealousy or pride over marital status (i.e., married and unmarried)
7. believers' pride over intellectual prowess (i.e., first century educational elitism, sophists)

In many ways this emphasis on arrogance, pride, dogmatism, and personal preference describes the modern church's denominational confusion. Each group claims to be number one following their human leaders (i.e., Luther, Calvin, Arminius, Wesley, etc.). Each group thinks they exclusively reflect God's mind. Oh, the continuing need for humility and teachability. All those who continually call on Jesus' name are His church!

■ **"that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment"** The Today's English Version (TEV) translation has "completely united with only one thought and one purpose." That purpose is the Kingdom of God, the gospel, the Great Commission, personal holiness, not personal biases, preferences, or agendas!

**1:11 "Chloe's people"** We know nothing about this lady except that perhaps she was a member of the church at Corinth or at least her workers were members. Her name was a nickname for the agriculture goddess, Demeter. Her servants are one source of Paul's knowledge about the problems which had

developed within the house churches at Corinth. See Introduction, VI. A.

■ **"that there are quarrels among you"** This same term (i.e., *eris*) is listed in fruits of the flesh in Gal. 5:20, which characterizes fallen, angry, selfish people. It is also listed in several other Pauline lists of sins (cf. 1 Cor. 3:3; 2 Cor. 12:20; 1 Tim. 6:4). It should never, never characterize the church of Jesus Christ!

**1:12** This seems to be a list of the factions (i.e., Paul's group, Apollos' group, Peter's group, Jesus' group). Much has been made of the characteristics of the leaders (i.e., Paul = freedom party, which included Gentiles by faith alone; Apollos = philosophical party; Cephas = Jewish traditionalist or legalistic party, cf. 2 Cor. 11:18-33); Christ = those of special rank, calling, giftedness, or spirituality (cf. possibly 2 Cor. 12:1). However, there is no certain information in the NT about the theology or motivation of each group. These leaders themselves were not factious. It was the groups at Corinth who claimed them as their champions who were factious.

■ **"Apollos"** This was a highly educated and eloquent preacher from Alexandria, Egypt. He was in Corinth (cf. Acts 18:24-19:1), but he refused to go back (cf. 1 Cor. 16:12). He was just the kind of leader this church was drawn to.

■ **"Cephas"** This is the Aramaic equivalent to the Greek name, Peter. It is uncertain if Peter was ever in Corinth. If not, this may reflect a "Judaistic" party (cf. Galatians and possibly 2 Corinthians).

■ **"I of Christ"** It is uncertain if this is Paul's reaction to the leader-oriented factions or another factious group who claimed only Christ as their leader. Clement of Rome, who wrote to Corinth in a.d. 95 (i.e., 1 Clem. 48) does not mention a Christ's party, although he does mention the other factious groups. This supports the view that this may be an exclamation by Paul. They may choose to acknowledge and follow human leaders, but he lifts up and belongs to Christ alone!

Other scholars have supposed that this may have been a group that claimed a special knowledge of Jesus or a special revelation from Jesus or a special relationship to Jesus (i.e., an elite, Gnostic-type faction). But again, this is uncertain and mere speculation. There is so much we do not know about the first and second century church.

**1:13** This verse records Paul's horrified reaction. "Has Christ been cut up?" This is a perfect passive indicative, implying Christ has been and remains divided by the attitudes and actions of these factions at Corinth. If this is a question, then a "yes" response is expected.

The Papyri manuscript which was written in the a.d. 200's, has a textual variant, "Christ cannot be divided" (but this papyri has been damaged and the text is unsure). The most ancient and reliable Greek uncial manuscripts,  $\alpha$ , A, B, C, D, F, and G, delete the negative and, thereby, make this (1) a question; (2) an exclamation; or (3) a statement. The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives the shorter text an A rating (certain).

■ **"Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul"** These are Paul's emphatic statements of Christ's supremacy (i.e., depreciating himself) possibly addressed to these factious groups or at least the group that was called by his name. This question expects a "no" answer.

**1:14 "Crispus"** This is the person mentioned in Acts 18:8 who was the leader of the synagogue in Corinth who accepted Christ. Acts 18:8 also mentions that he was baptized along with his household (cf. 1 Cor. 1:16). Apparently Paul performed this "household" baptism. In the ancient world when the head of the household converted, usually the entire house converted. This would normally include the children and servants, if there were any. For my full note see Acts 16:5 online at [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org).

■ **"Gaius"** This person may be the one mentioned in Rom. 16:23, in whose house the church at Corinth met. His full Roman name would be Gaius Titus Justus.

**1:16 "Stephanas"** This is the person mentioned in 1 Cor. 16:15,17. He was one of the three church members who brought a letter from the church to Paul at Ephesus. See Introduction, VI. A.

**1:17 "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach"** This is not meant to disparage baptism, but to react to the factious spirit in the church of Corinth that was lifting up certain leaders. However, this statement does indicate that baptism was not seen as a "sacramental" agency of grace. It is surprising that some interpret Paul's writings in a sacramental sense when in all his writings he specifically mentions the Lord's Supper only once in 1 Cor. 11 and baptism twice, in Rom. 6:1-11 and Col. 2:12. However, baptism is the will of God for every believer:

1. it is the example of Jesus (Matt: 3:13-17)
2. it is the command of Jesus (Matt. 28:28-10)
3. it is the expected, normal procedure for all believers (Romans 6; Acts 2:38)

I do not believe it is the channel for receiving the grace of God or the Spirit. It was that public opportunity for new believers to express their faith in a very public and decisive way. No NT believer would ask, "Must I be baptized to be saved?" Jesus did it! Jesus commanded the church to do it! Do it!

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: BAPTISM**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"not in cleverness of speech"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"not with wisdom of words"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"not with eloquent wisdom"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"without using the language of men's wisdom"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"not by means of wisdom of language"</b>

The term *sophia* (i.e., cleverness or wisdom) in 1 Cor. 1:17-24 is used in its human orientation (i.e., worldly wisdom, human wisdom, fallen wisdom). Human eloquence and/or wisdom cannot take the place of God's good news in Christ's substitutionary death. The power is in the message, not in the messenger (i.e., not even in Paul, cf. 2 Cor. 10:10; 11:6). A segment of this church prided themselves in rhetoric (see Bruce W. Winter, *Philo and Paul Among the Sophists*). A group of Jewish-oriented false teachers will later come to Corinth and attack Paul for his lack of rhetorical speaking skills in 2 Corinthians 10-13. No flesh will glory before God (cf. 1 Cor. 1:29; Eph. 2:9).

■ **"so that the cross of Christ would not be made void"** If humans could save themselves through their actions or intellect, then Christ's death would not have been necessary! But, they could/can not! The power of the cross is God's complete provision through Christ. Everything that needs to be done for the whole world to be saved is finished, complete, and available in the life, teachings, death, resurrection, ascension, and coming again of Christ, to which humans can only respond/receive by faith.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 1:18-25**

**<sup>18</sup>For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. <sup>19</sup>For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And the cleverness of the clever I will set aside." <sup>20</sup>Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? <sup>21</sup>For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not *come to* know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup>For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; <sup>23</sup>but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, <sup>24</sup>but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup>Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.**

**1:18 "For the word of the cross"** This "word" (i.e., *logos*) is related to the content of Paul's preaching (cf. 1 Cor. 1:17 and 23). Usually in his preaching Paul emphasizes both the crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ. But in this context he focuses on the crucifixion (cf. Gen. 3:15; Psalm 22; Isaiah 53; Zechariah 9-

14) and its results (cf. 1 Cor. 1:30).

**NASB, NKJV,**  
**NRSV** "foolishness"  
**TEV** "is nonsense"  
**NJB** "folly"

This Greek word comes into English as "moron." It is a key element in Paul's description of fallen human wisdom (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18,21,23,25), also notice 2:14; 3:18-19; 4:10. The gospel is revelation (i.e., self disclosure) from God, not human discovery!

■ **"to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God"** These are two present participles. The first is a present middle participle and the second a present passive participle. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: SALVATION \(GREEK VERB TENSES\)](#) at 1 Cor. 3:15. There are only two kinds of people: those who are perishing and those who are being saved (cf. 2 Cor. 2:15; 4:3). The term "perishing" does not mean physical annihilation, but permanent loss of fellowship with God, for which they were created. See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:28. Modern interpreters have taken the Hebrew euphemisms and literalized them. Two examples are:

1. "sleep" = death, not unconsciousness until resurrection
2. "perish" = spiritual loss, not annihilation

Some say that annihilation (i.e., cessation of life) is more humane than a permanent hell (cf. Fudge, *The Fire That consumes*). The problem arises when the same word used to describe hell is used of heaven (i.e., "eternal," cf. Matt. 25:46) and the mention of a double resurrection as in Dan. 12:2; John 5:28-29; and Acts 24:15. Yet it is not God who sends people to hell, but their own rejection of (1) the light they have (i.e., Ps. 19:1-6; Romans 1-2) or (2) the gospel (i.e., the unpardonable sin and the sin unto death are the sin of unbelief). Unbelief in this life affects eternity.

The NT describes salvation as a

1. past decisive volitional act (i.e., aorist tense, Acts 15:11; Rom. 8:24; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5)
2. a process which continues through life (i.e., present tense, 1 Cor. 1:18; 15:2; 2 Cor. 2:15)
3. a past event which becomes a state of being (i.e., perfect tense, Eph. 2:5,8)
4. a future consummation (i.e., future tense, Rom. 5:9,10; 10:9; 13:11; 1 Cor. 3:15; Phil. 1:28; 1 Thess. 5:8-9; Heb. 1:14; 9:28)

The theological danger is to isolate any one of these as "the" essence of salvation. We must always be on guard against an easy believism which emphasizes the initial act only or perfectionism which emphasizes the product only. Salvation is an initial, volitional response to God's free offer in Christ which issues in a daily Christlikeness. It is not only a person to welcome, but a message about that person to be received, and a life in emulation of that person to live. It is not a product, an insurance policy, a ticket to heaven, but a growing daily relationship with Jesus. The NT does not emphasize making a decision, but being a disciple (cf. Matt. 28:19-20).

The real mystery is that when the gospel is presented, some say "yes" and are saved, but some say "no" and their rebellion is reaffirmed (cf. Luke 2:34; John 9:39; 1 Pet. 2:7). It does not surprise me that people say yes, but I am amazed that with

1. the desire of God for all to be saved
2. the finished work of Christ
3. the wooing of the Spirit
4. the felt guilt of humanity
5. the purposelessness of life without God

that people say "No"! This is the mystery of election (cf. 2 Cor. 3:14; 4:4; 11:3).

■ **"the power of God"** The gospel is the power of God (cf. 1 Cor. 1:24; Rom. 1:16). The gospel reveals and channels the power of God. It produces faith. It produces repentance. It produces wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (cf. 1 Cor. 1:30). The preaching of the cross does all of this. It is God's power behind the written word (i.e., the Bible), the living word (i.e., Christ), the preached word

(i.e., the gospel), and the established word (i.e., Christlikeness/the kingdom of God).

**1:19** This is a quote of Isa. 29:14. It is an example of OT synonymous parallelism. The emphasis is on the folly of human wisdom without God (cf. Isa. 29:13; Eccl. 1:12-18; 12:12).

▣ **"destroy"** This is part of an OT quote (i.e., Isa. 29:14). See Special Topic: *Apollumi* at 1 Cor. 8:11.

**1:20** This is a list of human rationalists (i.e., Jewish and Gentile). It may be an allusion to Isa. 33:18 in the LXX (*Jerome Biblical Commentary*, p. 257). Humans cannot discover the gospel. It is the mystery of God hidden from the ages (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13). God's plan and provisions seem foolish because they devalue human merit and wisdom.

▣ **"of this age. . .of the world"** These two phrases reflect a similar concept in that this period of time is fallen. This is not the world that God intended, but the gospel will transform this fallen age into God's intended creation (i.e., Genesis 1-2 and Revelation 21-22).

The term "world" is used in two senses in the NT: (1) the physical planet (cf. John 3:16) and (2) fallen human society organized and functioning apart from God (cf. James 1:27; 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17). In Paul's writings the Hebrew term *'olam*, translated into Greek as *aiōn*, and came to be synonymous with *kosmos* (cf. 1 Cor. 1:20; 2:6; 3:19; Eph. 2:2). For *kosmos* see Special Topic: Paul's Use of *Kosmos* (world) at 1 Cor. 3:21b-22.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THIS AGE AND THE AGE TO COME**

▣ **"Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world"** The grammar shows that Paul expects a "yes" answer.

**1:21 "For since in the wisdom of God"** This may be an allusion to Pro. 8:22-31, as is John 1:1-5,9-14. It also refers to the plan of God to redeem fallen humanity. Redemption was planned in the heart of God before creation (cf. Matt. 25:34; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29; Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:19-20; Rev. 13:8). This plan involved

1. foreknowledge of mankind's fall
2. mankind's inability to perform the will of God (cf. Deut. 31:27-29; Jos. 24:19; Gal. 3)
3. God's provision in Christ (i.e., the new covenant, cf. Jer. 31:31-34)
4. the inviting of Jew and Gentile by faith in Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 1:21; Eph. 2:11-3:13)

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: YHWH'S ETERNAL REDEMPTIVE PLAN**

▣ **"did not come to know God"** The Greeks did not believe that God was knowable. Their deities had human frailties and were uninvolved in this world. Fallen humanity cannot discover God, but God has chosen to reveal Himself through Christ, (i.e., the Living Word) and through the Bible (i.e., the written Word), as well as through redeemed humanity (i.e., the established word)!

▣ **"God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached"** It is not the presentation, but the content of the gospel that is foolishness to the fallen mind (cf. 1 Cor. 2:14).

▣ **"to save those who believe"** This is an aorist active infinitive followed by a Present active participle. This is the essence of gospel proclamation! The term "save" was used in the OT for physical deliverance, but in the NT it came to be used for spiritual forgiveness and acceptance. Our acceptance by God through Christ is a completed fact, but on our part it is a continuing covenantal relationship. All dealings between God and humans are covenantal. God always initiates the covenant and sets its requirements, but He has chosen that we must personally respond and continue to respond. See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 3:15.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NEED TO PERSEVERE**

**1:22 "Jews ask for signs"** This reflects Paul's knowledge of the life of Christ (cf. Matt. 12:38; 16:1,4; Mark 8:11-12; John 4:48; 6:30).

▣ **"Greeks search for wisdom"** "Greeks" (*Hellēnes*) refers to all non-Jewish people. This is clearly seen in its use in Acts 18:16-21,32; Rom. 1:13.

**1:23** This verse should begin with the adversative "but." Paul's answer to both a desire for "signs" and "wisdom" was the gospel.

▣ **"crucified"** This is a perfect passive participle. Jesus' crucifixion, not logic nor miracles, is the heart of Paul's gospel. The perfect tense asserts that Jesus remains the "crucified one." When we see Jesus in heaven He will have retained the marks of His crucifixion (cf. John 20:25) because they have become His badges of honor and glory. Jesus is the only part of the Trinity that has a physical body.

It is surely possible that this perfect tense is a consummative perfect which focuses on the completion of an event or act, implying the result (cf. Daner and Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, pp. 202-203). Jesus crucified sealed our salvation. He was the fulfillment of Gen. 3:15; Psalm 22; Isaiah 53; and Zech. 12:10. A suffering Messiah was a theological shock to Jews!

Notice the Messianic titles used by the early proclaimers and confessors.

1. Jesus is the Christ (Messiah) - Acts 5:42; 9:22; 17:3; 18:5,28; 1 Cor. 1:23

2. Jesus is the Son of God - Acts 9:20; Rom. 1:3-4

3. Jesus is Lord (reflecting Lord, YHWH) - Acts 2:36; 10:36; 11:20; Rom. 10:9; 2 Cor. 4:5; Col. 2:6

These are theological summaries used to affirm Christological affirmation (see James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the NT*, pp. 34-63).

**NASB, NKJV,**

**NRSV** "stumbling block"

**TEV** "that is offensive"

**NJB** "an obstacle"

This Greek term (i.e., *skandalon*) was used for the trigger mechanism on an animal trap (cf. Gal. 5:11). The Jews rejected Christ because of the crucifixion (cf. Deut. 21:23). They were expecting the Messiah to be a conquering military leader (and He will be when He returns!). The Jews did not recognize a Suffering Messiah (cf. Gen. 3:15; Psalm 22; Isa. 52:13-53:12) and a two-stage coming (i.e., incarnation and glorious return).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: MESSIAH**

**NASB, NJB** "and to the Gentiles foolishness"

**NKJV** "to the Greeks foolishness"

**NRSV** "foolishness to Gentiles"

**TEV** "nonsense to the Gentiles"

The Greeks rejected Christ because the concept of resurrection (i.e., because to them the physical body was the origin of evil) did not fit their preconceived philosophical ideals. This statement of Paul also shows that the supposed "dying and rising redeemer" of the fertility cults and mystery religions was not a major tenet of Greek thought and surely not the source of Paul's view of Jesus.

Be careful not to judge the gospel by your own culture or national categories! The NKJV, following the Textus Receptus, has "Greeks," which follows the corrected Greek uncial manuscripts C<sup>3</sup> and D<sup>c</sup>. All other Greek manuscripts have "Gentiles" (*ethnesiu*). The term "Greeks" does occur in 1 Cor. 1:22 and 24. Probably ancient scribes changed 1 Cor. 1:23 to make them all consistent.

For "foolishness" see note at 1 Cor. 1:25.

**1:24 "but to those who are the called"** The opening of 1 Corinthians emphasizes God's call (i.e.,



election) and God's grace as the only grounds for the Corinthian church's salvation (cf. 1 Cor. 1:2,9,26,27; Eph. 1-2). We learn from John 6:44,65 that no one comes to God unless the Spirit draws him/her. God's call does not eliminate or minimize the need for human response, both initially and continually.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: ELECTION/PREDESTINATION AND THE NEED FOR A THEOLOGICAL BALANCE**

■ **"both Jews and Greeks"** This shows the purpose of the gospel is to unite all humans in Christ. This is the mystery of God hidden from the ages, but now clearly revealed (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13).

■ **"Christ the power of god and the wisdom of God"** The first phrase may relate to the resurrection of Christ because of the use of "power of God" in Rom. 1:4.

The second phrase uniquely relates to the problem of the Corinthian church's emphasis on knowledge. However, it may surely be a reference to Pro. 8:22-31 (i.e., the personified wisdom of creation, cf. 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15-17; Heb. 1:2).

**1:25 "the foolishness of God is wiser than man"** This is an OT theme (cf. Isa. 55:8-9). It is repeated in 1 Cor. 1:18,21,23. This is the term *mōros*. It and its other forms are used often by Paul in his Corinthian letters. See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 15:36.

1. *mōros* (foolish), 1 Cor. 1:25,27; 3:18; 4:10
2. *mōria* (foolishnes), 1 Cor. 1:18,21,23; 2:14; 3:19
3. *mopainō* (made foolish), 1 Cor. 1:20

■ **"the weakness of God is stronger than men"** This is basically asserting God's incomparable greatness. He is even magnified through human weakness (cf. 1 Cor. 12:5,7-10). It may refer to the "apparent" failure of Jesus' death from a purely human point of view (cf. 2 Cor. 13:4), yet in reality it was a victory of eternal consequences!

The gospel, the victory, is all of God and not of mankind. See Special Topic: Weakness at 2 Cor. 12:9.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 1:26-31**

**<sup>26</sup>For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; <sup>27</sup>but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, <sup>28</sup>and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, <sup>29</sup>so that no man may boast before God. <sup>30</sup>But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, <sup>31</sup>so that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord."**

**1:26-31** This last paragraph of chapter one shows us the tension-filled relationship of "wisdom" and "knowledge" as it relates to the gospel. In one sense they are "bad," in another they are "good." Let me quote a wonderful passage from Herman Ridderbos' *Paul, An Outline of His Theology*:

"To be sure, the relationship of faith and knowledge, *pistis* and *gnosis*, just as that of faith and works, is ambivalent. On the one hand knowledge stands in faith's way, that is, when, just as good works for the Jews, it represents the human will to self-redemption. As this antithesis is developed in Galatians and Romans with respect to works, this threat to the Christian faith from the side of *gnosis* is elucidated especially in 1 Corinthians (cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 1:26-29). And this danger exists not merely from the side of what Paul calls "the wisdom of this world" (1 Cor. 1:21), but also from a certain kind of Christian *gnosis*. Paul does recognize that *gnosis* in itself: we know that we all have knowledge (1 Cor. 8:1). But he immediately adds to this: knowledge puffs up, love builds up. What is at issue here is a wrongly employed Christian *gnosis*, which elevates itself above one's neighbor, the weak; a

knowledge that is indeed in the service of one's own individual freedom, but not of the edification of the church. This *gnosis* only promotes proud individualism and stands over against love. In that sense *gnosis*, even as works, can come to stand over against love; as such it is injurious and without profit (1 Cor. 13:2,3)" p. 242.

1:26

NASB, NRSV,

NJB "consider"

NKJV "see"

TEV "remember"

This is either a present active imperative or a Present active indicative. Moffatt translates it as, "Look at your own ranks." This passage was not meant to be a put-down to the early church and its leaders, but an affirmation of the love and power of God. It was meant to shatter the pride of this arrogant church. The early church was made up mostly of the "have nots" of society. However, apparently one of the factions in Corinth was made up of Roman patrons and the culturally elite. By using these who have no worldly status, God magnifies His power.

■ **"not many wise according to the flesh"** This refers to human wisdom or worldly standards (cf. 1 Cor. 1:20; 2:6,8; 3:18).

### SPECIAL TOPIC: FLESH (*sarx*)

■ **"not many mighty"** This refers to physical strength or social standing.

■ **"not many noble"** This refers to one's family background which would involve wealth, education, and social privilege. These three characterizations fit the Sophists, who were so proud of their education, position, and sophistication.

**1:27 "God has chosen the foolish things of the world"** This is an AORIST MIDDLE INDICATIVE. God Himself has chosen to manifest His power through the weak so that there will be no doubt who should receive the glory (cf. 2 Corinthians 12). The victory is in God's resources, not human achievement (cf. 1 Cor. 1:29; Eph. 2:9) or social standing.

For "foolish" see note at 1 Cor. 1:25. For "world" see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 3:21b-22.

1:28

NASB "the base things of the world and the despised"

NKJV "the base things of the world and things which are despised"

NRSV "what is low and despised in the world"

TEV "what the world looks down on and despises"

NJB "those who by human standards are common and contemptible"

This phrase is in contrast to the "wise. . .mighty. . .noble" of 1 Cor. 1:26. The term "base things" is literally "those of low birth," which is another reference to Roman nobility.

NASB, NRSV "the things that are not"

NKJV "the things which are not"

TEV "things is nothing"

NJB "those who count for nothing"

Is this another category of debased things/people or a summary? Because there is no *kai* (i.e., and; MSS P<sup>46</sup>,  $\kappa^*$ , A, C<sup>\*</sup>, D, F, G) before this phrase as there is with all the others, it is probably a summary statement. God calls and uses those people of whom the world takes no notice! The theological points are

1. "no flesh will glory before God" (cf. 1 Cor. 1:29)

2. God's power and equipping is magnified in the weakness of the human vessel (cf. 2 Cor. 12:1-10)

3. Christ's mediation is magnified (cf. 1 Cor. 1:30)

In Him, everything that the Jews and Greeks sought and strived after, is a gift from YHWH, through Messiah, energized by the Holy Spirit!

■ **"nullify the things that are"** This is the Greek term, *katargeō*. See note at 1 Cor. 1:18 and the Special Topic following.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: NULL AND VOID \(KATARGEŌ\)](#)

**1:29 "no man may boast before God"** The verb is an aorist middle subjunctive which implies a settled personal choice. No created flesh entity will vaunt itself before the creator (cf. Eph. 2:9)! This was the central truth of Paul's message to the proud Corinthians and to fallen mankind in general, Jew or Gentile (cf. Rom. 3:27; Eph. 2:9). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: BOASTING](#) at 1 Cor. 5:6.

■ **"man"** This is literally "flesh." See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:26.

**1:30**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"by His doing"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"of Him"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"He is the source"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"God"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"by Him"</b>

This is literally "out of him," which is a Greek idiom expressing the First Cause, the Prime Mover. The Father sent it, Jesus brought it, and the Spirit energized it. What follows is a list of God's gifts to believers through Christ.

■ **"wisdom from God"** In Jewish thought wisdom is personified in Pro. 8:22-31 and Col. 2:2-3. Wisdom is a person. Truth is a person. The gospel is a person-Jesus! (cf. John 14:6).

If, however, Paul was addressing the philosophical element in the church, then *sophia* would have a connection with their pride in their cultural traditions (i.e., Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, etc.). It would be a metaphor from academy. It is also possible that an incipient Gnosticism was present in the eclectic religious milieu of Corinth and possibly had infiltrated the church (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18-2:8; 3:18-23; 8:1-2). If so, then Paul's comments in Colossians are relevant (i.e., Christ, Himself, is wisdom, cf. Col. 1:9; 2:3).

I think all these terms refer to what Christ has done for believers through Jesus.

1. He is God's wisdom to us
2. He is God's righteousness to us
3. He is God's sanctification to us
4. He is God's redemption to us

It is all of God the Father through God the Son.

■ **"righteousness"** This was a metaphor from the law court (cf. Rom. 3:21-26; 2 Cor. 5:21). By Paul's day the rabbis had transferred the semi-personal wisdom of Proverbs 8 to the Mosaic Law. To it was attributed ultimate authority. If Paul was thinking of the Jewish element in the Corinthian church, this was a powerful and ultimate designation.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: RIGHTEOUSNESS](#)

■ **"sanctification"** This was a metaphor from the sacrificial system of Israel (cf. Rom. 6:19-23). This is the from the same root as "holy" or "consecrated." In the OT it referred to a person, place, or thing that was separated to God's service. Theologically it refers to the believer's position in Christ. The moment one puts his faith in Him, he is justified and sanctified (cf. Rom. 8:30). See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:2.

■ **"redemption"** This means "to buy back" (cf. Rom. 3:24). This was a metaphor from the slave market. It is the major OT concept of salvation.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: RANSOM/REDEEM**

**1:31** This is a quote from Jer. 9:23-24. Paul repeats this quote in 2 Cor. 10:17. "Lord" in the Jeremiah passage refers to YHWH, but here to Jesus! This is a common NT technique to affirm the deity of Jesus. We do not boast in and of ourselves, but of Him in whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily! These two quotes of Jeremiah show a connection between 1 Corinthians 1-4 and 2 Corinthians 10-13. The opponents are Jewish sophists who boasted of the rhetorical style (cf. Bruce W. Winter, *Philo and Paul Among the Sophists*).

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is God's calling emphasized so often by Paul?
2. How can God call sinful people "holy"?
3. What is the purpose of spiritual gifts in the church?
4. Why was the church at Corinth so factious?
5. How does 1 Cor. 1:12 relate to modern denominations?
6. Is Paul putting down baptism in 1 Cor. 1:17?
7. Why did the Jews reject the gospel?
8. Why did the Greeks reject the gospel?
9. Why has God chosen to use weak people with no social or intellectual standing to spread the gospel?

# 1 CORINTHIANS 2

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Proclaiming Christ Crucified	Christ Crucified	Christ Crucified	The Message About Christ on the Cross	The True Wisdom and the False (1:17-3:4)
2:1-5	2:1-5	2:1-5	2:1-5	2:1-5
The Revelation by God's Spirit	Spiritual Wisdom	Spiritual Wisdom	God's Wisdom	
2:6-16	2:6-16	2:6-13	2:6-12	2:6-9 2:10-16
		2:14-16	2:13-16	

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

#### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS ON 1 CORINTHIANS 2:1-16

A. There were some in the church at Corinth who were very intellectually oriented (i.e., first century rhetorical traditions). Into this context of overemphasized human knowledge and performance, Paul begins in chapter 1 with an emphasis on the grace of God (as he also does in Eph. 2:1-10). Yet, he admitted that wisdom and knowledge are also among the gifts of God. In chapter 2, Paul continues on this theme by emphasizing revelation versus human discovery. As the Corinthians had no claim on the knowledge they possessed, they equally had no claim on the means of attaining that knowledge.

B. Basically, 1 Cor. 2:1-16 is an amplification of chapter 1 Cor. 1:18-25.

C. Verses 10-16 can be understood as referring to several categories of spiritual insight or revelation.

God has acted so as to reveal Himself to us (i.e., revelation, 1 Cor. 2:10-12); He has chosen certain men to record and explain His acts (i.e., inspiration, v.13), and finally the Spirit enables Bible readers to understand the main truths of His revelation (i.e., illumination, 1 Cor. 2:14-16).

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: ILLUMINATION**

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: INSPIRATION**

### **WORD AND PHRASE STUDY**

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT 2:1-5**

**<sup>1</sup>And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. <sup>2</sup>For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. <sup>3</sup>I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, <sup>4</sup>and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, <sup>5</sup>so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.**

**2:1 "brethren"** This designation for believers is often used by Paul, consciously or subconsciously, to denote the next step in presentation of a truth or the presentation of a new truth (cf. 1 Cor. 2:1; 3:1; 4:6; 7:24; 10:1; 11:33; 12:1; 14:6, 20, 35; 15:1, 31, 50, 58; 16:15). The term would denote men and women of the Corinthian church.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"I did not come proclaiming. . .in lofty words or wisdom"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"I did not use long words and great learning"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"I did not come with any brilliance of oratory or wise argument"</b>

Paul is expressing the difference between himself (i.e., Paul at Corinth, cf. Acts 18:1-18) and the false over-emphasis on knowledge and rhetoric of some of the Corinthians who later became church leaders. Apollos, not Paul, was the polished rhetorician and they wanted Paul to emulate his public speaking style (see Bruce W. Winter, *Philo and Paul Among the Sophists*. For "superiority" (*huperochē*) see Special Topic following.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL'S USE OF HUPER COMPOUNDS**

<b>NASB, NKJV</b>	<b>"the testimony of God"</b>
<b>NRSV, NJB</b>	<b>"mystery of God"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"God's secret truth"</b>

There is a Greek manuscript variant here. The Greek term *musterion* (mystery) appears in MSS P<sup>46</sup>,  $\kappa^*$ , A, and C. The word *marturion* (testimony) appears in the ancient manuscripts  $\kappa^2$ , B, C, D. If it is "mystery," this concept is described in 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 2:11-3:13; and Col. 1:26-27, which is the union of Jews and Greeks through Christ into one family (i.e., the church). If it is "testimony," it is linking back to 1:6, which would be synonymous with "the gospel." The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives "mystery" a B rating (i.e., almost certain).

The term "mystery" was used often in the first century Koine papyri found in Egypt in reference to the new initiate to secret knowledge available only to a special group (i.e., mystery religions). Paul takes this technical term and uses it in connection with those who have the Spirit (i.e., believers) and those who do not. There is no distinction at this point in Paul's presentation between believers (cf. 1 Cor. 3:1). All are considered "the mature" (cf. 1 Cor. 2:6).

## SPECIAL TOPIC: MYSTERY

**2:2 "I"** In verses 1-5 Paul seems to be comparing himself with

1. his previous presentation of the gospel at Athens where he used Greek logic, even quoted their poets (i.e., first suggested by Origen, cf. Acts 17:16-34)
2. his presentation of the gospel versus those at Corinth who spoke with human wisdom and human rhetoric about spiritual matters

■ **"Jesus Christ, and Him crucified"** This is a perfect passive participle (cf. 1 Cor. 1:23). There are two theological aspects revealed in this participle:

1. the perfect tense reveals that Jesus remains the crucified One. When we see Him, He will still have the scars. They have become His badge of glory (see note at 1 Cor. 1:23).
2. the passive voice reveals that Jesus' death was
  - a. by the Father's agency and was His eternal plan (cf. Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29) for redemption (cf. Isa. 53:10)
  - b. by human sin and rebellion demanded a sacrifice (cf. Rom. 5:14-15, 18-19)

The message about Christ's death on humanity's behalf is the central message of Paul's theology. The concept of a suffering and dying Messiah was foreign to traditional Jewish thought. This aspect of the gospel must have initially troubled Paul. How could YHWH's anointed One be cursed by God (cf. Deut. 21:23). Yet, this was part of the OT revelation (cf. Gen. 3:15; Psalm 22; Isaiah 53; Zech. 12:10). Jesus, the sinless Son of God, died in our place (cf. Rom. 5:18-19; 2 Cor. 5:21). He became the curse for us (cf. Gal. 3:13). Christ crucified for all is God's hidden mystery (cf. Col. 1:26-28; 2:2-4).

**2:3 "I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling"** This may be an allusion to Exod. 15:16 in the LXX. Paul is showing us his inadequacies.

1. he was fearful because of his rough treatment at Philippi, Thessalonika, and Berea (cf. Acts 16-17)
2. he was disappointed at the results and possibly his methodology used in Athens (i.e., Origen's view from Acts 17:22-34)
3. his physical problem, probably eye trouble, caused him great difficulty (cf. 2 Cor. 12:7-9)
4. Paul's lack of faith and discouragement while at Corinth

Christ had to appear to Paul several times to encourage him (cf. Acts 18:9-10; 23:11; 27:23). His words and his physical condition were not what turned people to faith in Christ, but the gospel's appeal and the Spirit's power (cf. 1 Cor. 2:4; 1:17; 2 Cor. 10:10).

It is helpful to me as a minister of Jesus Christ to realize

1. Jesus had His own discouraging moments (i.e., Gethsemane)
2. the Apostles often did not fully understand Jesus' teachings
3. Paul felt fearful and weak.

We must always acknowledge the weakness of the flesh yet also the tremendous power of the gospel and the presence of the Spirit! God's character and provisions are magnified through human weakness (cf. 1 Cor. 1:26-29; 2 Cor. 12).

Paul's weaknesses are these very things that the false teachers in 2 Cor. 10-13 attacked Paul for. They magnified their strengths (i.e., education, social position, spiritual giftedness, speaking skills). Apparently Paul's writings were more rhetorically structured (i.e., 2 Cor. 10-13) and powerful than his oral messages. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: WEAKNESS](#) at 2 Cor. 12:9.

**2:4**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"not in persuasive words of wisdom"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"not with persuasive words of human wisdom"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"not with persuasive words of wisdom"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"not delivered with skillful words of human wisdom"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"not meant to convince by philosophical argument"</b>

There are many variants of this phrase in the Greek manuscripts.

1. The first problem relates to the rare adjective *peithois* (cf. MSS P<sup>46</sup>, κ, A, B, C, D), which is not found anywhere else in the Septuagint, Koine papyri, or the NT.
2. Some think the variants were caused by scribes who were unfamiliar with this adjective. They may have slightly changed its form to *peithoi*, which means "persuasion."
3. Some Greek manuscripts add "persuasion of men" (cf. 1 Cor. 2:13 and MSS κ<sup>2</sup>, A, C).
4. In some manuscripts the term "words" (i.e., *logois* or *logos*) is missing (cf. MSS P<sup>46</sup>, F, G and the Greek text used by Chrysostom).

It seems best from the general context to link this phrase with Paul's rejection of human rhetoric, logic, and wisdom (cf. 1 Cor. 1:17; 2:1,13). However, the exact meaning of the word *peithois* remains uncertain (see NIDNTT, vol. 1, pp. 588-593).

■ **"in demonstration of the Spirit and of power"** This refers to the changed lives of the Corinthian converts. It also may relate to the presence of confirming signs that often attended Paul's preaching of the gospel (cf. Acts 13:11; 14:10; 16:18,28; 19:11-12; 20:10). See note on capital or lower case "s" spirit at 1 Cor. 2:11.

**2:5** For Paul, mankind's only hope was in the grace of the Father, the finished work of the Son, and the power of the Spirit. In other words, God Himself is the only true foundation for salvation. God's revelation, not human discovery; God's wisdom, not human eloquence or logic, are the only source of confidence.

For Paul, God's gospel and fallen mankind's appropriate covenantal responses (i.e., repentance, faith, obedience, and perseverance) are the keys to eternal life.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 2:6-13**

**<sup>6</sup>Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; <sup>7</sup>but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God predestined before the ages to our glory; <sup>8</sup>the *wisdom* which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; <sup>9</sup>but just as it is written, "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, And *which* have not entered the heart of man, All that God has prepared for those who love Him." <sup>10</sup>For to us God revealed *them* through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. <sup>11</sup>For who among men knows the *thoughts* of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the *thoughts* of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. <sup>12</sup>Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, <sup>13</sup>which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*.**

**2:6 "Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature"** Paul may

1. be using sarcasm here relating to the Corinthians' overemphasis on human wisdom and their view of their own "maturity" (cf. George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 383-385)
2. this may relate to the baby believers of 1 Cor. 3:1-4 which Paul relates to the worldly factious spirit in the church
3. In Eph. 4:13 this very term, *teleios*, describes mature believers as over against children (i.e., literally "infants" Eph. 4:14). Notice also 14:20; Phil. 3:15 and Heb. 5:14

See how the word is used in Hebrews from the Special Topic below.

#### **SPECIAL TOPIC: END OR FULL (TELOS)**

■ **"a wisdom, however, not of this age"** This is Paul asserting the Jewish interbiblical concept of two



ages: the current evil age, dominated by fallen humanity, and the age of righteousness to come, dominated by the Messiah. Human earthly wisdom is basically presuppositional and changes from culture to culture and period to period. See Special Topic on the concept of the two Jewish ages at 1 Cor. 1:20.

■ **"nor of the rulers of this age"** It is possible that this phrase refers to angelic ranks or Gnostic aeons (cf. Rom. 8:38-39; Eph. 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:10,15, BAGD, p. 114, #3; F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, p. 90). It seems more in line with this context to interpret these as human leaders (cf. 1 Cor. 2:8; Acts 3:17; Rom. 13:1-2; see Grant Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, pp. 82-83). It is so hard to know if Paul is speaking purely of human logic or the demonic activity behind human logic; both are present. Humans are influenced because of their fallenness (cf. Rom. 12:2; Gal. 1:14; Eph. 2:2), but they are also influenced by the presence of supernatural evil (i.e., angelic and demonic, cf. 2 Cor. 4:4; Dan. 10).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"who are passing away"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"who are coming to nothing"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"who are doomed to perish"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"powers that are losing their power"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"who will not last long now"</b>

This is a present passive participle of the term which means "to be made inoperative" (cf. 1 Cor. 1:28; Rom. 6:6). Paul uses this term twenty-seven times. If this refers to human authorities, they will die. If this refers to angelic authorities, this age will pass away into the new age of righteousness. See Special Topic: Null and Void (*Katargeō*) at 1 Cor. 1:28.

**2:7 "but"** This is a strong adversative "*alla*." Paul's wisdom and power were from God.

■ **"God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom"** This wisdom is from God (i.e., *Theos* is fronted, or placed first, in the Greek text for emphasis); this is hidden wisdom (i.e., perfect passive participle, cf. Eph. 3:9); this mystery has now been clearly manifested in Christ (cf. Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:3-5; Col. 1:26). This uncovered secret (i.e., the gospel) emphasizes God's revelation versus human discovery (cf. Rom. 16:25-26; Eph. 1:9-10; 3:3-5; Col. 1:26; 2:2-3). The most comprehensive definition of this mystery is that Jew and Gentile are united in one new people of God (i.e., the church, cf. Eph. 2:11:-3:13). See Special Topic: Mystery at 1 Cor. 2:1.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"which God predestined"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"which God ordained"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"which God decreed"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"which he had already chosen"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"which God predestined"</b>

Even before creation God already had His plan of redemption (cf. Matt. 25:34; John 17:24; Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8 and also Acts 2:13; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29). The term translated here "predestine" is a compound of the preposition "before" and "to set bounds" (cf. Acts 4:28; Rom. 8:29,30; Eph. 1:5,11).

The definitive passages on predestination in the NT are Rom. 8:28-30; Rom. 9; and Eph. 1:3-14. These texts obviously stress that God is sovereign. He is in total control of all things, including human history. There is a preset divine redemption plan being worked out in time. However, this plan is not arbitrary or selective. It is based not only on God's sovereignty and foreknowledge, but also on His unchanging character of love, mercy, and undeserved grace.

We must be careful of our western (American) individualism or our evangelical zeal coloring this wonderful truth. We must also guard against being polarized into the historical, theological conflicts between Augustine versus Pelegius or Calvinism versus Arminianism.

Predestination is not a doctrine meant to limit God's love, grace, and mercy, nor to exclude some from the gospel. It is meant to strengthen believers by molding their worldview. God's love is for all mankind (cf. 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9). God is in control of all things. Who or what can separate us from Him (cf. Rom.

8:31-39)? Predestination forms one of two ways to view life. God views all history as present; humans are time-bound. Our perspective and mental abilities are limited. There is no contradiction between God's sovereignty and mankind's free will. It is a covenantal structure. This is another example of biblical truth given in paradoxical, dialectical, tension-filled pairs. Biblical doctrines are presented from different perspectives. They often appear paradoxical. The truth is a balance between the seemingly opposite pairs. We must not remove the tension by choosing one of the truths. We must not isolate any biblical truth into a compartment by itself.

It is also important to add that the goal of election is not only heaven when we die, but Christlikeness now (cf. Eph. 1:4; 2:10)! We were chosen to be "holy and blameless." God chooses to change us so that others may see the change and respond by faith to God in Christ. Predestination is not a personal privilege, but a covenantal responsibility! We are saved to serve!

▣ **"before the ages"** The phrase "before the ages" is an OT idiom referring to eternity past. It corresponds to the Hebrew term *'olam*, which can mean eternity, past or future. It can also denote a limited period of time. It must be translated in context. Its translation is related to its object (i.e., God, OT covenant promises, earthly life, the wicked, etc.).

This is also true for the NT Greek translations *aiōn*, *aiōnios*, *eis ton aiōna*, which follow the Septuagint's translation of *'olam*. God is eternal, but physical things (i.e., the heavens and earth) will pass away (cf. 2 Pet. 3:10). As with all words, but especially *'olam* and *aiōn*, the context is crucial and determines the translation.

For interesting discussions of "eternality" see Robert B. Girdlestone's *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, pp. 312-319 and F. F. Bruce's, *Answers to Questions*, pp. 202-203.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: FOREVER \('OLAM\)](#)

▣ **"to our glory"** See Special Topic below.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY \(DOXA\)](#)

**2:8 "if"** A. T. Robertson, in *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, p. 85, calls this a second class conditional sentence called "contrary to fact." A false statement is made to highlight a false conclusion, "If the rulers of this age had understood (i.e., perfect active indicative), which they did not, then they would not have crucified (i.e., aorist active indicative) the Lord of glory, which they did."

▣ **"the Lord of glory"** This phrase is used of YHWH in Acts 7:2; Eph. 1:17 and probably is an allusion to Exod. 24:16. A similar phrase is used of Jesus in James 2:1. This is another example of NT authors using a title of YHWH for Jesus and, thereby, asserting His equality with YHWH (cf. 2 Cor. 4:6).

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: NAMES FOR DEITY](#)

**2:9 "it is written"** This is a Hebrew idiom (i.e., perfect passive indicative) for introducing an OT quote. Clement of Rome (i.e., The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians XXXIV), writing in a.d. 95, says it is a quote from the Septuagint of Isa. 64:4 or possibly combined with 65:17 (cf. Isa. 52:15 and Jer. 3:16). Origen and Jerome thought Paul was quoting from a noncanonical book called *Apocalypse of Elijah*, which has almost completely been lost. The truth is that this quote/allusion fits no known OT text (the same is true of Matt. 2:23; John 7:38; James 4:5).

God has acted in ways that human beings could not ever have imagined (cf. Isa. 55:8-9), but now through the gospel and the Spirit they can by faith! What a wonderful promise!

▣ **"heart"** See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 14:25.

**2:10 "For to us God revealed *them* through the Spirit"** The Father, through the Spirit, has unveiled (i.e., *apokaluptō*, aorist active indicative) this hidden mystery in Christ. All wisdom is in Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18-25,30).

Notice the Triune God in 1 Cor. 2:8-10: the crucified Lord of glory (i.e., Jesus), God (i.e., the Father), and the Spirit.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY**

■ **"for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God"** The emphasis here is on the full personality of the Spirit (cf. Isa. 63:10; Eph. 4:30). The Spirit is our only means of knowing God (cf. Rom. 8:26-27; 11:33-36). This is the continuing emphasis of the entire context that human means are unable to know God or the things (i.e., plans) of God. "Deep" is a metaphor of that which is (1) profound as opposed to shallow or (2) hidden beyond mankind's reach or discovery. The Spirit's work is crucial in conviction, salvation, and Christlike living (cf. John 16:7-14).

The phrase "the deep things of God" (NKJV) may have been a catchphrase of one of the factions at Corinth. The deep things of God are available to all who exercise faith in Christ. There are no hidden secrets anymore. The gospel is revealed to all who will receive. There are no "deeper things," no elitism, no exclusivism!

This wonderful assurance of God's provision and care was exploited by later Gnostics, who claimed it as a proof-text for special knowledge (e.g., the non-canonical and Gnostic book of *Ascension of Isaiah*).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE PERSONHOOD OF THE SPIRIT**

**2:11-12** This is an example of the previously stated truth. Notice the first and third uses of "spirit" in this verse have a little "s," while the second use of "Spirit" has a capital "S." In the Greek text there is no way to distinguish capitals, therefore, this is the interpretation of the translators. A capital "S" would refer to the Holy Spirit and a small "s" to the human spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 6:18; Rom. 8:16; 2 Cor. 2:13; 7:13; 12:18; Gal. 6:18; Phil. 4:23). This may be an allusion to Pro. 20:27.

**2:12 "the spirit of the world"** This is another connotation of the term *kosmos* (i.e., world, see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 3:21b-22), human society organized and functioning without God (so common in John's writings). Today we would call it "atheistic humanism" (cf. 1 Cor. 2:6). It is also called "spirit of slavery" in Rom. 8:15.

■ **"that we may know the things freely given to us by God"** Believers can understand the gospel of Christ and their blessings in Him only through the Holy Spirit.

It is certainly true that in their fallen and temporal state even believers cannot fully, exhaustively know God, but can know and understand everything needed for salvation and godly living through the revelation of the Father, the person and work of the Son, and the illumination of the Spirit. Because we cannot know everything is no excuse not to embrace the clear truths of the Bible and walk in them.

It is also crucial that believers acknowledge that God's wisdom has been "freely given" (cf. Rom. 8:32). It is a gift of God which He desires to give to all humans made in His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27), but now through rebellion are estranged from Him (i.e., Genesis 3). God's wisdom is not the result of human intelligence, social standing, or ingenuity, but the revelation of God's love and mercy through Christ's work and the Spirit's agency. Since Christ, ignorance is willful! The Holy Spirit brings light, truth, and salvation. The spirit of this world brings darkness, deception, and death.

**2:13 "which things we also speak"** It is crucial that believers share these God-given truths. They are life and light to a lost and dying world, a loved world which has been redeemed if only they will receive God's Son, God's truth! Revelation is primarily redemptive (cf. 2 Tim. 2:15) and then transformational (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual <i>thoughts</i> with spiritual <i>words</i>"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"we do not speak in words taught by human wisdom, but in words taught by the Spirit"</b>

This is a very ambiguous phrase for several reasons. Before attempting to sort this out, remember the larger context is the key and not ambiguous details of Greek grammar or philology. The larger context relates to the mature believers (cf. 1 Cor. 2:6). It contrasts human wisdom and knowledge with God's wisdom, which is Christ, and God's knowledge, which is expressed in the gospel. This is the main truth of chapters 1 and 2.

The Holy Spirit is an indispensable channel of communication (cf. John 16:8-14). He reveals spiritual truths to those who have trusted Christ and received the indwelling Spirit. In some ways Paul's discussion here is similar to Jesus' parable of the sower or soils (cf. Matthew 13). The gospel message is understood and responded to by receptive hearers, but rejected by unresponsive hearers.

The term *pneumatikois* can be neuter (i.e., spiritual things) or masculine (i.e., spiritual people). Another group of hearers is mentioned in the next verse, *psuchikos* (i.e., the natural or lost person). It is probable that the term in 1 Cor. 2:13 refers to spiritual people. This same group is previously mentioned in 1 Cor. 2:6 (i.e., *teleiois*, the mature or equipped believers) as well as 1 Cor. 2:15 (i.e., where they are called *pneumaikos*). There seem to be three groups of people referred to in this context.

1. lost people
2. saved, but immature believers
3. mature believers

There is often no visible difference between # 1 and #2.

If so, then how does the Spirit communicate spiritual truths? The present active participle, *sunkrinontes*, is used in the Septuagint for interpreting dreams (cf. Gen. 40:8,16,22; 41:12,15; Jdgs. 7:15; Dan. 5:12; 7:15,16). However, this same Greek word is used only here and in 2 Cor. 10:12 in the NT having its normal sense of "comparing." Exactly how the Spirit communicates spiritual truth to spiritual people is ambiguous and because of that we should not become dogmatic or rigid on how to interpret this text. The great truth is that the Holy God seeks and accomplishes communication with fallen humanity (cf. 1 Cor. 2:12). God is speaking, are we listening?

There is an interesting article on "Revelation and Scripture" in the *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, pp. 461-462. Here is but one paragraph.

"For the NT writers, revelation concerns truth. Truth is a function of language. In this way revelation and Scripture are inextricably joined in NT theology. Event and interpretation go together. The NT revelation as it concerns Jesus Christ involves not merely abstract and timeless ethical truths, or the subjective experiences of the disciples, but it has to do with events that are concrete, particular, and actual. The apostolic statement and interpretation of the events is the truth of the matter. The writers intend to convey to the reader what is actually the case—that is, to state what was going on in the things that were happening. Whatever charge may be made against the NT writers as to their religious beliefs, we much recognize that they claim to give us divine revelation expressed in human language (1 Cor. 2:13)."

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 2:14-16**

**<sup>14</sup>But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. <sup>15</sup>But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. <sup>16</sup>For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.**

**2:14**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"a natural man"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"natural man"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"those who are unspiritual"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"the man who does not have the Spirit"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"the natural person"</b>

This is the opposite of a "spiritual person" referred to in 1 Cor. 2:6,13 and 3:1. The term (i.e., *psuchikos*) is used several times in the NT where it refers to life on earth, life lived in relation to the five senses only (i.e., *bios*, life vs. *zoē*, life). The *ikos* ending means "characterized by" (cf. 1 Cor. 3:3). It then could mean earthly vs. heavenly or unspiritual vs. spiritual (cf. 1 Cor. 15:44,46; James 3:15; and Jude 1:19).

**NASB** "does not accept"  
**NKJV, NRSV** "does not receive"  
**TEV** "cannot receive"  
**NJB** "has no room for"

This Greek negated term means "rejects," "refuses to accept," "cannot comprehend," or "cannot make sense of." This term without negation is often used of welcoming a guest. This term (i.e., *dechomai*, cf. Luke 8:13; Acts 8:14; 11:1; 17:11; 2 Cor. 11:4; 1 Thess. 1:6; James 1:21) is synonymous with *lambanō* (cf. John 1:12; 12:48; 14:17). It does not relate to human ignorance, but to the incapacity of understanding spiritual truth!

This is the mystery of how/why some who hear the gospel respond and some do not. Is this rejection related to predestination or human volition? The answer is "yes," but exactly how these two relate is part of the dialectical nature of revelation itself (cf. Phil. 2:12-13, see Special Topic at 2 Cor. 8:16-17). I like what Frank Stagg, in *New Testament Theology*, says, "in the New Testament, the opposite of election is not non-election, but man's rejection of God's salvation" (p. 87).

■ **"foolishness"** See note at 1 Cor. 1:25.

■ **"they are spiritually appraised"** This is a legal term that speaks of the preliminary exhaustive examination before a trial (cf. Luke 23:14; Acts 12:19; 24:8; 25:26; 28:18) or to examine something carefully (i.e., the Scriptures, cf. Acts 17:11; food, cf. 1 Cor. 10:25,27). This same word occurs twice more in 1 Cor. 2:15.

■ Believers endued with the Spirit are able to judge appropriately the things in both the physical and spiritual realms (cf. 1 Cor. 1:22-25 and 2:2, also note 14:29 and 1 Thess. 5:20-21). However, the unspiritual of 1 Cor. 2:14 cannot properly discern spiritual things, spiritual truths, or spiritual people.

**2:15 "yet he himself is appraised by no one"** This, of course, is the generic masculine form. Believers cannot be judged, yea even truly understood, by unbelievers (cf. 1 Cor. 4:3-4). This may be a reference to some of Paul's enemies at Corinth (cf. 1 Cor. 9:3). It is the indwelling Spirit who brings light through the gospel to reality, not this age's reality or physical reality, but God's reality!

**2:16** This is an allusion to Isa. 40:13 in the Septuagint. In Isa. 40:3 the term "Lord" is the Divine name YHWH, but here Paul uses the quote to refer to Jesus (also note Rom. 10:13 and Phil. 2:10-11).

This continues the contextual emphasis on the need of the Spirit for humans to "hear" the gospel and to understand spiritual truth. This context and John 14-16 are crucial in understanding the work of the Spirit of God.

Without the Spirit fallen humanity engages in speculations, myths, even demonically inspired false truths! Oh, the tragedy of world religions and human philosophy.

■ **"But we have the mind of Christ"** The pronoun "we" is emphatic! This could refer to (1) Paul and his companions; (2) Christian preachers; or (3) mature Christians. This does not mean believers know everything Christ knows, but that the Spirit has opened our minds to His perspective, His priorities, His heart (cf. Rom. 12:2; Phil 2:5).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in

interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Define Paul's use of the word, "mystery" in this context.
2. What did Paul mean that he came in fear and great trembling to Corinth?
3. What was the evidence that Paul's preaching was empowered by God?
4. Why are the New Testament authors reluctant to describe heaven or hell in detail?
5. Explain the difference between "revelation," "inspiration," and "illumination."
6. List the three distinct ways Paul uses the term "spirit" in this chapter.
7. List the four distinct ways that Paul uses the term, "wisdom," in this chapter.
8. Look up 1 Cor. 2:13 in several English translations. What do you think this verse teaches?

# 1 CORINTHIANS 3

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Fellow Workmen for God	Sectarianism is Carnal	Dissension Over Leaders	Servants of God	The True Wisdom and the False (1:17-3:4)
3:1-9	3:1-4 Watering, Working, and Warning 3:5-17	3:1-4 3:5-9	3:1-4 3:5-9a 3:9b-15	3:1-4 The Place of the Christian Preacher 3:5-9
3:10-17	Avoid Worldly Wisdom	Teachers and Church Under God 3:10-15 3:16-17	3:16-17	3:10-15 3:16-17 Conclusions (3:18-4:13)
3:18-23	3:18-23	3:18-23	3:18-23	3:18-23

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 1 CORINTHIANS 3:1-23

- A. In this chapter, Paul continues to develop the characterization of the Corinthian Christians as immature as in chapter 2.
- B. The personality-focused factions that are mentioned in chapter 1 are mentioned again specifically in chapter 3. This shows that chapters 1-3 are a sustained argument about human wisdom and

Christian leadership.

C. Note the three groups.

1. natural man, 1 Cor. 2:1
2. spiritual man, 1 Cor. 3:1
3. babes in Christ, 1 Cor. 3:1

D. Verses 10-17 have long been viewed as describing individual, carnal Christians. This is possible by comparing the larger context of 1 Cor. 1:12 through 3:4-5. Another evidence for this view would be that Paul is addressing the church (plural "you") in 1 Cor. 3:1 and 16. The recurrent use of "each man," "no man," "any man" in 1 Cor. 3:10,11,12,13, 14,15, 17,18 also gives credence to this interpretation.

However, it is also possible to relate this text to church leaders (cf. 1 Cor. 3:10). The factious groups do not refer to all Corinthian Christians (i.e., mature of 1 Cor. 2:6), just some of them (i.e., "men of flesh," "infants in Christ," 3:1). It is the leaders of these factious groups that Paul is comparing to himself and Apollos in 1 Cor. 3:6-9. The immediate context relates 1 Cor. 3:10-15 to leaders, to how they use their spiritual gifts in serving the church. This is the thrust of the warning of 1 Cor. 3:17.

It is difficult to decide between the two views: (1) the NT does not discuss the spiritual status and consequences of carnal Christians and (2) the "destruction" of 1 Cor. 3:17 is not clarified. Verses 15 and 17 must be held in tension. All the "ifs" in this context are first class conditional sentences, which are assumed true for the purposes of the author. Verse 14 assumes they are true believers, while 1 Cor. 3:15 assumes some will suffer the loss of all reward. The term for "test" in 1 Cor. 3:13 implies a test resulting in approval. However, the context implies that Paul is accusing them of not understanding the gospel, of being unspiritual, jealous, and factious.

It seems best to me not to relate this text to all Christians, but also, neither to restrict it to leaders. This text specifically relates to those who promote factions and divisions within the church. All believers will give an account to God of their service to or damage to His body, the church (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10; Gal. 5:10).

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 3:1-4

**<sup>1</sup>And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as *to* men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. <sup>2</sup>I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to *receive it*. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, <sup>3</sup>for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? <sup>4</sup>For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not *mere* men?**

**3:1 "brethren"** See fuller note at 1 Cor. 2:6.

▣ **"could not speak to you"** This is an aorist indicative and an aorist infinitive, which refers to Paul's initial preaching at Corinth (cf. Acts 18:1-18).

NASB	"as to spiritual men"
NKJV, NRSV	"as to spiritual people"
TEV	"to people who have the Spirit"
NJB	"as spiritual people"

To whom is Paul addressing these verses: (1) all the believers or (2) the spiritually immature (i.e., the factions cf. 1 Cor. 3:4)? The answer to this question involves how one interprets 2:6. Were there some Spirit-led, mature believers in the Corinthian church or were all of them immature?



■ **"but"** This is the strong adversative *alla*. There is a contrast between the "mature" of 1 Cor. 2:6 (i.e., spiritual men) and the "men of flesh" in 1 Cor. 3:1-4. Both groups have the Spirit (i.e., are Christians), but the first is characterized by the Spirit, while the second group is characterized by worldliness.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"men of flesh"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"as to carnal"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"as people of the flesh"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"as though you belonged to this world"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"as people still living by your natural inclinations"</b>

This is "*sarkinios*" in Greek. The *inos* ending means "made of" or "derived from" (e.g., "hearts of flesh," cf. 2 Cor. 3:3) so this would mean "made of flesh." Paul uses the word "flesh" in several different ways (see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:26). This context (i.e., "as to infants in Christ") seems to use it of believers who have the Spirit, but walk after the ways of the world. This is not Paul's flesh vs. Spirit (cf. Rom. 8:1-11), but a category of believers. If this is true this context is one of the few places in the NT that this distinction is made. Here is the tragedy of salvation without sanctification. Claiming Christ as Savior, but not living as if Christ is Lord. If this appalling spiritual condition is characterized by jealousy, strife, and a factious spirit, what of the modern church? Oh, the tragedy of "baby Christians" to the Kingdom of God and the heart of the King!

■ **"as to infants in Christ"** Every believer starts as a baby Christian. There is no shame in this. This is the origin of the familial metaphor derived from the concept of being "born again" (cf. John 3:3; 2 Cor. 5:17; 1 Pet. 1:3,23), but we must not stay infants!

**3:2 "I gave you milk to drink"** This is a continuing metaphor of the new Christian as being a brand new creature characterized as a child (cf. Heb. 5:12-14; 1 Pet. 2:2). Tertullian and Hippolytus tell us that the early church gave a glass of milk to the new converts at their first communion as a symbol of this very truth.

■ **"for you were not yet able to receive it"** By the time Paul wrote this letter, many months had passed. Although it is appropriate to be a baby Christian at the beginning of the Christian life, it is a tragedy to still be a baby Christian after many years.

These opening verses of chapter 3 must have hurt the intellectual pride of the leaders of the factions. There is a startling play on the imperfect tense (i.e., "for you were not yet able") and the present tense (i.e., "even now you are not able"). The word "able" is the Greek term *dunamai*, which means the power to act, to accomplish, to function toward a desired result. Believers are saved to serve; they are called to Christlikeness now, not only to heaven later. These "believers" had no Kingdom power, just flesh power, which is, in reality, powerlessness!

### 3:3

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"you are still fleshly"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"you are still carnal"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"you are still of the flesh"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"you still live as people of this world live"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"you are still living by your natural inclinations"</b>

This is *sarkikos* in Greek. The ending *ikos* means "characterized by" (cf. 1 Cor. 2:14-15). Paul is making a play on the word *sarks* (flesh) in 1 Cor. 3:1 and 3 to describe many of the Christians at Corinth as being saved, but very immature. They were selfish, not selfless! For "fleshly" see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:26.

■ **"jealousy and strife"** These are two of the works of the flesh listed in Gal. 5:19-21. They were evidence that some Corinthian Christians were still carnal.

In some early Greek manuscripts (i.e., P<sup>46</sup>, D, and the Syriac translations) there is an additional descriptive term, "divisions," which is also found in Gal. 5:20. It surely does describe the problem at

Corinth. However, the term is missing in MSS P<sup>11</sup>,  $\kappa$ , A, B, C, and P and the Vulgate, Coptic, and Armenian translations. It appears to be a scribal addition (i.e., UBS<sup>4</sup> rates its omission as B (almost certain)).

■ **"are you not walking like mere men"** The grammatical form of this question expects a "yes" answer. This is the essence of carnality. Maturity is seen by its fruits, both in attitude and actions (cf. Rom. 8:1-11; Matt. 7:1ff).

**3:4** This reflects the divisions of 1 Cor. 1:10-17.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 3:5-9**

**<sup>5</sup>What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. <sup>6</sup>I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. <sup>7</sup>So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. <sup>8</sup>Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. <sup>9</sup>For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.**

**3:5**

**NASB, NRSV,**

**NJB "what"**

**NKJV, TEV "who"**

The King James version has "who" (i.e., *tis*), following the Greek manuscripts P<sup>46</sup>, C, D, and G. Most modern English translations have "what" (i.e., *ti*), which seems to be purposeful to take the focus off the personalities (i.e., Apollos, Paul, Peter). This is confirmed by *ti* in verse 7. See Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary On the Greek NT*, p. 548.

■ **"Servants"** This is the term (i.e., *diakonos*) from which we get our English word "deacon" (cf. Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8,12). It became one of three Greek words (i.e., *therapeuō*, *hupēreteō* and *diakoneō*) used to denote service, help, or ministry (another common term *latreuō* denotes priestly service). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: SERVANT LEADERSHIP](#) at 1 Cor. 4:1.

■ **"through whom you believed"** Christianity begins with a volitional decision to receive (i.e., aorist active indicative) God's gospel, which is Jesus Christ, His teachings, His redemptive actions, His resurrection, and His return. One cannot osmose into salvation. It is not a matter of one's parents, one's nation, one's intelligence. It is a matter of God's covenant gift and our covenantal response (i.e., repentance, faith, obedience, service, and perseverance). People become Christians by receiving Christ, believing the gospel, and walking in Christ. These had done the first two, but lacked the third. The good news is a Person, a truth, and a lifestyle. All three are crucial for maturity.

The Greek term believe (i.e., *pisteuō*) is translated in English as believe, trust, or faith. Its OT counterpart meant "to be firm" and, thereby came to be used metaphorically of someone who was trustworthy, loyal, dependable, or faithful (see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:9). As the implications of this context reveal, humans can only respond to God's trustworthiness, God's faithfulness, God's covenant loyalty. Human faith is a response to God's faithfulness! The object of faith, the promise of faith is God! His grace, His mercy, His call, His Son, His Spirit, these are the only hope of rebellious mankind.

■ **"even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one"** The emphasis here is on the divine element, not human response or performance. But the goal of predestination is holiness (cf. Eph. 1:4; 2:10), not a privileged position, not the exercise of personal privilege or personal preference. Every believer is equipped by God for service in and for the church (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7,11; Eph. 4:11-13).

The exact identification of "the Lord" is difficult. Usually it is God the Father who calls to salvation. But Paul has used "Lord" several times already in 1 Corinthians to refer to Jesus (cf. 1 Cor. 1:2,3,7,8,9,10; 2:8). However, several times Paul quotes an OT passage where Lord refers to YHWH (cf. 1 Cor. 1:31; 2:16; 3:20). The ambiguity is clearly seen in 1 Cor. 2:16 where Lord in an OT quote is used in parallel to "the mind of Christ."

The phrase "to each one" also clearly shows the difficulty in determining who is being addressed. Is it the leaders like Paul and Apollos, the believers in Corinth, or all believers?

1. All believers are called and gifted, but some are also called and gifted to lead (cf. Num. 16:3).
2. Is the context exclusively corporate or is there an individual emphasis (i.e., certain leaders)?

**3:6 "planted. . . watered"** Paul is using agricultural metaphors. The gospel is the seed (i.e., Matthew 13), but humans sow it and nurture it.

The Great Commission (i.e., Matt. 28:19-20) has two co-equal tasks.

1. evangelism
2. discipleship

Paul started the church by preaching the gospel and Apollos taught the church. Both are crucial and inseparable!

■ **"but God was causing the growth"** This is an imperfect tense, which means continual action in past time. Apollos' and Paul's actions were one-time events, but God's actions are continuing (cf. 1 Cor. 3:7).

**3:8**

**NASB, NKJV "are one"**

**NRSV "have a common purpose"**

**TEV "there is no difference between"**

**NJB "it is all one"**

The question of this brief and ambiguous Greek phrase (i.e., NASB, NKJV) is (1) are all leaders equal or (2) do all leaders share in the same church-growing ministry? The true contrast is not between spiritual gifts (i.e., initial evangelist or discipler, pastor/teacher, etc., cf. Eph. 4:11), but between God's work and human instrumentality. The key is God!

■ **"but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor"** The concept of rewards is developed in 1 Cor. 3:10-15. In discussing rewards see fuller note at 1 Cor. 3:14.

This idea of rewards for service is related to the spiritual principle delineated in 1 Cor. 3:13 and Gal. 6:7. We reap what we sow (cf. 2 Cor. 9:6).

A related theological issue is degrees of rewards. Knowledge of the gospel energized by the Spirit and the call to leadership within God's church brings a greater responsibility (cf. Luke 12:48). The NT seems to teach degrees of rewards and punishments (cf. Matt. 10:15; 11:22,24; 18:6; 25:21,23; Mark 12:40; Luke 12:47-48; 20:47; James 3:1). See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 9:24.

**3:9**

**NASB, NKJV "we are God's fellow workers"**

**NRSV "we are God's servants, working together"**

**TEV "we are partners working together for God"**

**NJB "we do share in God's work"**

**REB "we are fellow-workers in God's service"**

The different translations are trying to show that Apollos and Paul work "for" God, not that they are all three co-workers. The priority must remain with God, not His temporary human leaders!

This refers to Paul and Apollos. This is the Near Eastern metaphor of a family working together in the field (cf. 2 Cor. 6:1). This verse has three possessive genitives: Paul and Apollos belong to God the Father, as does the church in Corinth.

■ **"you are God's field, God's building"** This refers to the Corinthian church. Paul is using the metaphors of agricultural growth (cf. Isa. 61:3; Matt. 15:13) and building construction (cf. Eph. 2:20-22; Col. 2:7; 1 Pet. 2:5) to describe the church. Theologically it must be remembered that the church is a people, not a building.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 3:10-15**

**<sup>10</sup>According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. <sup>11</sup>For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. <sup>12</sup>Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, <sup>13</sup>each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is *to be* revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. <sup>14</sup>If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup>If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.**

**3:10 "According to the grace of God which was given to me"** Paul is asserting his salvation, call, and giftedness as the Apostle to the Gentiles (cf. 1 Cor. 15:10).

■ **"a wise master builder"** This could also mean "building supervisor." We get the English word "architect" from this Greek word. In a sense Paul is asserting his authority as the Christ-called Apostle to the Gentiles and the first to share the gospel with these Corinthians.

■ **"I laid a foundation"** This refers to Paul's initial preaching of the gospel at Corinth. It may be an allusion to Isa. 28:16. Jesus is the foundation!

■ **"and another is building on it"** Paul started the church, but others contributed to its growth. Apollos is one example (cf. 1 Cor. 3:5-9). However, in context this must also relate to those leaders in the church who were promoting a factious spirit. They may have been leaders of different house churches.

■ **"each man must be careful"** This is literally a Present active imperative of *blepō*, "I see." This is the warning that church leaders will give an account to God of their church work, as will all believers (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10).

**3:11** There are two criteria mentioned in this passage for the church.

1. the leader's/believer's message must be Christocentric (cf. 1 Cor. 3:11-12 and Eph. 2:20-21)
2. the leader's/believer's life must be Christlike (cf. 1 Cor. 3:12-15)

**3:12 "if"** This is the first in a series of first class conditional sentences which are assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purpose (cf. 1 Cor. 3:12,14,15,17,18). There were (and are) fruitful and precious leaders and hurtful and destructive leaders!

■ **"any man builds on the foundation"** The major interpretive question here is which foundation is Paul speaking about: (1) the gospel, 1 Cor. 3:11 or (2) the church at Corinth, 1 Cor. 3:10? Is he addressing leaders or believers in general? One's interpretation of 1 Cor. 3:10-15 must relate to 1 Cor. 3:16-17, which describes the church as a whole as the temple of God.

■ **"gold, silver, precious stones"** The emphasis here is on what is durable, beautiful, and costly and cannot be destroyed by fire. Precious stones may be jewels, semi-precious stones, or polished marble stones.

**3:13**

NASB	"will become evident"
NKJV	"will become manifest"
NRSV	"will become visible"
TEV	"will be seen"
NJB	"will be shown"

This clear manifestation of believers' or leaders' ministry (i.e., motives, actions, purposes) is emphasized by a three-fold repetition of verbs in 1 Cor. 3:13.

1. become evident (i.e., *phainō*)
2. show (i.e., *dēloō*)
3. reveal (i.e., *apokaluptō*)

This open display and judgment of believers must relate to the judgment seat of Christ in 2 Cor. 5:10.

▣ **"the day will show it"** This refers to the OT "Day of the Lord," which will involve both glorification and rewards for believers and judgment for unbelievers. However, even believers will also give an account before the judgment seat of Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10; Matt. 12:36-37; 25:31ff; Rom. 2:16; 14:12; Gal. 5:10; Heb. 13:17).

▣ **"fire"** See Special Topic following.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: FIRE](#)

▣ **"will test "** This refers to the refiner's fire (cf. 1 Cor. 4:5), which tests with a view toward approval (i.e., *dokimazō*).

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: GREEK TERMS FOR TESTING AND THEIR CONNOTATIONS](#)

▣ **"the quality of each man's work"** In context this must refer to one's church involvement. All the spiritual gifts are for the building up of the church (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7). There is no spiritual distinction between clergy and laity, leader and follower, but there is a task distinction (cf. Num. 16:3). Leaders are more accountable (cf. James 3:1).

**3:14 "If"** This is the second in a series of first class conditional sentences, assumed to be true from the perspective of the writer or for his literary purpose (cf. 1 Cor. 3:12,14,15,17,18).

▣ **"he will receive a reward"** This passage refers to rewards, not salvation. All of the people addressed are assumed to be believers!

The NT concept of rewards must be distinguished from salvation by merit (cf. Rom. 6:23). In the OT rewards or blessings were connected to obedience (cf. Deut. 11:13-32,27-29; Psalm 1). In a sense, that is still true. However, salvation is a gift, not a reward. The life of faith and obedience is a result of salvation, not a means to salvation. Rewards can be lost, yet salvation retained. Rewards are a recognition of the developing ministry of believers. Paul has now universalized his eschatological evaluation (cf. 1 Thess. 2:19-20; Phil. 2:14-16) to include all believers. Rewards are a way of recognizing those who have ministered effectively and faithfully in the furtherance of the gospel. Rewards are God's gifts through His empowering for His Kingdom. Yet, like all covenant relationships, believers must appropriately and continually respond (cf. 1 Cor. 9:24-27). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: DEGREES OF REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS](#) at 1 Cor. 9:24-27.

**3:15 "If any man's work is burned up"** Oh, the tragedy of a fruitless, selfish, factious Christian life—a tragedy for the person, a tragedy for the church, and a tragedy for the unsaved!

▣ **"but he himself will be saved"** This shows the priority of grace even with the possibility of the loss of reward.

This concept may answer the theological dilemma of a free salvation in the grace of God, the finished work of Christ, and the wooing of the Spirit contrasted to the cost-everything mandate of the Christian life. My only fear in using this text as a key concept is how rare in Scripture the theological category of a "back-slidden," carnal, baby Christian is used! The modern church uses this concept to explain an ineffective, apathetic, worldly church, but seldom delineates the NT mandate of spiritual growth (cf. Heb. 5:11-14).

■ **"will be saved"** This is has an eschatological orientation. See Special Topic below.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: SALVATION \(GREEK VERB TENSES\)](#)

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 3:16-17**

**16**Do you not know that you are a temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?  
**17**If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.

**3:16 "Do you not know that you are a temple of God"** There is no article with "temple" (i.e., *naos*, the central shrine itself). The pronoun "you" is plural, while "temple" is singular, therefore, in this context "temple" must refer to the whole church at Corinth (cf. 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21-22), which may have involved several house churches.

The focus of Jewish faith developed into the Temple ritual and liturgy (cf. Jeremiah 7) instead of personal faith in YHWH. It is not where or when or how one worships, but Who one is in relationship with, God. Jesus saw His body as the temple of God (cf. John 2:21). Jesus is greater than the OT Temple (cf. Matt. 12:6). God's activity has moved from a sacred building into a sacred (i.e., redeemed, holy) body of believers. The focus of God's activity in the world is people! Jesus' body is now a place, both corporately and individually.

■ **"that the Spirit of God dwells in you"** "Dwells" is a Present active indicative. "You" is plural. The concept of the temple as the unique dwelling place of YHWH in the OT is paralleled here with the concept of the church as the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.

The concept of indwelling deity is recurrent in the NT. All three persons of the Trinity are said to indwell believers.

1. the Spirit (cf. John 14:16-17; Rom. 8:9,11; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; 2 Tim. 1:14)
2. the Son (cf. Matt. 28:20; John 14:20,23; 15:4-5; Rom. 8:10; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27)
3. both the Son and the Father (cf. John 14:23 and 2 Cor. 6:16)

**3:17 "If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him"** This is a first class conditional sentence, which assumes the reality of unspiritual believers damaging the work of the church (i.e., leaders or the factions). Here the emphasis is on the actions of the individual believer. This does not affect their salvation, 1 Cor. 3:15, but their longevity and reward.

The supreme tragedy of believers living selfish, fruitless lives is the potential of the resources at their disposal. They know the gospel; they have the Spirit, yet they and the church are damaged by their actions. This is where Luke 12:48 speaks loudest! Is it speaking to you?

The term *phtheirō* (destroy) has several uses in the NT.

1. spoil or corrupt physically (i.e., rotting fruit or decaying meat, even metaphorically of spoiling financially)
2. spoil or corrupt morally (i.e., breaking the rules of an athletic contest or seducing someone sexually)
3. destroy
  - a. physically
  - b. spiritually
  - c. eternally

Only the immediate context can determine its meaning. Here it is used in parallel clauses, but it is uncertain if it has the same meaning in each clause because the first refers to the church and the second to

a person. This term in context is referring to saved, but immature, believers who are causing a factious spirit to develop in the church at Corinth. See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 15:42.

It is hard to define what "destroy" means in this context (cf. Matt. 18:6; Luke 17:1-2; Rom. 14:15; 1 Cor. 5:5; 8:11; 1 Tim. 1:20).

While I am on this subject, I personally do not believe this term (and related terms) can legitimately be used to prove the physical annihilation of lost persons (Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes*), but rather their conscious, eternal separation from God (i.e., hell, cf. Dan. 12:2; Matt. 25:46; Acts 24:15).

It is even possible that what Paul is referring to here relates to 1 Cor. 5:5 and 1 Tim. 1:20, where the church disciplines one out of their fellowship (but always with the hope and prayer of restoration following repentance).

■ **"the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are"** This is a corporate concept. The related and logical implication is that the individual believer is also a temple of God (cf. 1 Cor. 6:19). Christians are called to holiness (cf. Matt. 5:48; Eph. 1:4).

## [SPECIAL TOPIC: HOLY](#)

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 3:18-23**

**<sup>18</sup>Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become wise. <sup>19</sup>For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, "He is the one who catches the wise in their craftiness"; <sup>20</sup>and again, "The Lord knows the reasonings of the wise, that they are useless." <sup>21</sup>So then let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you, <sup>22</sup>whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you, <sup>23</sup>and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God.**

**3:18 "Let no man deceive himself"** This is a present imperative with the negative particle, which usually means to stop an act already in process. Some of the believers at Corinth were priding themselves on their membership in or allegiance to certain leaders and/or special knowledge.

The term "deceive" is the intensified form of *apataō* (cf. Eph. 5:6; 1 Tim. 2:14; James 1:26) with the prefix *ek* (cf. Rom. 7:11; 16:8; 2 Thess. 2:3). This term is synonymous with *planaō* (i.e., to wander, to deviate, to go astray), which is used in the Synoptic Gospels, John's writings, and Paul (cf. 1 Cor. 6:9; 15:33 and the adjective in 2 Cor. 6:8). Self deception is a spiritual tragedy (cf. Rom. 12:16; Gal. 6:3; 2 Tim. 3:13; 1 John 1:8). Paul may be alluding to Pro. 3:7 or Isa. 5:21 or even Jer. 9:23-24. Many of the leaders of the factions at Corinth thought they were mature and wise, but they were self-deceived.

■ **"If"** This is a first class conditional sentence. Many in the Corinthian church prided themselves on their supposed spirituality or spiritual giftedness or knowledge. These tendencies are similar to what was later called Gnosticism. It is historically uncertain if Corinth was being influenced by this developing Greek intellectual exclusivism. This system of thought (a radical dualism between spirit and matter) is not fully documented until the second century, but it was a major heresy of the early church.

■ **"any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age"** This refers to the person who thinks that he/she has special knowledge or standing. There were those in the church who claimed superiority based on their spirituality, knowledge, social standing, or intelligence. It is possible that this refers to the group leaders of the factions mentioned in 1 Cor. 1:12; 3:5,21.

■ **"he must become foolish"** This is an aorist middle (deponent) imperative. The gospel of God, Christ Himself, is the only true wisdom. This term is used often to describe the "wisdom of this age" (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18,27; and here). Paul even uses it in 1 Cor. 4:10 in a sarcastic sense in relation to the Corinthian Christians who claimed and magnified human wisdom. See Special Topic: Terms for Foolish People at 1 Cor. 15:36.

**3:19 "the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God"** This is because it is based on limited, worldly, finite, fallen knowledge (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18,21,23,25). For "foolishness" see note at 1 Cor. 1:25.

**3:19-20** The following slightly modified quotes are from Job 5:13 and Psalm 94:11. For the term "craftiness" see fuller note at 2 Cor. 4:2.

**3:21**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"So then let no one boast in men"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"therefore let no one glory in men"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"so let no one boast about human leaders"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"no one, then, should boast about what human beings can do"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"so there is to be no boasting about human beings"</b>

This may even be an allusion to Jer. 9:23-24. Human boasting is mentioned several times in 1 Cor. (cf. 1 Cor. 1:29,31; 3:21; 4:7; and 2 Cor. 5:12; 10:17; 11:12,18,30; 12:1,5,6,9). See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 5:6. It was a major problem in Corinth (and with humans in general). This problem involved more of the church than just a few leaders; followers are also responsible. This sounds so much like modern denominational arrogance and pride (i.e., I am of Calvin; I am of Wesley; I am of. . ., cf. 1 Cor. 4:6).

**3:21b-22** Paul is asserting that all things (i.e., a listing very much like Rom. 8:38-39) belong to believers through Christ including all the preachers listed. The term *kosmos* (i.e., world) is used here in a positive sense of the created order (cf. LXX of Gen. 1:31). Believers are fellow-heirs of all things and all times through Christ (cf. Rom. 8:12-17). Don't limit yourself.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL'S USE OF KOSMOS (WORLD)**

**3:23 "you belong to Christ"** The "you" is emphatic and plural. This shows Christ's exalted position in the church (cf. 1 Cor. 1:29-31). This also points toward their responsibility as believers.

■ **"Christ belongs to God"** This refers to Christ's temporal submission to the Father (cf. 1 Cor. 11:3; 15:28). This is not a matter of essence (cf. John 1:1-3), but a matter of function. The Trinity (see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 2:10) is task-oriented.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the difference between milk and solid food as it relates to Christian preaching?
2. Will Christians stand before God in judgment? If so, why?
3. Who is being addressed in 1 Cor. 3:10-15?
4. Does 1 Cor. 3:16 refer to individual believers or the church corporate?
5. What does the term "destroy" mean in 1 Cor. 3:17? How does it relate to 1 Cor. 3:15?
6. Does Christ's subordination to the Father, which is clearly seen in 1 Cor. 3:23 and 15:28, mean He is not deity?



# 1 CORINTHIANS 4

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Ministry of the Apostles	Stewards of the Mysteries of God	Applications	Apostles of Christ	Conclusions  (3:18-4:13)
4:1-5	4:1-5	4:1-5	4:1-5	4:1-5
	Fools for Christ's Sake			
4:6-13	4:6-13	4:6-7	4:6-7	4:6-13
		4:8-13	4:8-13	
	Paul's Paternal Care	Fatherly Admonition and Warning		An Appeal
4:14-21	4:14-21	4:14-21	4:14-17 4:18-21	4:14-17 4:18-21

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

#### **BRIEF OUTLINE OF CHAPTER 4**

- A. Verses 1-5 deal with Christians judging and being judged.
- B. Verses 6-13 contrast the proud Corinthian leaders and true apostles.
- C. In verses 14-21 Paul discusses his authority and travel plans in light of opponents' charges.

#### **WORD AND PHRASE STUDY**

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 4:1-5**

**<sup>1</sup>Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. <sup>2</sup>In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy. <sup>3</sup>But to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you, or by *any* human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself. <sup>4</sup>For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord. <sup>5</sup>Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, *but wait* until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of *men's* hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.**

**4:1 "Let a man regard us in this manner"** This is a present middle (deponent) imperative. Believers must evaluate or consider the status of leadership. For the Kingdom of God leadership is servanthood/stewardship (cf. Mark 10:42-44). Paul's theology follows Jesus' words.

■ **"servants of Christ"** See Special Topic below.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: SERVANT LEADERSHIP](#)

■ **"stewards"** This is a compound Greek term from "house" and "law." It was the servant who managed the house/estate and gave an account to the owner (i.e., term in Matt. 25:14-46; Luke 16:1, the concept of "to allot," "that which is assigned to someone"). This is the emphasis on responsibility to and trustworthiness of the gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 4:2; 4:1; 9:17; Col. 1:25; 1 Thess. 2:4; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 4:10). God will judge His stewards (cf. 1 Cor. 4:4,5; 3:13). What an awesome privilege and obligation!

■ **"of the mysteries of God"** This term is used in several different ways by Paul. The primary thrust seems to be that the one God is going to unite Jews and Gentiles into one family through Christ, thereby fulfilling Gen. 3:15 and 12:3. See Special Topic: the Mystery at 1 Cor. 2:1.

■ **"that one be found trustworthy"** This is the adjective *pistos*. Jesus used the concept of a faithful servant in Matt. 24:45; 25:21,23!

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: BELIEVE, TRUST, FAITH, AND FAITHFULNESS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT](#)

**4:3 "But to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you"** Paul was under personal attack by certain groups (i.e., babies in Christ, cf. 1 Cor. 3:1, or even Jewish opposition similar to the Judaizers of Galatians) at Corinth. Their estimation of his apostolic commission was not a central concern (yet it was still painful). He was concerned how people viewed the gospel and the church (cf. 1 Cor. 8:13; 9:19-23; 10:23,33; 2 Cor. 4:2; 5:11; Rom. 14:1-15:13).

■ **"or by *any* human court"** This is literally "human day." It refers to human court proceedings as 3:13 refers to "divine" court proceedings on the last day (cf. 1 Cor. 1:8; 5:5). As 4:3a refers to the *sarkinois* (i.e., immature believers of 1 Cor. 3:1), this phrase refers to the *psuchikos* (i.e., natural people without the Spirit) of 1 Cor. 2:14.

■ **"I do not even examine myself"** It is very hard to properly examine oneself spiritually. Often believers are too hard on themselves and too easy on others. Often we compare ourselves to other humans (cf. 2 Cor. 10:12-18). We must let God judge (cf. 1 Cor. 4:5). He knows the heart and the circumstances (cf. 1 Sam. 16:7; 1 Kgs. 8:39; 1 Chr. 28:9; Jer. 17:10; Luke 16:15; Acts 1:24).

**4:4 "For I am conscious of nothing against myself"** Before Paul's conversion he felt this way about his relationship to the Mosaic Law (cf. Acts 23:1; Phil. 3:5-6). The Spirit revealed his covetousness (cf. Rom. 7:7) and Paul was convicted of sin and responded to the grace of God in Christ alone (cf. Rom. 3:19-26). He lived and ministered in this grace as a steward. In the paradox of free grace, but accountable

stewardship, he had a peaceful conscience, but only a divine Judge in an eschatological setting could make the appropriate evaluation and reward!

**NASB, NRSV** "acquitted"  
**NKJV** "justified"  
**TEV** "innocent"  
**NJB** "justify"

This is a perfect passive indicative. It is a legal technical term for one being acquitted from the consequences of a crime (cf. Rom. 3:24). It is theologically similar to the "no condemnation" in Rom. 8:1 and the legal context of Rom. 8:31-35. In this context it means that Paul is not free from divine judgment (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10) simply because his conscience was clear.

▣ **"but the one who examines me is the Lord"** Stewards will give an account for their trustworthiness (cf. 1 Cor. 4:2; 3:11; 2 Cor. 5:10; 10:18).

**4:5**  
**NASB, NKJV,**  
**NRSV** "Therefore"  
**TEV** "so"  
**NJB** "for that reason"

This is the conclusion of Paul's discussion on this topic and it is a command related to premature human evaluations.

▣ **"do not go on passing judgment before the time"** This is a present active imperative with the negative particle, which usually means to stop an act already in process (cf. Matt. 7:1-5). These factious groups or the adherents of the false teachers had already judged Paul. Paul must have had many critics at Corinth through the years (cf. 2 Cor. 10-12).

▣ **"but wait until the Lord comes"** The Second Coming is certain; the time and manner are uncertain. True evaluation must wait until the right moment (cf. Matt. 13:24-30,36-43).

▣ **"who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness"** Even believers will give an account of their motives, plans, and attitudes (cf. 1 Cor. 3:13; John 3:17-21; Rom. 2:16; 2 Cor. 5:10), but thank God, not their sins! Paul uses this same word "hidden things" (*krupta*) several times.

1. Romans 2:16 - "the hidden things of men"
2. 1 Corinthians 4:26 - "the hidden things of darkness"
3. 1 Corinthians 14:25 - "the hidden things of the heart"
4. 2 Corinthians 4:2 - "the hidden things of shame"

▣ **"and disclose the motives of men's hearts"** This is crucial. This is why only God can judge fairly. Believers are only responsible for what they do understand, but they are always responsible for their attitudes and motives. Faithfulness will be rewarded (cf. 1 Cor. 3:8,14,15), unfaithfulness judged (cf. 1 Cor. 3:16-17). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HEART](#) at 1 Cor. 14:25.

▣ **"and each man's praise will come to him from God"** This is a recurrent theme (cf. Job 34:11; Ps. 62:12; Eccl. 12:14; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Matt. 16:27; 25:31-40; Rom. 2:16; 14:12; 1 Cor. 3:8; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12; 22:12) based on the principle of Gal. 6:7.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 4:6-7**

**<sup>6</sup>Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will**

**become arrogant in behalf of one against the other. <sup>7</sup>For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?**

**4:6**

**NASB** "I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos"  
**NKJV** "figuratively transferred"  
**NRSV, TEV,**  
**NJB** "applied"

The Greek word "figuratively applied" (i.e., *meteschēmatisa*, which is an Aorist active indicative) is very hard to translate in this context. In other contexts, Phil. 3:21, the active voice means to "transform," and in 2 Cor. 11:13-15, the middle voice means "to disguise." The basic idea is to transfer a set of circumstances from one group to another group. Paul is using himself and Apollos as examples for all leaders.

**NASB** "that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written"  
**NKJV** "that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written"  
**NRSV** "so that you may learn through us the meaning of the saying 'Nothing beyond what is written'"  
**TEV** "observe the proper rules"  
**NJB** "nothing beyond what is written"

The phrase, "it is written" is commonly used in the NT to introduce OT quotes. Here it seems to introduce a well-known proverb. The possible interpretations are

1. an introduction to a quote from the OT (cf. 1 Cor. 1:19,31; 3:19)
2. a party slogan of one of the factions at Corinth
3. "to observe the proper rules" (i.e., believers should live in submission to the Scriptures:
  - a. especially those Paul has quoted in chapters 1-3
  - b. not to go beyond the Scriptures like some of the Jewish false teachers)

**NASB** "so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other"  
**NKJV** "that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other"  
**NRSV** "so that none of you will be puffed up in favor of one against another"  
**TEV** "none of you should be proud of one person and despise another"  
**NJB** "no individual among you must become filled with his own importance and make comparisons, to another's detriment"

The Greek term *phusioō* originally meant to inflate or puff up something (i.e., Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, p. 105, and Vincent, *Word Studies*, p. 766, from *phusa* - bellows). It came to be used in Christian literature (possibly coined by Paul) metaphorically for pride or arrogance. This was a major spiritual problem for the church at Corinth. Paul uses this word in 1 Cor. 4:6,18,19; 5:2; 8:1; 13:4 and in a list of sins in 2 Cor. 12:20. It is only used outside the Corinthian letters in the NT in Col. 2:18, where it refers to Gnostic visions of special knowledge.

Believers must not arrogantly choose certain teachers over other teachers. They must judge proclaimers by the content of their message (1 John 4:1-6) and their lifestyle (Matt. 7:1ff), not by their presentation nor their personality nor by their personal preferences nor by the human leaders they claim as their own (i.e., denomination).

**4:7**

**NASB** "For who regards you as superior"  
**NKJV** "For who makes you differ *from another*"  
**NRSV** "For who sees anything different in you"

**TEV** "Who made you superior to others"  
**NJB** "Who made you so important"

The pronoun "you" and the verbs are singular in 1 Cor. 4:7, but it is still an "any-of-you" context. The plural "you" continues in 1 Cor. 4:8.

The Greek compound term *diakrinō* is used often in 1 Corinthians and in several senses.

1. to prefer or to confer a superiority (cf. 1 Cor. 4:7)
2. to judge (cf. 1 Cor. 6:5)
3. to make a distinction (cf. 1 Cor. 11:29)
4. to examine (cf. 1 Cor. 11:31; 14:29)
5. to discern (the noun form of *diakrisis*, cf. 1 Cor. 12:10)

The related compound *anakrinō* is used in 1 Cor. 2:15 (twice); 4:3,4 and 14:24. The proper evaluation process between believers and leaders and between leaders and leaders was crucial for the church at Corinth.

This question/answer format is a typical method of Paul's teaching known as "diatribe." It is a common OT (cf. Malachi) and rabbinical technique. Paul seems to be addressing the proud leaders of the factious groups (possibly house churches).

- ▣ **"What do you have that you did not receive"** Paul is reminding these proud leaders that they were not the originators or discoverers of truth, but recipients of other's ministry.
- ▣ **"if"** This is a first class conditional sentence, which is assumed to be true from the point of view of the writer or for his literary purposes. This is the third rhetorical question of 1 Cor. 4:7. Some leaders and their followers were acting as if they were the source of the truths they proclaimed. Another problem of Corinth was human boasting (cf. 1 Cor. 1:29,31; 3:21; 4:7; 13:4). See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 5:6.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 4:8-13**

**<sup>8</sup>You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings without us; and indeed, I wish that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you. <sup>9</sup>For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. <sup>10</sup>We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor. <sup>11</sup>To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; <sup>12</sup>and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; <sup>13</sup>when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now.**

**4:8-13** This is shocking sarcasm!

**4:8**  
**NASB** "You are already filled"  
**NKJV** "You are already full"  
**NRSV** "Already you have all you want"  
**TEV** "Do you already have everything you need"  
**NJB** "you have everything"

The pronoun "you" is plural in 1 Cor. 4:8,10. This term "filled" is normally used of physical eating (cf. Acts 27:38), but here is it a metaphor (cf. Matt. 5:6) of spiritual pride. Verse 8 can be three questions (cf. TEV) or three statements (cf. NASB, NKJV, RSV, and REB). These are a series of sarcastic statements or questions that reveal the pride of the Corinthian factious leaders. They thought they had arrived (i.e.,

perfect passive periphrastic). Paul wished they had, but it was not true; their actions revealed their maturity level (i.e., babies in Christ).

▣ **"kings. . .reign"** Paul is using eschatological imagery to jolt the leaders' arrogant self-sufficiency. In Christ all believers will co-reign with King Jesus, but only after the Second Coming. These leaders considered themselves as already reigning, spiritually speaking.

**4:9 "God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death"** This verse is an illustration taken from a Roman Triumphal March (cf. Col. 2:15), where condemned prisoners (i.e., usually later killed in the Roman arena, cf. 1 Cor. 15:32) were displayed last in a Roman victory parade.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: SEND (APOSTELLŌ)**

▣ **"we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and men"** Paul is referring to the difficult task of preaching the gospel (cf. 2 Cor. 4:7-12; 6:3-10; 11:23-30).

The phrase "to angels" may be linked to Eph. 2:7; 3:10. God has revealed Himself to the angelic world by His actions towards humans (cf. 1 Pet. 1:12).

**4:10 "We are fools for Christ's sake"** God's wisdom is foolishness to the world, even sometimes to arrogant Christians. For "fools" see note at 1 Cor. 1:25 and Special Topic at 1 Cor. 15:36.

▣ **"but you are prudent in Christ. . .but you are strong; you are distinguished"** This is biting sarcasm which continues from 1 Cor. 4:7-9.

▣ **"weak"** See [SPECIAL TOPIC: WEAKNESS](#) at 2 Cor. 12:9.

**4:11 "To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless"** These verses reflect Paul's own experience (cf. 2 Cor. 4:7-12; 6:3-10 and 11:23-30, also notice Hebrews 11:34-38). He wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus.

**4:12 "we toil, working with our own hands"** This reflects the Jewish emphasis on the appropriateness of manual labor (cf. Acts 18:3; 20:34; 1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8). It was depreciated by Greek culture, including the church at Corinth.

▣ **"when we are reviled, we bless"** Paul is reflecting the teachings of Jesus (cf. Matt. 5:10-12; 1 Pet. 2:23). The term "reviled" (i.e., *loidoreō*) is also included in the list of sins in 1 Cor. 5:11 and 6:10 (i.e., *loidoros*). Vincent, *Word Studies*, says this term refers to personal verbal abuse, while the term "slandered" (i.e., *dusphēmeō*, cf. 1 Cor. 4:13) means public defamation (cf. 1 Cor. 4:13; 2 Cor. 6:8). I have not been able to confirm this distinction. They both are part of a large number of Koine Greek terms used in the semantical category of "insult and slander" (cf. Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, pp. 433-434).

Paul experienced verbal abuse from many false teachers, but it was the church at Corinth that must have wounded him the most. A group of people whom he personally led to Christ became his most vocal slanderers.

**4:13 "conciliate"** See full note at 2 Cor. 1:4-11.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"we have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"we have become like the rubbish of the world, the dregs of all things"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"we are no more than the world's garbage; we are the scum of the earth"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"we are treated even now as the dregs of the world, the very lowest scum"</b>

This paragraph (1 Cor. 4:8-13) shows Paul's personal pain involved in preaching the gospel. He felt

humiliated and rejected not only by the unbelieving, but by these arrogant Corinthian leaders.

The first phrase "scum of the world" referred to what was left over after the cleaning of kitchen utensils. It is literally "to cleanse all around on all sides." In defining these rare synonyms the question of the origin of Paul's metaphors is crucial.

1. If he uses the OT background as expressed through the Greek translation, the Septuagint, this term is used of a thorough cleansing and thereby a ransoming (cf. Pro. 21:18). Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, and Danker's *Greek/English Lexicon*, p. 647, and A. T. Robertson's *Word Pictures*, p. 108, suggest it could be understood as "scapegoat," possibly from its use in Tobit 5:19.
2. If he is using Hellenistic background the two terms in 1 Cor. 4:13 are synonymous of that which is removed by a thorough cleaning.
3. If he is using them metaphorically then they both simply refer to humility (cf. Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, and Danker's *Greek/English Lexicon*, p. 653).

The second phrase "dregs of all things" also refers to that which had been scraped out in the cleansing process. These two terms are synonymous. They are strong terms, but were used as metaphors or idioms. Possibly they are so strong and colorful to us because they are rare terms. They help intensify Paul's sarcasm.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 4:14-21**

**14**I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children. **15**For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet *you would not have* many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. **16**Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me. **17** For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church. **18**Now some have become arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. **19**But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I shall find out, not the words of those who are arrogant but their power. **20**For the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power. **21**What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love and a spirit of gentleness?

**4:14 "I do not write these things to shame you"** Verses 8-13 have been very sarcastic. Paul feels they should be ashamed (cf. 1 Cor. 6:5; 15:34). It is uncertain if this paragraph (i.e., 1 Cor. 4:14-24) points backward (i.e., chapters 1-4) or forward. They had much to be ashamed of.

▣ **"but to admonish you as my beloved children"** Paul is using the metaphor of child training to encourage the Corinthians (cf. Eph. 6:4). This is a compound Greek word (i.e., "mind" plus "to place") used to remind (cf. 1 Cor. 10:11 and Titus 3:10). A related term (i.e., "with" plus "remembrance") is used in 1 Cor. 4:17; 11:24-25; 2 Cor. 7:15.

**4:15 "if"** This is a third class conditional sentence which means potential action.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"countless tutors"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"ten thousand instructors"</b>
<b>NRSV, TEV</b>	<b>"ten thousand guardians"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"ten thousand slaves to look after you"</b>

This is literally "slave tutors" (cf. Gal. 3:24). These slaves were responsible for accompanying the older male children to school, teaching them at home, and guarding them from danger.

▣ **"fathers. . . father"** This is Paul's metaphor for describing himself as the evangelist who initially led them to faith in Christ. This deserves some respect and priority!

**4:16 "I exhort you, be imitators of me"** This is a present middle (deponent) imperative. We get our

English word "mimic" from this Greek term "imitator." Paul lived his faith (cf. 1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 4:9; 1 Thess. 1:6; 3:9) and he called on these Corinthian church leaders to do the same.

▣ **"exhort"** See [SPECIAL TOPIC: COMFORT](#) at 1 Cor. 1:10.

**4:17 "I have sent to you Timothy"** We have no other biblical information on this visit. Timothy was converted on Paul's first missionary journey and recruited as a helper on the second. He became Paul's trusted friend, companion, co-worker, and apostolic representative. Sending Timothy showed Paul's love and concern for this church. But Paul worries about how some in the church would treat his young friend and personal representative, Timothy (cf. 1 Cor. 16:10-11). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: TIMOTHY](#) at 2 Cor. 1:1.

▣ **"just as I teach everywhere in every church"** Paul wanted to emphasize that the Corinthian church had been given the same teachings as all the other churches (cf. 1 Cor. 7:17; 11:16; 14:33). They were not special or advanced. They did not have the right to be different, novel, or avant garde. See Special Topic: Church at 1 Cor. 1:2.

**4:18-21** This is Paul's future travel plans, as they relate to Corinth. He does this because some in the church are using Paul's absence as a means of attack (cf. 1 Cor. 4:18). They were asserting that (1) Paul's absence was a sign that he did not really care about this church or (2) he never followed through on his promises.

**4:18 "some have become arrogant"** Paul has uses this term three times in this chapter (i.e., 1 Cor. 4:6,18,19) and several times in the Corinthian letters (cf. 1 Cor. 5:2; 8:1; 13:4 and 2 Cor. 12:20). This was a special problem for this church. See note at 1 Cor. 4:6.

**4:19 "I will come to you soon"** Paul returned again and again to strengthen the churches he started (cf. 1 Cor. 11:34; 16:5). Paul wanted to come to them, but his life was not his own. He must seek and follow the Spirit's direction (cf. Acts 16:6).

▣ **"if the Lord wills"** This is a third class conditional sentence, which means potential action. This was no meaningless phrase for Paul (cf. 1 Cor. 16:7; Acts 18:21; Rom. 1:10; 15:32).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"and I shall find out, not the words of those who are arrogant, but their power"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"and then I will find out for myself the power which these proud people have, and not just what they say"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"and then I shall find out not what these self-important people say, but what power they have"</b>

The false teachers were eloquent in their speech but powerless in the results (cf. Matthew 7).

**4:20 "kingdom of God"** Paul does not use this concept as much as Jesus did (i.e., mostly in the Synoptic Gospels). It refers to God's reign in human hearts now (cf. Rom. 14:17), which will one day be consummated over all the earth as it is in heaven (cf. Matt. 6:10). Paul uses this phrase more in 1 Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor. 4:20; 6:9; 15:24,50) than any other of his writings. These believers needed to know that they were part of a larger Christian agenda (cf. 1 Cor. 4:17).

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE KINGDOM OF GOD](#)

▣ **"does not consist in words but in power"** To put this truth in an American proverb, "actions speak louder than words" or "the proof is in the pudding."

**4:21 "rod"** This refers to the tutor's stick (cf. 1 Cor. 4:15). This church had to decide if Paul was to come



as a disciplining father or a forgiving father. Their actions determined his approach.

■ **"a spirit of gentleness"** In *Synonyms of the Old Testament* Robert Girdlestone has an interesting discussion of the uses of the term "spirit" in the NT (pp. 61-63).

- "1. evil spirits
2. the human spirit
3. the Holy Spirit
4. things that the Spirit produces in and through human spirits
  - a. 'not a spirit of slavery vs. a spirit of adoption' - Rom. 8:15
  - b. 'a spirit of gentleness' - 1 Cor. 4:21
  - c. 'a spirit of faith' - 2 Cor. 4:13
  - d. 'a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him' - Eph. 1:17
  - e. 'not a spirit of timidity vs. power, love and discipline' - 2 Tim. 1:7
  - f. 'spirit of error' vs. 'spirit of truth' - 1 John 4:6"

See another note on "spirit" at 2 Cor. 4:13.

*The Jerome Bible Commentary, NT*, p. 260, mentions that this last sentence in 1 Cor. 4:21 may be an allusion to Job 37:13.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why are believers not to judge themselves nor allow others to do so? How does this relate to our Christian witness?
2. What does the paragraph, verses 6-13, say about the motives and lifestyle of modern ministers?
3. Define the term "Kingdom of God."
4. Identify and explain Paul's use of ironical sarcasm in this chapter.

# 1 CORINTHIANS 5

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
		Disorders in Corinth (5:1-6:20)		
Judgement Against Immorality 5:1-8	Immorality Defiles the Church 5:1-8	A Case of Church Discipline 5:1-2 5:3-5 5:6-8	Immorality in the Church 5:1-5 5:6-8	Incest in Corinth 5:1-5 5:6-8
5:9-13	Immorality Must be Judged 5:9-13	5:9-13	5:9-11 5:12-13	5:9-13a 5:13b

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND TO CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE

- A. This is one of several passages in the NT on church discipline (cf. 1 Cor. 5:2,7,13; 2 Cor. 2:5-7; 2 Thess. 3:14-15; 1 Tim. 1:20; Titus 3:10).
- B. Church discipline has three purposes.
  1. to maintain the reputation and integrity of the local church
  2. to help disciple and restore an erring covenant brother or sister (cf. 2 Cor. 2:5-11; 2 Thess. 3:14-15)
  3. to cause other Christians not to sin (cf. 1 Tim. 5:20)
- C. There is a staged approach.

1. first, private confrontation and if not successful, personal disfellowship (cf. Matt. 18:15; Gal. 6:1; 2 Thess. 3:14-15; Titus 3:10)
2. second, small group confrontation (cf. Matt. 18:16)
3. third, public exclusion from the Christian fellowship (cf. Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:1; 1 Tim. 1:20)
4. the goal must always be for repentance and restoration, not just isolation and punishment (cf. 2 Cor. 2:6-8; Gal. 6:1)

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 5:1-2

**<sup>1</sup>It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife. <sup>2</sup>You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst.**

**5:1 "It is actually reported"** The English "actually" is the Greek *holōs*, a rare form which occurs in 1 Corinthians several times (cf. 1 Cor. 5:1; 6:7; 15:29). It is a form of the term *holos*, which means "wholly," "altogether." This rare form seems to mean "widely known" (cf. NJB). This may have been one of the reasons Paul was so upset over this flagrant immorality. The Corinthian church was glorying in it and it was being widely reported to the other churches. Paul had to deal with this out-of-bounds action and the attitude of this church lest they negatively affect all churches (i.e., the yeast principle, cf. 1 Cor. 5:6-8).

▣ **"immorality"** This is the Greek term "*porneia*" which was the general term for sexual looseness. We get the English word, pornography, from this Greek word. Greek Corinth was known for its sexual promiscuity. Even other pagans were shocked by Corinth's immoral social license. See Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*.

In the OT there is a distinction between the terms "adultery" (i.e., one or both are married) and "fornication" (i.e., neither is married), but this is not the case in Koine Greek (cf. Acts 15:20,29). This term refers to any sexual impropriety (i.e., adultery, fornication, homosexuality, even bestiality). Here it is a violation of Lev. 18:8; Deut. 27:20.

▣ **"of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles"** This incestuous relationship was forbidden by the Mosaic Law (cf. Lev. 18:8 and Deut. 22:30), but it must have also been shocking even to the immoral pagans of Corinth. This was "too far" even for first century Roman culture (cf. Gaius, *Inst.* I, 63 and *Oxford Classical Dictionary* 8, 539-540).

<b>NASB, NKJV</b>	<b>"the Gentiles"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"pagans"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"the heathen"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"Gentiles"</b>

Paul is using this term in a specialized sense. In the OT there was a sharp distinction between Jew and Gentile. The "nations" had negative connotations. Paul is using Gentile in the sense of unbeliever. Many of those he was writing to were non-Jews.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"that someone has his father's wife"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"that a man has his father's wife"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"for a man is living with his father's wife"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"that a man is sleeping with his stepmother"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"that one of you is living with his stepmother"</b>

This apparently refers to his living with his step-mother. The man

1. seduced his step-mother away from his father
2. was living with his divorced step-mother
3. was living with his widowed step-mother

**5:2** It is possible to take this verse as (1) three questions; (2) three statements (NASB, NKJV); or (3) a combination (cf. NRSV, TEV, NJB, NIV).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"You have become arrogant"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"you are puffed up"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"you are arrogant"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"How then, can you be proud"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"And you are so filled with your own self-importance"</b>

This is a perfect passive participle of the term "puffed up," used so often in the Corinthian letter (cf. 1 Cor. 4:6,18,19; 5:2; 8:1; 13:4; 2 Cor. 12:20). It has the "to be" verb linked with it, which makes this a perfect periphrastic, which implies a settled condition. The real problem was the attitude of the church (i.e., plural pronoun and verbs). They were proud of this situation.

This shocking incident has several possible rationales.

1. from the general context it is possible that this was seen by the church as an example of the radical newness which salvation brings
2. it reflects the Jewish background of Rabbi Aqibah illustrating how a new convert was a totally new person (i.e., A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, p. 111), therefore, in the Corinthian setting this was not incest, but Christian freedom (i.e., one's newness in Christ).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"and have not mourned instead"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"and have not rather mourned"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"Should you not rather have mourned"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"On the contrary, you should be filled with sadness"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"It would have been better if you had been grieving bitterly"</b>

This Greek word (i.e., *pentheō*, cf. Matt. 5:4; 9:15; 2 Cor. 12:21; James 4:9) was used of mourning for the dead (cf. Rev. 18:8,11). In Jewish society mourning was done for the dead, for some tragedy, or for blasphemy (cf. Mark 14:63).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"would be removed from your midst"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"might be taken away from among you"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"would have been removed from among you"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"should be expelled from your fellowship"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"were turned out of the community"</b>

This is an aorist passive subjunctive. This Greek word means to "lift up and take away," often involving judgment (cf. Matt. 24:39) and destruction (cf. John 11:48). The purpose of church discipline is three-fold.

1. cleansing of the local church (i.e., both from sin and the restoration of its image in the local community)
2. the reformation and redemption of erring believers. It is just possible because of 1 Cor. 5:5 (also the same terms are used in Luke 23:18) that this refers to the death of the erring believer(s).
3. other believers seeing God's discipline are encouraged not to sin

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 5:3-5**

<sup>3</sup> For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present. <sup>4</sup> In the name of our Lord Jesus, when

**you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, <sup>5</sup>I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.**

**5:3-5** This paragraph is a judicial metaphor. Paul is supposing that the church called a "church court" (cf. James 2:1-4). The early church followed the administrative and worship pattern of the synagogue. These courts were common and many were excommunicated from the synagogue.

**5:3 "though absent in body but present in spirit"** These are both present active participles. This clearly shows Paul's sense of his apostolic authority (cf. 1 Cor. 5:3 & 5). But notice that he wants the church to confirm his decision (cf. 1 Cor. 5:4).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: SPIRIT (PNEUMA) IN THE NT**

■ **"have already judged him who has so committed this"** This is a perfect active indicative. Paul asserts his authority even in his physical absence and his decision stands.

**5:4 "In the name of our Lord Jesus"** This is a Hebraic way of asserting the prestige and power of the risen Christ as Paul's source of apostolic authority. Paul represents Him and emulates Him.

There are a variety of forms of "the name of \_\_\_\_\_" in the Greek manuscripts of this verse.

1. "our Jesus" in uncial manuscripts B, D<sup>\*</sup>
2. "Jesus Christ" in the uncial manuscript  $\kappa$
3. "our Jesus Christ" in uncial manuscripts D<sup>2</sup>, F, G
4. "our" in Lectionary in the minuscule manuscript 1021 (12<sup>th</sup> century)
5. "Jesus Christ our Lord" in minuscule manuscript 81 (11<sup>th</sup> century)

The United Bible Societies' Greek NT, fourth edition (UBS<sup>4</sup>) says it is difficult to decide, but prefers #1. This same manuscript problem occurs again in 1 Cor. 5:5 (and also 1 Cor. 5:11).

1. "Lord" in MSS P<sup>46</sup>, B
2. "Lord Jesus" in MS  $\kappa$
3. "Lord Jesus Christ" in MS D
4. "our Lord Jesus Christ" in MSS A, F, G, P

UBS<sup>4</sup> rates #1 as almost certain.

**5:5 "to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh"** "Deliver" is the Greek term *paradidōmi*, which is used in the Gospels of turning someone over to the authorities for appropriate punishment (cf. Matt. 4:12; 5:25; 10:4,17; 18:34; 20:19; 26:15; 27:2,18,26) and in Romans (cf. Rom. 1:24,26,28) for turning someone over to evil spiritual powers. This usage fits this context best (i.e., Satan being identified).

This is similar to 1 Tim. 1:20. There has been much discussion among scholars and commentators over what this involves. Some see it as resulting in the ultimate physical punishment (i.e., death), as in Acts 5 and 1 Cor. 3:17; 11:30. Others see it as a total excommunication, putting one in the realm of Satan's activity, which is the world (cf. John 12:31; 16:11; 1 Cor. 4:4; 1 John 5:19), where his alienation from fellowship with God and His people may turn him back to God and avert eschatological judgment. Paul saw the world as the domain of Satan (cf. Eph. 2:2). The evil which occurs in this world (i.e., death, disease, loss, etc.) are attributed to the evil one, Satan (cf. 2 Cor. 12:7; 1 Thess. 2:18). It is also possible that "flesh" may refer to mankind's sensual rebellious lifestyle (i.e., Adamic fallen nature). See Special Topic: Personal Evil at 1 Cor. 7:5.

For "flesh" see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:26.

■ **"so that his spirit may be saved"** Church discipline must always be redemptive and restorative, not vindictive (cf. 2 Cor. 2:5-11; 2 Thess. 3:14-15). This is the OT connotation of the word "saved," which

means physical deliverance. This person, though acting immorally, is a member of the church. He needs spiritual deliverance, not salvation.

As so often in Paul's writings the physical body and the spirit are set in contrast (e.g., Rom. 8:1-11). They represent two distinct authority structures, two worldviews, two allegiances (cf. Matt. 6:19-34; 1 John 2:15-17).

One more theological point about 1 Cor. 5:5: Satan is God's instrument, serving His redemptive purposes. In the OT Satan is an enemy of humanity, but a servant of God (cf. A. B. Davidson, *An OT Theology*, pp. 300-306). The relationship intensifies in the NT. Satan becomes an enemy of God, but he still is an unwilling servant. Satan's function in 1 Cor. 5:5 is to bring ultimate salvation to an erring church member.

■ **"in the day of the Lord Jesus"** This obviously refers to an eschatological, end-time setting. God's temporal judgment towards Christians can be seen in 1 Cor. 11:30-32; Acts 5, and 1 Tim. 1:20. Does this text imply (1) physical death, but eschatological salvation, 1:8 or (2) is his salvation dependant on his repentance?

There is a recurrent eschatological emphasis in 1 Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor. 1:7-8; 3:13; 4:5; 5:5; 6:14; 11:26; 13:12; 15:50-54; 16:22). Possibly one of the theological problems in the Corinthian church was an over-realized eschatology combined with an incipient

Gnosticism. They thought they had arrived spiritually (cf. 1 Cor. 4:7-10) and that the body was evil (i.e., Greek thought) and, therefore, irrelevant to spiritual issues. Paul refutes these tendencies by

1. affirming a future as well as present (cf. 1 Cor. 5:5) judgment

2. emphasizing the inappropriateness of immorality for believers (cf. 1 Cor. 5:5-6)

Also notice that OT phrases referring to YHWH have now been transferred to Jesus (cf. 1 Cor. 1:8; 2 Cor. 1:14; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Thess. 2:2; 2 Tim. 4:8). This is one of the literary ways that NT authors assert the deity of Jesus of Nazareth.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 5:6-8**

**<sup>6</sup>Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? <sup>7</sup>Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are *in fact* unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. <sup>8</sup>Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.**

**5:6 "Your boasting is not good"** This comment helps interpret the attitude of the Corinthian church. They were claiming a freedom and license based on the gospel. They wanted to flaunt their new freedom instead of providing a gospel witness to their community.

#### **SPECIAL TOPIC: BOASTING**

■ **"Do you not know"** This is a characteristic phrase used often by Paul to refer to things believers should have known, things previously communicated to them, but which they often apparently (i.e., because of their actions and attitudes) have forgotten (cf. Rom. 6:16; 11:2; 1 Cor. 3:16; 5:6; 6:2,3,9,15,19; 9:13,24).

■ **"leaven"** This refers to a Jewish proverb (cf. Matt. 16:6,12; Gal. 5:9) about yeast, usually in a negative sense, being likened to rottenness because of the fermentation process. However, sometimes the metaphor has a positive aspect (cf. Matt. 13:33; Luke 13:20-21), which shows that meaning is related to context.

#### **SPECIAL TOPIC: LEAVEN**

**5:7 "Clean out the old leaven"** This is an aorist active imperative. It is an allusion to the Jewish custom of removing yeast from the house just before Passover each year (cf. Exod. 12:15). The annual ritual was a

symbol of repentance.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"that you may be a new lump, just as you are <i>in fact</i> unleavened"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"that you may be a new batch, as you really are unleavened"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"so that you will be entirely pure. Then you will be like a new batch of dough without any yeast, as indeed I know you actually are"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"so that you can be the fresh dough, unleavened as you are"</b>

This shows Paul's typical combination of the MORAL command linked with the POSITIONAL statement. What we are in Christ positionally, we are to become in Christlike lifestyle. They were the people of God (i.e., unleavened), but would be the eschatological people of God (i.e., new lump).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"For our Passover feast is ready, now that Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"For our Passover Festival is ready, now that Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"For our Passover has been sacrificed, that is, Christ"</b>

Paul relates the death of Christ to the OT concept of the Passover Lamb (cf. Exod. 12:15ff; 13:7). This is one of the few places in the NT that this connection is specifically stated:

1. John the Baptist saw this connection and called Jesus "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" in John 1:29.
2. John 19:36 uses a quote from the Exodus Passover from Exod. 12:46.

**5:8 "Therefore let us celebrate the feast"** This is a present active subjunctive (a Hortatory subjunctive calls for action). It relates to the only OT fast day (cf. Leviticus 16), called the Day of Atonement in 1 Cor. 5:7, while 1 Cor. 5:7b and 8 relate to the Passover Feast (cf. Exodus 12). This refers to our continual lifestyle because of Christ's work for us and in us, but with an element of contingency (i.e., subjunctive mood).

- **"not with old leaven"** This refers to the New Covenant in Christ (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38). This new covenant excludes human boasting and arrogance. The death of Christ is the watershed of biblical revelation.
- **"nor with malice and wickedness"** In context and by contrast, Paul is asserting the improper, even evil, motives and actions of some of the factions in the house churches of Corinth.
- **"but with sincerity"** This rare word is possibly a compound term from "sunshine" and "judge." It conveys the concept of unhidden, pure motives (cf. 1 Cor. 5:8; 2 Cor. 1:12; 2:17; Phil. 1:10; 2 Pet. 3:1).
- **"truth"** The etymology of *alētheia* is "to expose, unconceal, clearly manifest," which is parallel with the root meaning of "sincerity." Paul is concerned with motives! See Special Topic at 2 Cor. 13:8.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 5:9-13**

<sup>9</sup>I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; <sup>10</sup>I *did* not at all *mean* with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. <sup>11</sup>But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler not even to eat with such a one. <sup>12</sup>For what have I to do with judging

**outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within *the church*? <sup>13</sup>But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.**

**5:9 "I wrote you in my letter"** This probably refers to a lost letter (cf. A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, p. 115, and M. R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, p. 769). It is possible that several of Paul's letters have been lost (cf. Col. 4:16) or it could be an epistolary aorist (cf. 1 Cor. 9:15), which would refer to 1 Corinthians, which he was currently writing (cf. 1 Cor. 5:11). See Introduction to 1 Corinthians, VII. C.

■ **"immoral people"** This is the Greek term *pornos* (cf. 1 Cor. 5:9,10,11; 6:9). It relates to "immorality" (i.e., *porneia* cf. 1 Cor. 5:1 [twice]; 6:13,18; 7:2; 2 Cor. 12:21) and "commit immorality" (i.e., *porneuō*, cf. 1 Cor. 6:18; 10:8).

These new believers at Corinth were mostly Gentiles (probably Romans). Pagans worshiped with drunkenness and sexual acts at the temples of their gods and at special public and private dinners. Their new faith in Christ was still tainted with their Gentile past and culture.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: VICES AND VIRTUES IN THE NT**

**5:10** Paul's letter had been misunderstood. Paul urged the new believers to flee immorality. However, some interpreted this as "never associate with." Paul had to clarify his meaning. Believers live in a fallen world; it is impossible not to come in contact with immoral people (especially if we take seriously Matt. 28:19). What Paul meant was do not let active pagans be your covenant brother, fellow church members, or even best friend. This is a Present middle infinitive of the term *sunanamignumi*, which means "to mix together" (cf. 1 Cor. 5:9,11; 2 Thess. 3:6,14). Verses 10-11 give a clear picture of the cultural setting of the church at Corinth.

**5:11**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"any so-called brother"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"anyone named a brother"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"anyone who bears the name of brother or sister"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"a person who calls himself a believer"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"anyone going by the name of brother"</b>

This phrase is a present passive participle, which links up with the third class conditional sentence. It refers to someone claiming the name of Christ (cf. Eph. 5:3) or calling on the name of Christ (cf. Rom. 10:9-13; Phil 2:11). Taking Christ's name meant taking His character. It is very clear that Paul (like Jesus) believed that one's lifestyle revealed one's true self (cf. Matt. 7:15-23). Profession must be matched with knowledge of the gospel, the indwelling Spirit, personal obedience, and perseverance.

■ **"a reviler"** See note at 1 Cor. 4:12.

■ **"if"** This is a third class conditional sentence, which means possible action. There are several lists in Paul's writings of the sins of the flesh (cf. Romans 1:29-37; 1 Cor. 5:10-11; 6:9-10; 2 Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 4:31; 5:3-4; Col. 3:5-9).

■ **"not even to eat with such a one"** This may refer to the Lord's Supper, but could refer to social contact (cf. 1 Cor. 10:27). In Roman culture dinners were often opportunities for immorality.

**5:12** Paul and the church must deal with members (1 Cor. 5:12 expects a "yes" answer), but believers must allow God to deal with non-members. Believers must not judge one another (cf. Matt. 7:1ff; Rom. 14:1-15:13), but

1. we must examine each other's fruits for leadership positions (cf. 1 Cor. 6:1-3; Matthew 7)
2. we must exercise church discipline when the reputation of the church is at risk



This is often a fine line! By implication Paul is asserting that the sinning man of 1 Cor. 5:1 must be placed in the realm of God's judgment (i.e., outside the church).

One wonders how this context relates to modern societies where believers and non-believers have an opportunity by voting to regulate social norms. Should believers vigorously participate in the political process? This context is limited to judgment relating to church discipline and not western, modern democracy. Believers are citizens of two realms with obligations and privileges in both! God's Spirit, God's will, and God's Book help us as believers find our way in this fallen world, but unbelievers are exploited and manipulated by sin, self, and Satan. They need our witness and compassion, not our judgmental self-righteousness. They are not capable of understanding our motives, purposes, and actions.

The problem of when and how Christians should "judge" each other caused several Greek manuscripts to alter this text.

1. The very early papyrus manuscript P<sup>46</sup> (about a.d. 200) as well as the Bahairic Coptic translation (3<sup>rd</sup> century) and Peshitta Syriac translation (5<sup>th</sup> century) just omit the negative and translate the sentence as an imperative, "Judge ye those who are inside [the church]" (cf. Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, p. 551).
2. The Sahidic Coptic translation (3<sup>rd</sup> century) put the negative with the preceding sentence, "For what have I to do with judging those who are outside and not those who are inside? Judge those who are inside" (Metzger, p. 51).
3. The UBS<sup>4</sup> text does not even acknowledge the possibility of these variants as original.

**5:13** Paul clinched his argument from the Jewish point of view by alluding to the writings of Moses (cf. Deut. 13:5; 17:7,12; 19:19; 21:21; 22:21,24; 24:7). If the church tolerates (even glories in) immoral members they will affect the whole church (cf. 1 Cor. 5:11).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why do churches not practice church discipline today?
2. How do we relate Paul's apostolic authority with the authority of the local church?
3. What does it mean to turn someone over to Satan for destruction of his flesh?
4. How many letters did Paul write to Corinth?

# 1 CORINTHIANS 6

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Going to Law Before Unbelievers	Do Not Sue the Brethren	Lawsuits in Pagan Courts	Lawsuits Against Fellow Christians	Recourse to the Pagan Courts
6:1-11	6:1-11	6:1-6 6:7-8	6:1-6 6:7-11	6:1-8  6:9-11
Glorify God in Your Body	Glorify God in Body and Spirit	A Warning Against Laxity	Use Your Bodies for God's Glory	Sexual Immorality
6:12-20	6:12-20	6:12-20	6:12-14 6:15-17 6:18-20	6:12-17  6:18-20

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### OPENING COMMENTS

I have, through the years, had several lawyers ask me about how this context relates to our modern society.

First, the prohibition against taking someone (even another Christian) to court must be dealt with. One could argue that modern courts differ from pagan courts, but how so? Much of our law is also based on Roman law. Some judges today are believers, but that should not affect their judicial rulings.

There seem to be several issues involved.

1. The motive and purpose of the litigation are crucial, not just the legal basis of the case. We live in a litigious society, just like ancient Athens. Often pride, money, or revenge are the real issues.
2. The resulting social impact of greedy, petty, or angry Christians in open court must be avoided. Each believer has a corporate obligation to the Kingdom of God. Our witness is crucial.

3. However, the church has not provided an effective means of arbitration between believers. There is not an ecclesiastical forum for believers to air and deal with issues that are important to them or that are inherently unfair.
4. Possibly one solution is a Christian Lawyers Association with spiritual resources (i.e., Scripture, godly wisdom, etc.), not just legal precedent, which deals with legal issues involving believers. Believers (i.e., believing lawyers) who feel led to be involved in lawsuits should ask God's guidance and establish guidelines by which they choose to practice law. This could develop into a forum for arbitration between believers.

Although the NT is historically and culturally conditioned, the basic problems and tendencies of humanity are not. God is speaking through these texts and believers must hear His words and will, though not in first century Greco-Roman categories. These texts call for believers to be less litigious and more Christlike. They call for the church to provide a forum (like the synagogue courts). They shout at us that personal loss is better than Kingdom (i.e., gospel) loss!

In a day of little church discipline, rampant divorce between believers, combined with a greedy, litigious society, chapters 5 and 6 are crucial texts for us to study and implement, both corporately (church and churches) and individually. American freedoms are based on equality under the law. This means as believers we live in two spheres or realms, one civil and one spiritual. We dare not abolish our legal system, but we must remember our heavenly citizenship. Both realms have rights and responsibilities. But one realm does have priority (cf. 1 Cor. 6:19-20)!

Some believers may view the issue of litigation and the proper reasons for litigation differently. We all must walk in the light we have. This context can increase that light.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 6:1-6

**<sup>1</sup>Does any one of you, when he has a case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous and not before the saints? <sup>2</sup>Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent to *constitute* the smallest law courts? <sup>3</sup>Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life? <sup>4</sup>So if you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church? <sup>5</sup>I say *this* to your shame. *Is it so, that* there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren, <sup>6</sup> but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers?**

6:1

NASB	"a case"
NKJV	"a matter"
NRSV	"a grievance"
TEV	"a dispute"
NJB	"a complaint"

This is used in the Koine Greek Papyri found in Egypt for (1) "an action" or "a deed"; (2) "a lawsuit"; (3) "trouble" or "difficulty"; (4) "business" or "trade" (cf. Moulton and Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, p. 532). Number two fits this context best. We know from the Athenian documents that Greeks were culturally prone to litigations. The same, to some extent, applies to Romans. The Corinth of Paul's day was not Greek, but Roman (see Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, Eerdmans, 2001).

NASB	"his neighbor"
NKJV, NRSV,	
NJB	"another"
TEV	"another Christian"

This is literally *heteros* (cf. 1 Cor. 10:24; 14:17; Gal. 6:4). In Classical Greek there was a distinction between *alla* (i.e. another of the same kind) and *heteros* (i.e., another of a different kind). This distinction in Koine Greek (as were many of the distinctions of Classical Greek grammar and usage) was fading. This context is a good example. The use here of *heteros*, referring to a fellow believer, is paralleled in Rom. 13:8. In Rom. 2:1 the term has a wider meaning, possibly neighbor, fellow citizen, or Jew. The contextual clincher for the connotation in this verse is the phrase "before the saints." A lost neighbor would probably not agree to go before a church court (cf. Matt. 18:17; James 2:1-4) in a dispute with a believer.

It is surely possible that Paul had a two-level distinction. It is a problem for a believer against a nonbeliever to go before a pagan tribunal. It is even worse for a believer to take another believer before a pagan tribunal. I prefer the interpretation that "neighbor" in 1 Cor. 6:1 also means "covenant partner" or "fellow believer."

■ **"dare"** This Greek term (i.e., *tolmaō*) is used several times in the Corinthian letters in the sense of "to presume" or "to assure a boldness" (cf. 1 Cor. 6:1; 2 Cor. 6:2,10; 11:21; and Rom. 5:7; 15:15,18; Jude 9).

**NASB, NKJV** "go to law before the unrighteous"  
**NRSV** "to take it to court before the unrighteous"  
**TEV** "go before heathen judges"  
**NJB** "to seek judgement from sinners"

Paul was not worried about believers being treated unfairly, but about exposing Christian problems before unbelievers. The Spirit is the key to interpersonal relationships in the church, not pagan law. Evangelism is more important than personal justice!

**6:2 "do you not know"** See note at 1 Cor. 5:6.

■ **"the saints"** "Saints" (*hagioi*) is from the OT term "holy," (*kadosh*) which meant "set apart for God's service" (cf. Exod. 19:6; Deut. 7:6; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Rom. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:2). It is always plural in the NT except for one time in Philippians (4:21), but even there, it is used corporately. To be saved is to be part of the covenant community of faith, the family of believers. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: SAINTS](#) at 1 Cor. 1:2.

God's people are holy because of the imputed righteousness of Jesus (i.e., the indicative statement, cf. Romans 4; 2 Cor. 5:21). It is God's will that they live holy lives (i.e., the imperative command, cf. Eph. 1:4; 4:1; 5:27; Col. 1:22; 3:12). Believers are declared holy (positional sanctification) and also called to lifestyle holiness (progressive sanctification). Justification and sanctification must be held together! See [SPECIAL TOPIC: NEW TESTAMENT HOLINESS/SANCTIFICATION](#) at 1 Cor. 1:2.

■ **"will judge the world"** Although Jesus mentioned specifically that the Apostles will act as judges, the logical extension of that truth is that saints will also judge (cf. Dan. 7:22,27; Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:28-30; Rev. 2:26, 3:21, 20:4). When and how are the hard questions.

■ **"If"** This is a first class conditional sentence, which assumes that saints will participate as judges in the end-time events.

**NASB** "are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts"  
**NKJV** "are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters"  
**NRSV** "are you incompetent to try trivial cases"  
**TEV** "aren't you capable of judging small matters"  
**NJB** "are you not competent for petty cases"

This is biting sarcasm directed to those who claimed to have superior wisdom! This same term (i.e., *anaxios*) is used of the inappropriate behavior of the Corinthian churches at the Lord's Supper (cf. 1 Cor. 11:27,29). These immature believers, who claimed so much special spiritual insight, in reality did not know

how to evaluate properly or act properly!

The term "smallest" is the superlative form of *mikros*. Paul used it earlier in 1 Cor. 4:3. Its use heightens the sarcasm.

**6:3 "Do you not know that we will judge angels"** The grammar expects a "yes" answer. Believers are a higher spiritual order than the angels. It is hard for believers, trapped in this fallen world, to realize our true spiritual standing (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12). Angels were created as servants of God and of redeemed humanity (cf. Heb. 1:14). It is humanity that is created in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27), not the angels. It is for humanity that Jesus gave His life, not for angels (cf. Heb. 2:14-16). Believers will one day judge the angels (i.e., rebellious angels, cf. Gen. 6; Matt. 25:41; 2 Pet. 2:4-9; Jude 6 or all angels as a metaphor of universal domination, Dan. 7:22, 27).

According to rabbinical theology the angels have always been jealous of God's love, care, and provision for fallen humanity. The Jewish apocalyptic literature even asserts that Satan's rebellion was related to God's command to serve Adam's race.

▣ **"How much more"** This reflects a strong enclitic particle (i.e., *ge*), which is used to indicate emphasis (cf. Moulton's *Analytical Lexicon*, Revised, p. 75). The sarcastic contrast is obvious.

**6:4 "if"** This is a third class conditional sentence, which means potential action.

▣ **"do you appoint"** There are several possible ways to translate this phrase. The theories are

1. indicative (a statement), "you do set up"
2. interrogative (a question), "do you set up?"
3. exclamation (cf. NJB, NIV), "you set up!"
4. IMPERATIVE (a command), "set up"

The point is that the least Christian should be able to judge simple and ordinary earthly matters. To try to clarify the options more, there are two ways to view this text: (1) it is referring to pagan judges or (2) it is referring to the least significant members of the church. If so, it is continuing sarcasm.

**NASB, NJB** "who are of no account"  
**NKJV** "those who are least esteemed"  
**NRSV, TEV** "those who have no standing"

This very term (i.e., *exoutheneō*, perfect passive participle) was used by Paul in 1 Cor. 1:28 to show that God uses the "base things," "the despised," "the things that are not" to confound the world's wisdom so that God Himself will receive the glory. Here it seems to imply those in the church with no standing or leadership skills. The least of the people of God are more adequate because of God's wisdom and Spirit to deal with problems than the best educated and experienced unbelieving secular judges.

▣ **"church"** See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:2.

**6:5 "I say this to your shame"** Paul uses this word often (cf. 1 Cor. 4:14; 6:5; 15:34; 2 Thess. 3:14; Titus 2:8). Shaming is one of the Spirit's tools to bring conviction and allow truth and trustworthy actions and attitudes to develop. This verse continues the biting sarcasm.

▣ **"Is it so, that there is not among you one wise man"** This was biting sarcasm to this intellectually arrogant church. This is an emphatic double negative question, which expects a "yes" answer. See note at 1 Cor. 4:7.

**6:6 "and that before unbelievers"** There is no article, therefore, the emphasis is on the worldly quality of "pagan" judges.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 6:7-8**

<sup>7</sup>Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why

**not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?** <sup>8</sup>**On the contrary, you yourselves wrong and defraud. You do this even to your brethren.**

**6:7 "Actually"** See note at 1 Cor. 5:1.

▣ **"then, it is already"** This phrase (i.e., *ēdē men oun*) implies that this church had already been doing these very things. They were already defeated!

**NASB, NRSV** "a defeat"  
**NKJV** "an utter failure"  
**TEV** "failed completely"  
**NJB** "a fault"

This is literally "less," but used in the sense of defeated or failed (cf. 2 Cor. 12:13; Rom. 11:12; 2 Pet. 2:19-20).

**NASB, NRSV** "Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded"  
**NKJV** "Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be defrauded"  
**TEV** "Would it not be better for you to be wronged? Would it not be better for you to be robbed"  
**NJB** "Why do you not prefer to suffer injustice, why not prefer to be defrauded"

These are two present passive indicatives. Believers' individual rights are not as important as the reputation and mission of the church. Does any Christian win if the Kingdom loses?

**6:8** The western church, with its emphasis on the individual, has skewed the gospel. We have missed its continual emphasis on the whole, the corporate, the body! We see Christianity as something for us individually instead of something for the gospel. We are saved (individually) to serve the body (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7). Believers must develop a NT worldview, see the world through God' eyes and corporate, global purposes (i.e., Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-11**

<sup>9</sup>**Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, <sup>10</sup>nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup>Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.**

**6:9-10** Paul is obviously concerned about the lifestyle of individual Christians (cf. 1 Cor. 5 :10,11; 6:9-10), which reflects on the church. Salvation is not only a judicial act (i.e., justification by faith), it is a changed life (i.e., sanctification or Christlikeness, cf. Gal. 6:7). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: NEW TESTAMENT HOLINESS/SANCTIFICATION](#) at 1 Cor. 1:2.

The church was, and is, being "deceived." This is a present passive imperative with the negative particle, which usually means to stop an act in process.

**6:9 "do you not know"** See note at 1 Cor. 5:6. The implication is that believers, because of their salvation and indwelling of the Spirit, should know these things! But, baby (immature), carnal believers do not!!! They are mentally dominated by this fallen world's system and the demonic (i.e., self deceived, culturally deceived, and satanically deceived, cf. 1 Cor. 12:2).

▣ **"that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God"** Paul states this twice for emphasis (1

Cor. 6:9, 10). This brings the paradox of the gospel into sharp contrast. Salvation is free in the finished work of Christ, but covenantal salvation demands an appropriate and continuing response. Believers who are declared "right" in Christ must mature into Christlikeness. The goal of God has always been a righteous people that reflect His character. The NT is just like the OT in this regard. The radical nature of the New Covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38) is that human performance for salvation has been replaced with Christ's performance. But this does not affect God's desire for a righteous people. It just changes the mechanism. In this gospel period, believers are motivated by gratitude, not reward.

However, the spiritual principle of "sowing and reaping" (cf. Gal. 6:7) is still in effect for believers and nonbelievers (cf. chapter 3). Oh, the tragedy of fruitless Christianity (cf. John 15; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter; 1 John). It impacts the Kingdom, the local church, the individual, and the lost.

Can a Christian who has committed the sins listed in 1 Cor. 6:9-10 be saved? For sure (cf. 1 Cor. 6:11)! Can a Christian continue to commit these sins and be saved? Not without divine consequences—loss of fellowship with God, loss of the Spirit's guidance, loss of assurance, loss of peace, loss of effective prayer, loss of true worship, loss of joy, loss of witness! What a price to pay!

There are several texts in Acts and Paul's writings (cf. Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 15:50; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5) which reflect Jesus' words on inheriting the Kingdom (cf. Matt. 25:34).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: APOSTASY (APHISTĒMI)**

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: BELIEVERS' INHERITANCE**

■ **"Do not be deceived"** This is a present passive imperative (*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 10, p. 223, says it is present middle, i.e., "Stop deceiving yourselves") with the negative particle, which usually means "stop an act in process." This is an *asyndeton* like 1 Cor. 6:18, which was a Koine Greek grammatical form of emphasis which brought it to the attention of the reader or hearer.

**NASB, NKJV,**

**NRSV**

**"fornicators"**

**TEV**

**"people who are immoral"**

**NJB**

**"the sexually immoral"**

This is the general term for sexual immorality (cf. 1 Cor. 5:1 [twice], 9, 10; 6:9, 11, 13, 18; 7:2; 10:8; 2 Cor. 12:21). Verses 9-10 list the sins related to first century pagan worship practices (cf. 1 Cor. 5:9-11), which regularly involved promiscuous sexual activity in the name of the fertility god.

■ **"idolaters"** For a believer with an OT perspective, there is nothing worse than this. The use of this term in the list of sins confirms that this is a list of pagan worship practices. All the Gentile believers at Corinth had come out of this background (cf. 1 Cor. 6:11). Paul uses this concept (i.e., the worship of and service to false gods) often in his Corinthian letters (cf. 1 Cor. 5:10, 11; 6:9; 8:4, 7, 10; 10:7, 14, 19, 28; 12:2; 2 Cor. 6:16).

■ **"adulterers"** This is the Greek term *moichos*, which refers to extramarital sexual unfaithfulness. This is the only place it is used in the Corinthian letters.

**NASB**

**"effeminate"**

**NKJV, NJB**

**"sodomites"**

**NRSV**

**"male prostitutes"**

**TEV**

**"homosexual perverts"**

**NJB**

**"self-indulgent"**

This term (*malakos*) literally means soft. It could be used of clothing (cf. Matt. 11:8). When applied metaphorically of persons it referred to male prostitutes, usually young men. For a good article on homosexuality see *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, pp. 413-414.

NASB	"homosexuals"
NKJV, NRSV,	
NJB	"sodomites"
TEV	"(both terms translated together as 'homosexual perverts')"

This term (*arsenokoitēs*, from *arsēn*, a male, and *keitē*, one who lies with) refers to a male homosexual (cf. 1 Tim. 1:10; Rom. 1:27). This was a major problem in Roman society (cf. Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Tim. 1:10) as it was in the ancient Near East (cf. Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Deut. 23:18). These two related terms in 1 Cor. 6:9 for homosexual activity may refer to the active (*arsenokoitai*) and passive (*malakoi*) aspects of this sexual sin.

There is much modern cultural pressure to accept homosexuality as an appropriate alternate lifestyle. The Bible condemns it as a destructive lifestyle, out of the will of God for His creation.

1. it violates the command of Genesis 1 to be fruitful and multiply
2. it characterizes pagan worship and culture (cf. Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:26-27; and Jude 7)
3. it reveals a self-centered independence from God (cf. 1 Cor. 6:9-10)

However, before I leave this topic let me assert God's love and forgiveness to all rebellious human beings. Christians have no right to act hatefully and arrogantly towards this particular sin, especially when it is obvious that all of us sin. Prayer, concern, testimony, and compassion do far more in this area than vehement condemnation. God's Word and His Spirit will do the condemning if we let them. All sexual sins, not just this one, are an abomination to God and lead to judgment. Sexuality is a gift from God for mankind's well-being, joy, and a stable society. But this powerful, God-given urge is often turned into rebellious, self-centered, pleasure-seeking, "more-for-me-at-any-cost," living (cf. Rom. 8:1-8; Gal. 6:7-8).

▣ **"revilers"** See note at 1 Cor. 4:12.

**6:11 "Such were some of you"** This is an imperfect indicative, which expresses a continual action in past time. This shows the moral blackness of the pagan culture of Paul's day (cf. 1 Cor. 12:2), but it also shows the marvelous grace and changing power of the gospel of God in Christ.

The changed lives of these converted pagans were a powerful witness to the gospel. But the change must be permanent and complete, not temporary and selective. They were different now, indwelt now, informed now. They must not return as a dog to his vomit or a pig to the mud (cf. 2 Pet. 2:22). The lost world is watching!

▣ **"but"** Notice the threefold rendition of *alla* in the Greek text to denote these three distinct spiritual events:

1. washing
2. sanctifying
3. justifying performed by the Son and the Spirit through our faith, repentant response

▣ **"you were washed"** This is an aorist middle indicative. This may refer to baptism as an initial, volitional, visible, symbolic act of inner cleansing (cf. Acts 2:38; 22:16; Titus 3:5). Most translations translate this phrase as a passive voice except the Williams translation, which has "you have washed yourselves clean." Proselytes to Judaism baptized themselves when joining the synagogue. If this word is middle voice like Acts 22:16, this may be a theological allusion to the covenant responsibility discussion in Ezek. 18:31 combined with God's initiating sovereignty (cf. Ezek. 36:25-27). This could be a metaphor for cleansing (cf. Titus 3:15).

▣ **"you were sanctified"** This is an aorist passive indicative by means of Christ's death and the Spirit's mediation (cf. 1 Cor. 1:2,30). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: NEW TESTAMENT HOLINESS/SANCTIFICATION](#) at 1 Cor. 1:2.

▣ **"you were justified"** This is an aorist passive indicative. Believers are both justified and sanctified when they believe (cf. Rom. 8:29). This positional theological standing mandates Christlike living. See



[SPECIAL TOPIC: RIGHTEOUSNESS](#) at 1 Cor. 1:30.

■ **"in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God"** This phrase probably confirms the interpretations that "washed" or "wash yourselves" in 1 Cor. 6:11 refers to baptism (cf. Rom. 10:9-13). The early church's public profession of faith was baptism. The candidates affirm their faith by verbally saying "I believe Jesus is Lord" or a similar liturgical confession.

The second phrase mentioning "Spirit" could be an allusion or liturgical formula based on Matt. 28:19, "baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." It is interesting how often Paul refers to "the name" in the opening chapters of 1 Corinthians (see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:10).

1. a way of referring to believers ("who. . .call upon the name," cf. 1 Cor. 1:2)
2. a way of exhorting believers (cf. 1 Cor. 1:10)
3. a way of asserting Paul's authority (cf. 1 Cor. 5:4)
4. a way of referring to believers' initial act of calling on the name (cf. 1 Cor. 6:11)

The name represents Jesus' person, authority, characteristic, and status.

This is an obvious reference for the redemptive work of the Triune God (cf. 1 Cor. 6:10-11). The term "Trinity" is not a biblical word, but the concept is. If Jesus is divine and the Spirit is a person, then the one divine essence has three eternal, personal manifestations. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY](#) at 1 Cor. 2:10.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 6:12-20**

**<sup>12</sup>All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything. <sup>13</sup>Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them. Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. <sup>14</sup>Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power. <sup>15</sup>Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be! <sup>16</sup>Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body *with her*? For He says, "The two shall become one flesh." <sup>17</sup>But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit *with Him*. <sup>18</sup>Flee immorality. Every *other* sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. <sup>19</sup>Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? <sup>20</sup>For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.**

6:12

NASB, NKJV

NRSV "All things are lawful for me"

TEV "Someone will say, 'I am allowed to do anything'"

NJB "For me everything is permissible"

This may refer to something Paul had said on an earlier occasion (cf. 1 Cor. 10:23; Rom. 14:2,14,20) but it had been taken out of context by (1) the legalism of the Jewish believers or (2) the libertine false teachers who were using Christian freedom as a license to sin (cf. Gal. 5:13; 1 Pet. 2:16). Paul is trying to walk a fine line between the two extremes and yet speak to both.

This may be the first of Paul's quoting of the slogans of the false teachers or the false teachers taking something out of context he had preached and extending his sayings into other areas (cf. 1 Cor. 6:12,13; 7:1; 8:1,4; 10:23, see (1) *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 1, p. 244, and (2) Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, pp. 362-363). It is not that what they said was not true, but they took the truth beyond legitimate bounds. It is hard to know when Paul is using this technique. Possibly the following criteria may be helpful.

1. It is something Paul has himself said in other writings (cf. 1 Cor. 10:23; Rom. 14:2,14,20).

2. It is a brief general statement of truth (like a proverb).

3. All biblical metaphors are true, but have limits as to their relevant application. No example or metaphor can be pushed at every level. They usually have one major application.

Paul attempts to restate the intended truth and limit the inappropriate extensions. This is the issue of hermeneutics in every age!

■ **"but not all things are profitable"** This verse speaks to the proper use of Christian freedom which must be exercised in self-limiting love (cf. 1 Cor. 10:23; 14:26; Rom. 14:19; 15:2). The building up of the body of Christ is more important than personal rights and freedoms.

■ **"profitable"** This is a compound Greek term which means "to bring together for one's benefit" (cf. 1 Cor. 6:12; 7:35; 10:23; 12:7; 2 Cor. 8:10, the negative in 1 Cor. 12:1). This parallels Paul's statements in Rom. 14:19; 15:2; 1 Cor. 10:23; 14:26; 2 Cor. 12:19; Eph. 4:12,29. Just because a believer is free in Christ does not mean that every thing edifies other believers. We limit our freedom in love for the Lord and His church. We always seek and promote the health and vitality of the whole body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"but I will not be mastered by anything"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"but I will not be brought under the power of any"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"but I will not be dominated by anything"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"I am not going to let anything make me its slave"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"but I am determined not to be dominated by anything"</b>

This is a future passive indicative of the Greek term *exousia*. This term had a wide array of usages

1. authority
2. jurisdiction
3. control
4. power
5. supernatural power

Paul may have had several of these connotations in mind in this setting. There is an obvious word play between "lawful" (*exestin*) and "mastered" (*exousiasthēsomai*). He did not feel that

1. any human being had the right to judge him (cf. 1 Cor. 2:14-15; 3:4-5)
2. no supernatural being had authority over him (cf. 1 Cor. 12:2, unbelievers are led astray by the demonic)
3. no personal freedom or personal preference or personal temptation (i.e., *tinōs*, an indefinite pronominal adjective singular in contrast to the double use of *panta* in this verse)

Paul's authority was from Christ. It was Christ and His Spirit who controlled and empowered him. Self-control is surely one of the fruits of the Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:23; Acts 24:25; 2 Pet. 1:6). Paul controls his freedom so that the gospel may prosper and so should we!

Paul is asserting that Christian freedom should not be an opportunity for personal license. Many things that are good can become improper motives, attitudes, or situations (cf. Rom. 14:23). This issue of Christian freedom and Christian responsibility is the critical issue of the Corinthian letters. This issue is also dealt with in Rom. 14:1-15:13. I would like to quote my opening remarks on this subject from the Roman commentary.

## **CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS FROM ROMANS 14:1-15:13**

- A. This chapter tries to balance the paradox of Christian freedom and responsibility. The literary unit runs through 15:13.
- B. The problem which precipitated this chapter was possibly the tension between Gentile and Jewish believers in the church of Rome. Before conversion the Jews tended to be legalistic and the pagans tended to be immoral. Remember, this chapter is addressed to sincere followers of Jesus. This chapter does not address carnal believers (cf. 1 Cor. 3:1). The highest motive is ascribed to both

groups. There is danger in the extremes on both sides. This discussion is not a license for nit-picking legalism or flaunting liberality.

- C. Believers must be careful not to make their theology or ethics the standard for all other believers (cf. 2 Cor. 10:12). Believers must walk in the light they have, but understand that their theology is not automatically God's theology. Believers are still affected by sin. We must encourage, exhort, and teach one another from the Scriptures, reason, and experience, but always in love. The more one knows the more one knows he does not know (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12)!
- D. One's attitude and motives before God are the real keys in evaluating his actions. Christians will stand before Christ to be judged on how they treated one another (cf. 1 Cor. 6:10,12 and 2 Cor. 5:10).
- E. Martin Luther said, "A Christian man is a most free Lord of all, subject to none; the Christian man is a most dutiful servant of all, subject to all." Biblical truth is often presented in a tension-filled paradox.
- F. This difficult but crucial subject is dealt with in the entire literary unit of Romans 14:1-15:13 and also in 1 Corinthians 8-10 and Colossians 2:8-23.
- G. However, it needs to be stated that pluralism among sincere believers is not a bad thing. Each believer has strengths and weaknesses. Each must walk in the light he/she has, always open to the Spirit and the Bible for more light. In this period of seeing through a glass darkly (1 Cor. 13:8-13) one must walk in love (1 Cor. 6:15), and peace (1 Cor. 6:17,19) for mutual edification.
- H. The titles, "stronger" and "weaker," which Paul gives to these groups, prejudices them to us. This was certainly not Paul's intent. Both groups were sincere believers. We are not to attempt to mold other Christians into ourselves! We accept one another in Christ!

### **CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO ROMANS 15:1-13**

- A. The discussion about Christian freedom and responsibility is continuing from chapter 14.
- B. The entire argument could be outlined as
  1. accept one another because God accepts us in Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 14:1,3; 15:7);
  2. do not judge one another because Christ is our only Master and Judge (cf. 1 Cor. 14:3-12);
  3. love is more important than personal freedom (cf. 1 Cor. 14:13-23);
  4. follow Christ's example and lay down your rights for others' edification and good (cf. 1 Cor. 15:1-13).
- C. Rom. 15:5-6 reflects the threefold purpose of the entire context of 1 Cor. 14:1-15:13
  1. live in harmony with one another;
  2. live in accordance with Christ's example;
  3. with unified hearts and lips offer united praise to God.
- D. This same tension between personal freedom and corporate responsibility is dealt with in 1 Cor. 8-10 and Col. 2:8-23.

#### **6:13**

**NASB**

**"Food is for the stomach"**

**NKJV**

**"Foods for the stomach and stomach for foods"**

**NRSV**

**"Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food"**

TEV  
NJB

**"Someone else will say, 'Food is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food'"**  
**"Foods are for the stomach, and the stomach is for foods"**

This may be another slogan. It seems to refer to an improper, hermeneutical extension by the libertine false teachers. Paul asserts there is an element of truth in what they say (cf. Mark 7:19). Paul is either

1. using a literary technique called diatribe, where he is using supposed objectors to make his theological points
2. quoting the slogans of the false teachers, some part of which may have come from Jesus' teachings or Paul's teachings

■ **"but God will do away with both of them"** This is an allusion to the consummated Kingdom. Food is only a part of time, not eternity. Jesus did eat fish after His resurrection (i.e., John 21), but that was an opportunity to visit with His fearful disciples, not a physical necessity for Him. Jesus also talked about a Messianic banquet (i.e., Luke 22:30), but this, too, is a metaphor of fellowship, not a physical necessity to be repeated.

The phrase "do away with" (cf. NASB) or "destroy" (cf. NKJV) is *katargeō*. Paul used this word twenty-seven times, but in different senses. See Special Topic: *Katargeō* at 1 Cor. 1:28.

■ **"Yet the body is not for immorality"** This clearly shows the false extension. Humans are wonderfully created for life and its development on this planet. However, there are some God-given boundaries to insure a long, happy, fruitful existence. Since the fall (cf. Genesis 3), humanity tends to grab the immediate, the self-satisfying, the personal gratification at any cost!

■ **"the body. . . for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body"** These phrases are in a parallel relationship. The thrust seems to be that believers belong to the Lord (cf. 1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; Acts 20:28). He wants to use their bodies for His service, His purposes. This may be a word play on the human body and Christ's church as a body.

**6:14** The definitive chapter in the New Testament on the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of believers is 1 Corinthians 15.

In light of Greek thought (i.e., the physical body is evil) it needs to be emphasized that biblical thought does not depreciate the body. In this very context the body is

1. made "for the Lord" (cf. 1 Cor. 6:13)
2. "members of Christ" (cf. 1 Cor. 6:15)
3. a temple indwelt by the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 6:19)
4. to glorify Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 6:20)

The body is not evil. It will be resurrected and will be part of the eternal kingdom. However, it is also the realm of temptation and the moral battleground of sin. Jesus gave Himself physically for the church. Believers must follow the example (cf. 1 John 3:16).

■ **"God has not only raised the Lord"** In *A Textual Commentary of the Greek New Testament* Bruce M. Metzger delineates the Greek manuscript variants connected to the verb tense:

- "1. AORIST in MSS P<sup>46</sup>, C<sup>2</sup>, B
2. PRESENT in MSS P<sup>11</sup>, P<sup>46</sup>, A, D<sup>\*</sup>
3. FUTURE in MSS P<sup>46</sup>, C<sup>1</sup>, κ, C, D<sup>3</sup>

The FUTURE tense fits the context and the parallel in 2 Cor. 4:14" (p. 552; UBS<sup>4</sup> rates it "B" [almost certain]).

This phrase is an excellent opportunity to show that the NT often attributes the works of redemption to all three Persons of the Godhead.

1. God the Father raised Jesus (cf. Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30,33,34,37; 17:31; Rom. 6:4,9; 10:9; 1 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 4:14; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12; 1 Thess. 1:10)
2. God the Son raised Himself (cf. John 2:19-22; 10:17-18)

### 3. God the Spirit raised Jesus (cf. Rom. 8:11)

▣ **"but will also raise us up"** Paul rejoiced in his current personal relationship with Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 6:17). This is Paul's realized eschatology (cf. C. H. Dodd). In a real sense heaven had come to Paul in this life and would only be supplemented in a future life.

Paul also believed that Jesus was returning very soon. In some texts Paul asserted that he would be alive at Christ's return (cf. 1 Thess. 4:17; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; Phil. 3:20). However, in other texts he links himself with those who are raised from the dead (cf. 1 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 4:14). The whole book of 2 Thessalonians expects a delayed Parousia, as do parts of Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21.

The Second Coming is the hope of every Christian generation, but the reality of only one generation. However, the resurrection with its new body and intimate fellowship is a reality for all believers!

### SPECIAL TOPIC: THE ANY-MOMENT RETURN OF JESUS VERSUS THE NOT YET

**6:15 "Do you not know"** See note at 1 Cor. 5:6.

▣ **"your bodies are members of Christ"** Paul uses an analogy from Gen. 2:24 as a basis for a warning about believers' oneness in sexual immorality of any kind. Believers are one with Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 12:20,27; Rom. 12:5; Eph. 4:12,16,25).

▣ **"prostitute"** This is the Greek term *pornē*, which comes from the verb "to sell" (i.e., *perēmēmi*, cf. Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 6, p. 580). In Corinth (and the Ancient Near East) there were two kinds of prostitutes, one cultic (i.e., pagan worship) and slaves (i.e., for profit). Paul repeatedly discussed *porneia* (cf. 1 Cor. 5:1 [twice]; 9,10,11; 6:9,13,15, 16,18; 7:2; 10:8; 2 Cor. 11:21). Pagan fertility worship was expressed in sexual acts. Paul's hearers had grown up and participated in these rituals and rites, but they are now Christians!

NASB	"May it never be"
NKJV	"Certainly not"
NRSV	"Never"
TEV	"Impossible"
NJB	"Out of the question"

This exclamatory phrase (a rare optative mood expressing a strong wish, desire, or prayer) is used often by Paul to express his horror at how some respond (i.e., diatribe) to his statements or rhetorical questions (cf. Rom. 3:4; 6:31; 6:2,15; 7:7,13; 9:14; 11:1,11; 1 Cor. 6:15; Gal. 2:17; 3:21; 6:14).

**6:16 "The two shall become one flesh"** This is a quote from Gen. 2:24. In marriage two persons voluntarily become one flesh. Physical intimacy is a strong bonding experience. It has an appropriate, God-ordained place in life. Like all of God's gifts, it can be abused and taken beyond God-given bounds.

**6:17** This is a spiritual analogy drawn from Gen. 2:24. As a man and wife become one flesh physically, the believer and his Lord become one spiritual entity (cf. John 17:11,23; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 5:21-33). A good example of this theological concept is Rom. 6:1-11. Believers die with Christ, are buried (in baptism) with Christ, and are raised with Christ.

NASB	"the one who joins himself"
NKJV	"he who is joined"
NRSV	"anyone united"
TEV	"he who joins himself"
NJB	"anyone who attaches himself"

This is exactly parallel to 6:16. The grammatical construction is

1. a present passive participle as in 1 Cor. 6:16 (cf. Zerwick and Grosvenor, *A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament*, p. 508)
2. a present middle participle (cf. Harold K. Moulton, *The analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, p. 236) The dynamic equivalent translations (i.e., TEV, NJB), as well as NASB, translate it as a middle voice. It is obvious that the context is focusing on the volition of the parties involved.

**6:18 "Flee immorality"** This is a present active imperative without a grammatical connection to what goes before or after (i.e., *asyndeton*), which for a Koine Greek reader was a way of emphasis, causing the phrase to stand out.

Human sexuality is a gift from a gracious God, but there are appropriate and inappropriate aspects related to how one exercises God's gift. Paul affirms marriage by his quote of Gen. 2:24, but firmly set the limits on premarital or extramarital promiscuity.

Believers must be constantly diligent in this area, especially when the culture is promiscuous. Sex sins are major problems to the life of faith. Believers must live sexually appropriate transformed lives (cf. 2 Cor. 12:21; Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5).

■ **"Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body"** This is a strange comment. I wish I understood it better. It may reflect

1. the pagan culture of Corinth
2. a teaching emphasis of the false teachers
3. a preaching emphasis of Paul (cf. 1 Cor. 6:12, 13)

Humans do not have a soul, they are a soul (cf. Gen. 2:7). Related to this is Paul's understanding that believers do not have a body, they are a body. This is possibly a theological development from Genesis and against Greek thought that depreciated the physical body as evil. The OT and the NT affirm a physical resurrection which is a way of affirming the goodness and eternity of human corporal existence. Later Gnostic libertine or antinomian teachers would separate the physical aspects from the mental aspects, thereby affirming salvation as knowledge instead of godliness or righteousness. Paul affirms that the gospel is

1. a person to welcome
2. a truth about that person to believe
3. a life of that person to emulate

These cannot be separated! Humans are a unity! Salvation is comprehensive. The kingdom has arrived. There is an unbreakable bond between faith and obedience. Initial sanctification must lead to progressive sanctification. Righteousness is both a gift (indicative) and a command (imperative).

My colleague at East Texas Baptist University, Dr. Bruce Tankersley, reminded me that in cultic prostitution the prostitute is a surrogate for the deity. Therefore, sexual relations were not only immoral, but idolatrous.

**6:19 "do you not know"** See note at 1 Cor. 5:6.

■ **"your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit"** Christianity replaces the physical temple of the Jews with the spiritual temple of Christ's physical body (cf. John 2:21) as His corporate body, the church (cf. 1 Cor. 10:16,17; 11:29; 12:12-27). This concept of temple is used in two senses in 1 Corinthians.

1. in 1 Cor. 3:16-17 it is used of the entire local church
2. here it is used of the individual believer

This expresses the fluid relationship between the corporate and individual aspects.

Paul's major point in this context is a call to holiness. Believers are to be radically different from the surrounding culture. This has two purposes.

1. it accomplishes the goal of Christlikeness
2. it attracts people to faith in Christ, which are the twin foci of the Great Commission (cf. Matt. 28:19-20)

■ **"the Holy Spirit who is in you"** This is an emphasis on the indwelling Holy Spirit. The power for the

Christian life is a gift of God, just like salvation. We must yield ourselves to the Spirit's work. All three persons of the Trinity indwell the believer.

1. the Spirit (cf. John 14:16-17; Rom.8:9,11; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; 2 Tim. 1:14)
2. the Son (cf. Matt. 28:20; John 14:20,23; 15:4-5; Rom. 8:10; 2 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27)
3. the Father (cf. John 14:23; 2 Cor. 6:16)

Believers are God-possessed people. This is volitionally different from demon possession in that the volitional cooperation of the believer is crucial at every stage and level. The demonic destroys the individual's will, but the sovereign God has chosen to honor the freedom of His human creation. Only in Christian maturity (i.e., Christlikeness) does God's will become the dominate guiding force!

**6:20 "you have been bought with a price"** This is an aorist passive indicative. This metaphor comes from the slave market (cf. 1 Cor. 7:22-23; Rom. 3:24; Gal. 3:13; 4:5). In the OT this was known as the *go'el*, which was a near relative who bought one back from slavery (cf. Lev. 25:25). This is a reference to Christ's substitutionary, vicarious atonement (cf. Isaiah 53; Mark 10:45; 2 Cor. 5:21). When one accepts Christ he/she relinquishes personal rights to his/her body and takes on the responsibility for the corporate health and vitality of the whole temple, the whole body (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7).

▣ **"glorify God in your body"** This is an aorist active imperative, an urgent command, not an option. How believers live is crucial for assurance, for peace, for witness! See [SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY \(DOXA\)](#) at 1 Cor. 2:7.

There are two extremes to avoid in the Christian life: (1) everything is improper; (2) everything is proper. Our bodies are for God, not for self; they are for service, not for sin (cf. Romans 6). This view of the body is very different from the Greek view of the body as the prison house of the soul. The body is not evil, but it is the battleground of the spiritual life (cf. Eph. 6:10-20).

There is an additional phrase in NKJV, "and in your spirit, which are God's," which is in a few late uncials and in many later minuscule Greek manuscripts. However, the older texts do not have it. It is not in P<sup>46</sup>,  $\kappa$ , A, B, C\*, D\*, F, or G. The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives the shorter text an "A" rating (certain).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Does this chapter teach that Christians in our day should not go to court?
2. How and when will saints judge the angels?
3. Does the list of sins in verses 9 and 10 refer to individual acts or habitual lifestyle?
4. When Paul asserts that everything is permissible for me, what does he mean exactly by that statement in reference to personal habits and specific commands in the Bible?
5. Why are sexual sins such a significant spiritual problem?
6. Explain the difference between the Greek view of the body and the Christian view of the body.

# 1 CORINTHIANS 7

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Problems Concerning Marriage	Principles of Marriage	Directions About Marriage	Questions About Marriage	Marriage and Virginity
7:1-7	7:1-9	7:1-7	7:1a 7:1b-5 7:6-7	7:1-7
7:8-16	Keep Your Marriage Vows 7:10-16	7:8-9 7:10-11 7:12-16	7:8-9 7:10-11 7:12-16	7:8-9 7:10-11 7:12-16
The Life Which the Lord Has Assigned	Live as You Are Called	Eschatology and Changes in Social and Marital Status	Live As God Called You	
7:17-24	7:17-24	7:17-20 7:21-24	7:17-24	7:17-24
The Unmarried and Widows	To the Unmarried and Widows		Questions About the Unmarried and Widows	
7:25-35	7:25-40	7:25-31 7:32-35	7:25 7:26-28 7:29-31 7:32-34 7:35	7:25-28 7:29-31 7:32-35
7:36-38		7:36-38	7:36-38	7:36-38
7:39-40		7:39-40	7:39-40	7:39-40

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

#### 1. First paragraph



2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 7:1-40

- A. This is Paul's most extensive discussion of domestic relationships. He deals with
1. sexual immorality, 6:9-20; 7:2
  2. marriage, 1 Cor. 7:2-5, 10-16, 28
  3. singles, 1 Cor. 7:6-9, 25-26, 29-35
  4. virgins, 1 Cor. 7:36-38
  5. remarriage of widows and widowers, 1 Cor. 7:39-40
  6. the recurrent theme is, "stay as you are," 1 Cor. 7:1, 6-7, 8, 10, 17-24, 26-35, 37, 40; because of the current crisis and the expected *parousia*, although he allows for exceptions
- B. Chapter 7 is a very good example of how the local and temporal situation must be taken into account before one can accurately interpret the Bible or draw universal principles for application. It is very difficult in the book of 1 Corinthians to know the historical setting because
1. we do not know exactly what the current crisis was in Corinth (possibly famine)
  2. we do not know which factious group Paul is addressing and in which verses (i.e., ascetics or libertines)
  3. we do not have the letter that the church wrote to Paul asking these questions (cf. 1 Cor. 7:1,25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1,12)
- C. There seem to be two inappropriate attitudes/factions in Corinth that were causing great strife. The first were those people who tended toward asceticism (cf. 1 Cor. 7:1). The other group were those who tended toward moral looseness or antinomianism (cf. 1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23). All truth is attacked by the extremes. In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul is trying to walk a practical and theological tightrope between these excesses, while still speaking to both groups.
- D. There is a recurrent theme running through chapter 7. It is characterized by verses 17, 20, 24, 26, 40 and made allusion to in verse 8. That theme is "stay as you are" because the time is short. This cannot be a universal principle because
1. this is related to a period of persecution
  2. marriage is God's will for mankind (cf. Gen. 1:28)
  3. this church faced internal problems with false teachers
- One wonders which category (i.e., never married, once married, or married to an unbeliever) Paul himself experienced. Maybe he existentially knew them all. Most Jews married out of rabbinical interpretation of Gen.1:28 as well as tradition. Paul's wife either died (i.e., he was a widower) or she left him because of his new faith (i.e., he was a divorcee). At the point of his call to salvation and ministry (i.e., the Damascus road) he personally chose celibacy, as did Barnabas, but he never condemned Peter's marriage (cf. 1 Cor. 9:5).
- E. Marriage in the Bible is the expected norm (cf. Gen. 1:28; 2:18). Paul was probably married at one time (i.e., the implication of Acts 26:10, if Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin, then he had to be married). He asserts that marriage is an honorable state for the believer (cf. 1 Cor. 6:16; 7:14; 2 Cor. 11:2 and Eph. 5:22-31). We must remember that Paul is addressing a local first century, Gentile, factious, cosmopolitan situation.
- F. Paul's discussion of circumcision in verse 19 affirms that for Paul OT rituals and regulations have passed away in the gospel of Jesus Christ for believing Gentiles (cf. Acts 15) and are, therefore, not binding. Theologically speaking it is usually stated that Paul affirms the ethical aspects of the OT, but negates the ceremonial aspects. To some extent this is true.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 7:1-7

**<sup>1</sup>Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. <sup>2</sup>But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband. <sup>3</sup>The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. <sup>4</sup>The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. <sup>5</sup>Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. <sup>6</sup>But this I say by way of concession, not of command. <sup>7</sup>Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that.**

**7:1 "Now concerning the things about which you wrote"** Possibly the issues addressed in chapters 1-6 were related to Paul by Chloe's people. The phrase "now concerning" refers to specific questions that the church at Corinth sent to Paul probably by Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (cf. 1 Cor. 7:25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1,12). It is very difficult to interpret this chapter without knowing exactly what questions the Corinthians asked and who asked them (i.e., the faithful believers, the libertine group, the ascetic group, or one of the factious house churches).

<b>NASB, NKJV</b>	<b>"it is good for a man not to touch a woman"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"it is well for a man, not to touch a woman"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"A man does well not to marry"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"Yes, it is a good thing for a man not to touch a woman"</b>

The term "good" has a wide semantic field, but in this context it means "profitable" or "to one's advantage" (cf. 1 Cor. 7:1,8,26). It is used in this same sense in the Septuagint in Gen. 2:18. Paul's whole purpose is what is best for the individual in times of distress and what is best for the Kingdom of God.

This may refer to

1. a quote from the letter that the Corinthians wrote to Paul
2. a slogan of one of the factious groups
3. a phrase taken out of Paul's preaching, but misinterpreted and applied in an ascetic, legalistic, or libertine way

This term "touch" has many different connotations, "lay hands on," "handle," "control." It came to be used metaphorically of sexual contact (cf. LXX Gen. 20:6; Pro. 6:29; Josephus' *Antiquities* 1.163; also Plato, *Leges* 8.840a; and Plutarch, *Alex. M.* 21.4. See Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Danker's *Lexicon*, p. 102, but not used in a sexual sense in the Koine Papyri from Egypt).

Paul is not depreciating marriage or human sexuality, but humanity's abuse of sexuality. Mankind always takes God's gifts beyond God's bounds. The social climate of Corinth was immoral to the extreme (cf. 1 Cor. 7:2a).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"But because of immoralities"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"But because of cases of sexual immorality"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"But because there is so much immorality"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"yet to avoid immorality"</b>

Marriage was not a problem for Paul. This is a present active imperative, third person singular. Many believe he was a rabbi because he studied under Rabbi Gamaliel and he was zealous for the law. He

knew that marriage was considered necessary to fulfill Genesis, "be fruitful and multiply" (cf. Gen. 1:28; 9:1,7). Sex is a gift from God. Gentile society was so sexually permissive and immoral because sex was used in pagan fertility worship practices that Paul felt it necessary to address the issue.

Paul addresses the theological topic of celibacy and the current setting of persecution. There is a spiritual gift of celibacy. It is not more spiritual than marriage. The single person is able to devote more time, energy, and personal resources to ministry. This is good, but not for all, not for the majority!

Paul's real issue in this context is not singleness, but "stay as you are." The times were hard. Persecution was increasing. History tells us of three empire-wide famines during this period. Paul affirms marriage (cf. 1 Cor. 6:16), but in the current social setting advocates singleness. This is not necessarily a universal principle, but a temporary, cultural admonition.

Paul's concern in 1 Cor. 7:2 is the pervasive immorality of first century Greco-Roman culture. In a promiscuous society faithful, monogamous marriage is far better spiritually, emotionally, and physically than pagan worship. Not only is marriage affirmed, but the proper responsibility of each partner is affirmed.

**7:2 "each man is to have his own wife and each woman is to have her own husband"** These are two present imperatives, but are not functioning as commands, unless this anticipates 1 Cor. 7:5. This is a grammatically parallel structure, as are 1 Cor. 7:3 and 4. Marriage is not the exception; it is the norm, not a concession (cf. 1 Tim. 4:3; Heb. 13:4).

**7:3** This verse also has two present active imperatives. Paul gives four guidelines in two verses. It is just possible that Paul is dealing with two problems in this area of human sexuality (cf. Gordon D. Fee, *To What End Exegesis*, pp. 88-98).

1. promiscuous Christians who continued their previous pagan sexual patterns, particularly at pagan temples and feasts (i.e., libertines)
2. Christians who have made even married sex a spiritual taboo (i.e., ascetics, cf. 1 Cor. 7:5 and thereby 1 Cor. 7:1 becomes a slogan or one of the factions)

**7:4** This verse shows Paul's ability to balance the impropriety of his own culture (cf. Eph. 5:21,22-33). In Paul's day wives had few rights. Paul addresses both married partners with a mutual responsibility. Sexual needs are not evil. They are a God-given desire.

**7:5 "Stop depriving one another"** This is a present active imperative with the negative particle, which usually implies "stop an act in process." This relates to the problem of asceticism in the Corinthian church. It also asserts that sex, or withholding sex, must not be a tool to control one's spouse!

■ **"except by agreement"** This phrase begins with *ei mēti*, which means "unless perhaps" or "unless it be" (cf. Luke 9:13). It is giving one possible exception to the stated norm. This type of structure (i.e., a rule then an exception) is used throughout this chapter. Paul is walking the theological tightrope between legalism/asceticism and libertinism/antinomianism. Each faction had its own agenda and slogans!

Notice Paul is expressing an egalitarian model. The husband does not have the right to choose alone! Biblical male headship is tragically misunderstood. The husband must act in self-giving ways for the maturity of the family (cf. Eph. 5:25-29), not for personal interest or in personal preference, but in spiritual stewardship.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: WOMEN IN THE BIBLE**

**NASB, NRSV "so that you may devote yourselves to prayer"**

**NKJV "that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer"**

**TEV "in order to spend your time in prayer"**

**NJB "to leave yourselves free for prayer"**

"Fasting" is in the Textus Receptus following the MSS  $\kappa^c$ , K, and L and the Peshitta. However, the vast

majority of ancient Greek texts, P<sup>11</sup>, P<sup>46</sup>,  $\kappa^*$ , A, B, C, D, G, P, most ancient translations, and most modern English translations, do not include it. The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives the shorter text an "A" rating (certain).

The NT principle on voluntary fasting periodically for spiritual purposes is paralleled here with sexual abstinence within marriage periodically for spiritual purposes. As fasting focuses the mind on God's will, so too, can limited sexual abstinence.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: FASTING**

■ **"so that Satan will not tempt you"** Even married couples need to be extremely careful of Satan's insidious temptations within marriage. Human sexuality, though a gift from God, is a powerful human drive. Satan uses this aspect of biological need as a tool to alienate fallen mankind from God. This is true both for lost and saved, though at different levels (cf. 1 Tim. 5:14-15).

In this context there is obviously a problem addressing a theology of human sexuality in the church of Corinth. Probably it had both extremes of asceticism or libertinism.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSONAL EVIL**

■ **"because of your lack of self-control"** This is the term *kratos*, which means "power," "strength," "rule," with the alpha privative, which negates the meaning. This lack of self-control is mentioned in

1. Matthew 23:25 in connection with the scribes and Pharisees
2. 1 Corinthians 7:5 in connection with married couples
3. 2 Timothy 3:3 in a list of vices.

The related term, *egkrateia*, has the connotation of self-control, especially related to sexual activity.

1. Acts 24:25 in a list of virtues presented by Paul to Felix
2. 1 Corinthians 7:9 in Paul's discussion of marriage rights
3. 1 Corinthians 9:25 in connection with athletic training
4. Galatians 5:23 in Paul's list of the fruits of the Spirit
5. 2 Peter 1:6 in a list of character traits which bring maturity.

Self-control is (1) a spiritual fruit of the Spirit and (2) a developed practice of controlling the natural desires. The domination of the redeemed human spirit over the flesh is possible with the help of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Natural desires are not evil unless they are taken beyond God-given bounds.

### **7:6**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"But this I say by way of concession, not of command"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"But I say this as a concession, not a command"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"This I say by way of concession, not of command"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"I tell you this not as an order, but simply as a permission"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"I am telling you this as a concession, not an order"</b>

Does 1 Cor. 7:6 refer to (1) 1 Cor. 7:1-5; (2) 1 Cor. 7:3-5; (3) 1 Cor. 7:5; or (4) 1 Cor. 7:7? Paul is giving his Spirit-led opinion. He expected

1. the Second Coming at any moment
2. increased persecution at any moment
3. continuing famine

His purpose was to help believers cope with current circumstances, not limit them.

**7:7 "Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am"** This may refer to (1) Paul as a single person; (2) Paul as content; or (3) Paul as self-controlled (cf. 1 Cor. 7:9). Paul was probably married at one time because of the cultural pressure from his Jewish background and the implications of Acts 26:10, where Paul seems to be a member of the Sanhedrin (i.e., "I cast a vote"). If he was part of the Sanhedrin, he had to be married.

Paul's desire that all believers remain as he was, needs to be clarified in several ways.

1. Paul expected the Second Coming in his lifetime, as did all first century Christians. The any-

moment return of Jesus (see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 6:14) is meant to be a strong motivator towards Christlikeness and evangelism in every age.

2. Paul's view must be seen in light of God's command "to be fruitful and multiply" of Gen. 1:28. If Christians were all single what of the next generation?
3. Paul himself had a high view of marriage (cf. 1 Cor. 6:16), how else could he use it as the analogy of Christ and the church compared to husband and wife in Eph. 5:22-33?

■ **"each man has his own gift from God"** This seems to refer to celibacy as one of many spiritual gifts (cf. Matt. 19:12). It is not listed in any of the list of gifts (Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4). It does not seem to be a typical action or function as other gifts. Paul is using the word "gift" in a specialized sense.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 7:8-9**

**<sup>8</sup>But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I.**  
**<sup>9</sup>But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn *with passion*.**

**7:8 "the unmarried and to widows"** The first term is masculine and could refer to (1) all unmarried people or (2) to widowers. The second term is feminine and relates to (1) those whose spouses had died or (2) widows.

■ **"it is good for them"** See note at 1 Cor. 7:1 on "good."

■ **"if"** This is a third class conditional sentence, which refers to potential action.

■ **"they remain even as I"** Paul has just mentioned a spiritual gift in 1 Cor. 7:7, but this verse mentions a situation in life, not a gift. Possibly "gift" is used in this context in the sense of attitude or perspective.

**7:9 "if"** This is a first class conditional which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. Many will want to marry not because they are evil, but because they do not have the gift of celibacy.

■ **"they do not have self-control"** This sounds so negative to modern ears. Is Paul saying marriage is a sign of a believer's lack of self-control? Is it a less spiritual state? In light of the teaching of all Scripture this cannot be true. Paul is directing his comments to the current local, temporal situation. This is not a universal comment on marriage and singleness. Marriage is not the lesser of two evils; promiscuous sex, however, is always out of bounds.

■ **"let them marry"** This is an aorist active imperative. Paul supported marriage (cf. 1 Tim. 5:14).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"for it is better to marry than to burn <i>with passion</i>"</b>
<b>NKJV, TEV</b>	<b>"For it is better to marry than to burn <i>with passion</i>"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"Since it is better to marry than to be burned up"</b>

Notice the contrast between "to marry" (aorist active infinitive) and "to burn" (present passive infinitive). The marriage brings the continuing passion under control. This is also not a disparaging comment on marriage, but a practical observation. Marriage is the normal way to fulfill a strong and recurrent, God-given desire. This same term "burn" is used by Paul of himself in 2 Cor. 11:29, therefore, it is not automatically a negative term.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 7:10-11**

**<sup>10</sup>But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband <sup>11</sup>(but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife.**

**7:10 "to the married"** This is the third of the groups addressed: "the unmarried," "the widowed," and now "the married."

■ **"not I, but the Lord"** By this phrase Paul is referring to the words of Jesus, many, but not all of them, recorded in the Synoptic Gospels concerning divorce (cf. Matt. 5:32, 19:6; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:8).

This is a good example of the fact that Paul is not dealing with all aspects of the Lord's teaching on divorce, only one. Paul's letters are "occasion documents." He is reacting to the poor theology of both the libertines and ascetics. This situation continues the pattern of Paul affirming some of the statements of the false teachers or factions, but also denoting the limits of their slogans. Half-truths are so hard to correct, especially if there is abuse on both sides of the issue!

■ **"that the wife should not leave her husband"** This implies that both are believers (cf. 1 Cor. 7:12-16). Women did not have the right of divorce in Judaism, but they did in Roman society. Just because a given culture allows or disallows something does not mean that believers should avail themselves of the right or turn it into a taboo! Because one can does not mean one should (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13). There are certainly circumstances in which divorce is seemingly best.

1. the lesser of two wrongs
2. reconciliation has become impossible
3. physical danger to the spouse and children is a real possibility

At this point I want to reemphasize the biblical seriousness of making vows in deity's name. Christian weddings are religious vows! God, more than secular society, holds believers accountable for how we treat His name. Marriage was meant to be permanent. Marriage is the norm, not the exception. In 2002 the current percentage of traditional homes in North America (i.e., husband, wife, and children) is down to 23%! Do you see the problem of easy divorce? Marriage is primarily a promise to God and then to another person. Strong Christian homes may be one of the most powerful witnessing tools in our day (so much like ancient Rome).

**7:11 "if"** This is a third class conditional sentence, which implies potential action. NASB puts this clause in parenthesis as a side comment. The subjunctive mood implies that divorces were occurring in the Christian community.

■ **"she must remain unmarried"** This is a present active imperative. The question of Christian remarriage is a difficult one. Deuteronomy 24 was written by Moses to provide for remarriage. Jesus' answers, in light of the Pharisees' questions, do not specifically deal with the subject. One might say, what about Mark 10:11-12. The problem is that this Gospel does not include the exception clause as Matt. 5:32 does. How does the exception clause relate to remarriage? 1 Timothy 5:14-15 needs to be expanded in our day to a wider group than "young widows." Surely God's care for singles who desire to marry in 1 Cor. 7:9 must relate to our troubled society also. Humans were created by God as sexual creatures. Unless there is a gift of celibacy, and/or self-controlled maturity, there must be an appropriate sexual option for God's people; sexual immorality is never an option, but a Christian remarriage may be an acceptable alternative. Grace and revelation must both apply here.

■ **"or else be reconciled to her husband"** This is an aorist passive imperative. In this cultural situation the Pauline options for the already married were (1) singleness or (2) reconciliation.

This verse has been used as a hard and fast universal rule by many modern believers. Reconciliation is always a hope unless remarriage of one of the partners has occurred. In that situation it ceases to be a desired result (i.e., it is forbidden in the OT).

It is difficult to interpret 1 Corinthians because

1. there are obviously cultural issues that modern western culture does not directly deal with (i.e., food offered to idols, virgin partners in ministry, etc.).
2. there are two groups of personality types (i.e., ascetics or libertines) or theological factions. Paul's words are an attempt to affirm the truths involved, but limit the excesses (i.e., dogmatic legalism, do not marry; and no-rules freedom, if it feels good, do it).

It is uncertain if these extremes reflect (1) Jews/Gentiles; (2) legalists/libertines; (3) personality types; or (4) two forms of Greek thought (later seen in Gnostic factions). The confusion comes when modern interpreters do not know

1. what the slogans were
2. the source of the slogans
  - a. Paul's earlier preaching
  - b. Judaism
  - c. Stoics/incipient Gnostics

Paul addresses both extremes! The difficulty is deciding which words are addressed to true believers and which to factious groups. Modern interpreters hear what they want to hear and condemn what they do not like! Our interpretations say more about our theology than Paul's letter to a Roman city in first century Achaia.

■ **"and that the husband should not divorce his wife"** Remember this context is addressing believers who are married. There are two NT exceptions to this mandate: (1) inappropriate sexual activity (cf. Matt. 5:32, 19:9) and (2) unbelief (cf. 1 Cor. 7:12,13).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 7:12-16**

**<sup>12</sup>But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her. <sup>13</sup>And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away. <sup>14</sup>For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy. <sup>15</sup>Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace. <sup>16</sup>For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?**

**7:12 "to the rest"** This would refer to previously married pagan couples where one had become a believer. This cannot be used as a prooftext for a believer marrying an unbeliever. This refers to a situation where both were originally unbelievers. One had received Christ and hopefully in time, so would the other (cf. 1 Cor. 7:16).

**NASB, NRSV "I say, not the Lord"**

**NKJV "I, not the Lord"**

**TEV "(I, myself, not the Lord)"**

**NJB "these instructions are my own, not the Lord's"**

This is not a disclaimer of inspiration by Paul, but simply a recognition that Paul did not know about any teachings of Jesus on this particular issue. Paul asserts his sense of inspiration in 1 Cor. 7:25 and 40 of this chapter.

■ **"if"** This is a first class conditional sentence. There were mixed couples in Corinth. This shows both the effectiveness of Paul's preaching and the difficulty involved in being married to an unbeliever.

■ **"he must not divorce her"** This is a present active imperative, like the parallel in 1 Cor. 7:13.

7:14

NASB, NKJV,

NJB "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified"

NRSV "For the unbelieving husband is made holy"

TEV "For the unbelieving husband is made acceptable to God"

This is a perfect passive indicative as is the parallel phrase in 1 Cor. 7:14. This does not imply that the unbelieving spouse is saved. This relates to the concern of some in Corinth that being married to an unbeliever might equal their participation in sin. They may have heard Paul's teaching about one flesh (cf. 1 Cor. 6:16-20). This must relate to the godly influence of the believing spouse on the family. This cannot relate to the unbeliever's position in Christ. There is no way to be spiritually saved except through personal faith and repentance in Christ. Evangelism is the goal of the believer for his/her spouse (cf. 1 Cor. 7:16).

NASB, NIV "the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband"

NKJV, NRSV "the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband"

NJB "the unbelieving wife is sanctified through the brother"

REB "the wife through her Christian husband"

There is a Greek manuscript variation in this phrase. Most of the early Greek manuscripts have "the brother" instead of "believing husband" (cf. MSS P<sup>46</sup>,  $\kappa^*$ , A, B, C, D<sup>\*</sup>, G, and P). Greek scribes changed it to balance it with the previous parallel phrase (cf. MSS  $\kappa^C$ , D<sup>C</sup>, K, and L). The UBS<sup>4</sup> rates "brother" as "A" (certain).

▣ **"for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy"** There have been many interpretations of this phrase; it refers to

1. legitimacy of children (i.e., legal sense)
2. ceremonial cleanliness (i.e., Jewish sense)
3. the unbelieving spouse and children sharing in the blessings of the one Christian in the home (i.e., spiritual sense)

Many have tried to interpret this verse in relation to the practice of infant baptism, but this seems highly improbable since the relationship of the believer to the children is exactly the same as the relationship of the believer to the unbelieving spouse. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: HOLY](#) at 1 Cor. 3:17.

**7:15 "if"** This is a first class conditional sentence. Christianity caused some homes to break up (cf. Matt. 10:34-36; Luke 12:49-53).

NASB, NKJV "is not under bondage in such cases"

NRSV "in such a case the brother or sister is not bound"

TEV "In such cases, the Christian partner whether husband or wife, is free to act"

NJB "In these circumstances the brother or sister is no longer tied"

This is a perfect passive indicative of the term "enslaved." This implies that Christians in this particular cultural situation may not instigate divorce proceedings, but if the unbelieving partner does, it is permissible. This has no relation to believers marrying non-believers; this situation refers to two married unbelievers of which one has been converted. In context this refers to separation, not remarriage (cf. 1 Cor. 7:11), although Paul's terminology is very similar to the "binding and loosing" of Jewish jurisprudence in which remarriage was assumed following Deut. 24:1-4. James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World*, says, "the term translated 'separation' in 1 Cor. 7:15 refers to divorce because the ancients had no equivalent of the modern legal concept of separation" (p. 247).

However, the issue of divorce seems to be settled for Paul in Jesus' teachings (cf. Mark 10:2-12). Paul advocates "singleness" to those not "bound" and remarriage to those whose spouse has died!

▣ **"God has called us to peace"** This is a perfect active indicative. It refers to peace with God which



issues in peace within the believer and within his home. God wants His children to have happy, loving, fulfilling homes. This is often impossible with an aggressive, unbelieving spouse and sometimes impossible with an immature, selfish, sinful Christian spouse! This lack of peace is the very reason why some "Christian" homes break up. Often one partner may be a believer, but not a mature one. Peace is not present in all "Christian" homes! I just cannot believe that Paul, in this context, is advocating staying together at any cost! There are dangerous physical and emotional situations. This cannot be a hard and fast universal mandate. It must be interpreted in context and with other texts. It is so hard to balance our respect for Scripture and the historical, cultural aspect in revelation (i.e., the Bible).

The UBS<sup>4</sup> text prefers (B rating) "you" plural, which is found in MSS  $\kappa^*$ , A, C, K, instead of "us" (MSS P<sup>46</sup>,  $\kappa^2$ , B, D, F, G). There are many textual variants related to the pronouns.

**7:16 "Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife"** There are two possible interpretations here which are diametrically opposite.

1. this passage probably follows 1 Pet. 3:1-12 where evangelism is a meaningful reason for continuing the marriage relationship (cf. NRSV, TEV, NJB, NEB, NIV)
2. marriage is not primarily for evangelism; it is for companionship and fellowship, therefore, a believing partner should not stay with the unbelieving partner in a situation of abuse and unlove, simply for the hope of evangelism (cf. footnote, Phillips translation, and LB)

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 7:17-20**

**<sup>17</sup>Only, as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each, in this manner let him walk. And so I direct in all the churches. <sup>18</sup>Was any man called *when he was already* circumcised? He is not to become uncircumcised. Has anyone been called in uncircumcision? He is not to be circumcised. <sup>19</sup>Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but *what matters is* the keeping of the commandments of God. <sup>20</sup>Each man must remain in that condition in which he was called.**

**7:17**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"Only"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"But"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"However"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>- omitted-</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"Anyway"</b>
<b>NIV</b>	<b>"Nevertheless"</b>

This introduces the expanded implications of Paul's discussion about sexual issues. The Greek terms *ei mē* can mean "unless," "except," or "but."

<b>NASB, NRSV</b>	<b>"the Lord has assigned to each one"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"God has distributed to each one"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"the Lord's gift to you"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"the Lord has allotted to him"</b>

This verb *merizō* means "to divide or distribute." It is used in the Septuagint for the division of the Promised Land to the Jewish tribes by YHWH (cf. Exod. 15:9; Num. 26:53,55,56; Deut. 18:8), which makes it a metaphor for God's people as does the next verb, "called." YHWH "called" His people and they "called" on His name. In this context both verbs refer to God's special giftedness (cf. 1 Cor. 7:7), which allows people to serve Him (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7,11). Whatever their life situation when they were called, saved and gifted, they are now to serve (i.e., "stay as you are," 1 Cor. 7:8,17,20,24,26,40). Bloom where you are planted with God's help and some exceptions.

**NASB** **"in this manner let him walk"**

NKJV	"so let him walk"
NRSV	"let each of you lead the life"
TEV	"go on living"
NJB	"let everyone continue in the part"

This is literally "walk" (i.e., Present active imperative), which is a biblical metaphor for lifestyle (cf. Eph. 2:2,10; 4:1,17; 5:2,15; Col. 1:10; 2:6). Paul explains what he means in 1 Cor. 7:18-20.

■ **"so I direct in all the churches"** This phrase is repeated often in 1 Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor. 4:17; 7:17; 11:16; 14:33; 16:1). The Corinthian church thought of themselves as "special," "privileged," and "uniquely gifted." Paul counteracts this false arrogance by asserting that he teaches the same truths in all his churches. See Special Topic: Church at 1 Cor. 1:2.

**7:18**

NASB	"He is not to become uncircumcised"
NKJV	"Let him not become uncircumcised"
TEV	"he should not try to remove the marks of circumcision"
NJB	"If a man who is called has already been circumcised, then he must stay circumcised"

This is a present passive imperative (the parallel in 1 Cor. 7:18b is also present passive imperative). This refers to someone surgically removing the signs of circumcision (cf. I Maccabees 1:15 and Josephus' *Antiq.* 12.5.1).

**7:19 "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing"** This shows Paul's view of the OT rituals and regulations (cf. Acts 15; Rom. 2:28,29; Gal. 5:6; 6:15; see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 9:9). This was the very issue brought up at the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 and exploited by the Judaizers in the churches of Galatia. Paul's theology at this point is very clear. Gentiles do not need to perform Jewish rites, rituals, and cultic procedures. Believing Jews must not be proud or ashamed of OT covenant practices they had participated in in the past. True circumcision is of the heart (cf. 1 Cor. 10:16; Deut. 30:6; Jer. 4:4), not the body, and it issues in "circumcised" ears (cf. Jer. 6:10) to hear God and lips (cf. Exod. 6:12,30) to speak His message, His new message in Christ (cf. Jer. 9:25,26).

■ **"but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God"** This is the emphasis of the OT prophets that obedience is more significant than the ritual (cf. 1 Sam. 15:22; Isa. 1:11-17; Hos. 6:6; Amos 5:21-27; Mic. 6:6-8). God looks at our attitude and motive before He looks at our acts. All of God's dealings with fallen man, OT and NT, are on a covenantal basis. Obedience is crucial (cf. Luke 6:46), but aspects of the specific covenantal requirements have changed through time.

**7:20 "Each man must remain in that condition in which he was called"** The NKJV is more literal and keeps the word play "let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called" (cf. Eph. 4:1,4). This is a present active imperative. It is the recurrent theme of Paul throughout this context (1 Cor. 7:8,17,20,24,26,40). The term "called" refers to when they had received Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 1:20). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: CALLED](#) at 1 Cor. 1:1.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 7:21-24**

<sup>21</sup>Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that. <sup>22</sup>For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord's freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ's slave. <sup>23</sup>You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men. <sup>24</sup>Brethren, each one is to remain with God in that *condition* in which he was called.

**7:21 "slave"** See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 4:1.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"if you are able also to become free, rather do that"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"but if you can be made free, rather use it"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"even if you can gain your freedom, make use of your present condition now more than ever"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"but if you have a chance to become free, use it"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"even if you have a chance of freedom, you should prefer to make full use of your condition as a slave"</b>

This is a first class conditional sentence, some slave will get the chance to be free, followed by an aorist middle imperative, "do it!" There are two possible interpretations.

1. that a slave should remain in the station in which he is called, 1 Cor. 7:20,24
2. that if he has an opportunity to become free, he/she should take advantage of this opportunity (cf. NASB, TEV, JB)

This fits the immediate context on the freedom of (1) singles to marry, 1 Cor. 7:9 and 28 (cf. NRSV, NJB) and (2) believing partners to leave unbelieving partners, 1 Cor. 7:15. Here is Paul's personal advice and an individual believer's choice side by side. All believers struggle with these "gray areas." When the Lord or Scripture has not clearly addressed an issue, believers are given a "godly flexibility"! In some areas "one size" does not fit all!

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL'S ADMONITIONS TO SLAVES**

**7:22-23** In the Lord all believers are free; in the Lord all believers are servants (cf. 1 Cor. 8:1-10:33; Rom. 14:1-15:13). Jesus, acting as our *go'el*, bought us from the slavery of sin and self. Now we serve Him (cf. 1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; Rom. 6; Col. 2:16-23).

**7:23 "do not become slaves of men"** Greek is an inflected language. Sometimes the form can have two possible meanings. This imperative can be

1. Present middle, "do not let yourselves be slaves of men"
2. Present passive, "do not be enslaved by men")

Both fit the context. Factions in the Corinthian church were trying to control all believers. This is still happening today. There must be freedom within limits; a freedom, not to self and sin, but to Christ (cf. Romans 6 and 14); a freedom of individual lifestyle choices about how to best serve Christ guided by God's giftedness and the present circumstances.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 7:25-31**

**<sup>25</sup> Now concerning virgins I have no command of the Lord, but I give an opinion as one who by the mercy of the Lord is trustworthy. <sup>26</sup>I think then that this is good in view of the present distress, that it is good for a man to remain as he is. <sup>27</sup>Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife. <sup>28</sup>But if you marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Yet such will have trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare you. <sup>29</sup>But this I say, brethren, the time has been shortened, so that from now on those who have wives should be as though they had none; <sup>30</sup>and those who weep, as though they did not weep; and those who rejoice, as though they did not rejoice; and those who buy, as though they did not possess; <sup>31</sup>and those who use the world, as though they did not make full use of it; for the form of this world is passing away.**

**7:25 "Now concerning"** This is a textual marker showing that Paul is moving on to another written question which he received from the Corinthian church (cf. 1 Cor. 7:1,25; ;8:1; 12:1; 16:1,12).

**NASB, NKJV,**  
**NRSV, NIV**     **"virgins"**  
**TEV**            **"unmarried people"**  
**NJB**            **"people remaining virgin"**

The major question about this term is how its use in 1 Cor. 7:25 is related to its use in 1 Cor. 7:36 (see note at 1 Cor. 7:36). The context of 1 Cor. 7:25-35 seems to relate to singleness vs. marriage as the preferred state in light of the current situation, which could refer to

1. the imminent Second Coming
2. governmental persecution
3. area-wide famine
4. the single person's ability to focus on serving Christ

▣ **"I have no command of the Lord, but I give an opinion"** Some have tried to use Paul's statement in 1 Cor. 7:6 and 25 to lower his authority as an Apostle or make this a disclaimer of inspiration. It is neither. This is an idiomatic way of admitting that he does not know whether Jesus ever addressed this issue specifically. Verses 25 and 40 show that Paul felt his apostleship and call gave him the authority to address issues that arose in the life of the early Gentile church.

▣ **"as on who by the mercy of the Lord is trustworthy"** This is a perfect passive participle. This is an idiomatic way of asserting his apostolic authority and Spirit-led insight.

#### 7:26

**NASB, NKJV,**  
**TEV**            **"the present distress"**  
**NRSV**          **"the impending crisis"**  
**NJB**            **"because of the stress which is weighing upon us"**

This has been interpreted in several ways, but it is very important to see that the majority of statements in chapter 7 are not universal principles, but are Paul's reactions to local, temporal situations. Some have seen this phrase as referring to

1. the crisis of pagan culture
2. the specific local situation in Corinth
3. a famine in the whole Mediterranean area
4. the nearness of the Second Coming (cf. 1 Cor. 7:29)

▣ **"that it is good for a man to remain as he is"** There is a play on the word "good" (cf. 1 Cor. 7:1,18,26), meaning "advantageous." The recurrent theme of "stay in the same condition as when you were saved" (cf. 1 Cor. 7:8,12-13,18,21,24,26,27,37,40) is Paul's theological standard in this letter.

**7:27 "Are you bound to a wife"** This is a perfect passive indicative from the tern *dēo*, which means to tie or bind. It is used in a metaphorical sense for marriage (cf. 1 Cor. 7:27,39; Rom. 7:2). There is a parallel to this phrase in the same verse, which is also a perfect passive indicative, "Are you released from a wife?" Paul wants his hearers to stay as they are.

▣ **"Do not seek to be released. . . Do not seek a wife"** These are both present active imperatives with the negative particle, which usually means stop an act in process. Here again one wonders whether different factions were advocating different family patterns (celibacy, marriage, promiscuity) or if Paul's purpose is maximum service to Christ. This is a recurrent issue. Paul seems to assert that

1. all should remain as they are
2. if single, focus on serving Christ
3. if there is a desire for marriage, no problem, but use your marriage to serve Christ!

Believers remain single to serve, marry to serve, live in persecution to serve, live in freedom to serve, live in theological conviction to serve! Believers are saved to serve!

**7:28 "if. . .if"** These are both third class conditional sentences, which mean potential action.

■ **"you have not sinned"** Paul is addressing a unique situation, not making universal statements. Marriage is the God-given norm (cf. Gen. 1:28).

■ **"if you. . .if a virgin"** The question is to whom do these refer? The first relates to 1 Cor. 7:27. If so, then this refers to remarriage. The second relates to 1 Cor. 7:25, those who have never married. Both categories are addressed again in 1 Cor. 7:34.

■ **"Yet such will have trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare you"** This does not relate to marriage in general, but to the present crisis (cf. 1 Cor. 7:26). Verses 32-34 do address marriage as a general principle.

■ **"trouble"** See Special Topic: Tribulation at 2 Cor. 1:4.

■ **"in this life"** This is literally "flesh." See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:26.

**7:29 "the time has been shortened"** This is a perfect passive periphrastic. There have been several interpretations of this phrase; it seems contextually to relate to 1 Cor. 7:26 ("the present distress"). Calvin believed it referred to the brevity of human life; others along the same line believe it refers to the shortness of the opportunity of our Christian service. I believe it refers to the Second Coming (cf. 1 Cor. 7:31; Rom. 13:11-12).

Did Paul expect an imminent return of Jesus or a delayed return? There are texts on both sides. I do not think Paul's theology changed (or matured). In one of his first letters he teaches a delayed Second Coming (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2). Paul (as all NT authors) used the hope of the certain return of the Lord as an impetus to godly living and active service. The return of Christ is an expectation of every generation of believers, but the reality of only one! See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 6:14.

For an interesting discussion on Apocalyptic eschatology and Paul's comments in 1 Cor. 7:26,28,29, see *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 593-595.

**7:29-30 "those who"** These parallel phrases are describing normal daily human life. Believers are to remain focused on their ministry tasks, according to their spiritual giftedness (cf. 1 Cor. 7:32,35).

Believers are citizens of two realms, the spiritual and the physical or the church and the world. The physical is not evil but transitory. Believers must be service-minded, gospel-minded. We use the world and its resources to serve the Kingdom. Otherwise, physical thing, worldly things, use us!

Do not let marriage act as a release from spiritual priorities! Live in both worlds with godly wisdom.

**7:30 "as though they did not possess"** See Special Topic following.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: WEALTH**

**7:31 "for the form of this world is passing away"** The OT prophets (esp. Isaiah 56-66) reveal a new heaven and a new earth. The new age will be like the old, but purified, redeemed (cf. 2 Pet. 3:10-13). Heaven will be a transformed garden of Eden-God, mankind, and the animals-perfect fellowship and order restored; Genesis 1-2 parallels Revelation 21-22.

Every generation of believers experiences the passing of this world's order (i.e., *schēma*) as they mature into Christlikeness. As we see Christ in clearer and clearer ways, the things of this life become duller and duller. We are in the world, but not of the world. We use the things of this world for evangelistic purposes, not personal purposes.

**<sup>32</sup>But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; <sup>33</sup>but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, <sup>34</sup>and *his interests* are divided. The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband. <sup>35</sup>This I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is appropriate and to *secure* undistracted devotion to the Lord.**

**7:32-34** This describes the mutual commitment of married people to each other as "one flesh" (cf. Eph. 5:24-31). This is not evil, it is used to describe the relationship between Christ and His church. It is obvious that single people have more time and energy for ministry.

Paul's concern throughout this context has been the ability to be an active believer without concern. Paul uses the term *merimnaō*, four times in two verses. This term can refer to frivolous concerns (cf. Matt. 10:19; Luke 12:25) or genuine concerns (cf. 2 Cor. 11:28; 1 Pet. 5:7). In this context it refers to the normal affairs of married life which can compete with the time and energy one has to use for the Lord. It may also relate to the unique pressures of being a believer in a pagan society (cf. 1 Cor. 7:26).

Paul wants believers to (1) be active for Christ and (2) live in peace and contentment. Both are valid, but difficult.

**7:34 "The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin"** Paul is referring to two different kinds of unmarried Christian women:

1. one is older, one is younger
2. the first was previously married (i.e., widows) and the second never married
3. the second possibly refers to a special group of celibate women or ministry partners (cf. 1 Cor. 7:36-38)

▣ **"that she may be holy both in body and spirit"** This is not a disparaging comment about human sexuality being evil. This is how Paul's teachings were interpreted by those influenced by Greek culture (i.e., Stoics, Gnostics, etc.). His point is that individuals focused on the Lord can spend their quality time, energy, and resources on spiritual things, whereas those married must also be concerned with family issues and responsibilities. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: HOLY](#) at 1 Cor. 3:17.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: BODY AND SPIRIT**

**7:35 "not to put a restraint upon you"** This term was used of an animal halter.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"but to promote what is appropriate and to <i>secure</i> undistracted devotion to the Lord"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"but for what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord without distraction"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"but to promote good order and unhindered devotion to the Lord"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"Instead, I want you to do what is right and proper, and to give yourself completely to the Lord's service without any reservation"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"but so that everything is as it should be, and you are able to give your undivided attention to the Lord"</b>

The Greek phrase is very brief. The two key words are

1. *euschēma*, a compound from "good" and "form." It denotes that which is proper, pleasing, and appropriate (cf. 1 Cor. 12:23-24; 14:40; Rom. 13:13) similar in meaning to *kalos* in 1 Cor. 7:1,8,26.
2. *aperispastōs*, an alpha privative with a term for turning about and thereby losing focus

Paul wants all believers to be focused on Kingdom issues, on ministry! I certainly concur with this. My

"problem" with this context is its seeming depreciation of marriage as an equal ministry model to celibacy. God instituted marriage; it is the norm. I am a stronger person and minister because of my marriage. This chapter has been used and abused by legalists and ascetics. The goal is focused ministry, not a dogmatic rule on whether to marry or stay single. Paul had his immediate Spirit-led purposes, but these cannot be turned into universal principles which negate other inspired texts.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 7:36-38**

**<sup>36</sup>But if any man thinks that he is acting unbecomingly toward his virgin *daughter*, if she is past her youth, and if it must be so, let him do what he wishes, he does not sin; let her marry.**

**<sup>37</sup>But he who stands firm in his heart, being under no constraint, but has authority over his own will, and has decided this in his own heart, to keep his own virgin *daughter*, he will do well.**

**<sup>38</sup>So then both he who gives his own virgin *daughter* in marriage does well, and he who does not give her in marriage will do better.**

**7:36 "if"** This is a First class conditional sentence, which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"any man. . .towards his virgin <i>daughter</i>"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"any man. . .towards his virgin"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"anyone. . .toward his fiancée"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"In the case of an engaged couple who have decided not to marry, if the man. . .toward the young woman"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"someone with strong passions. . .toward his fiancée"</b>

There are three major lines of interpretation of this passage.

1. that this refers to a Christian father and his unmarried daughter (cf. NASB and JB)
2. that this refers to a Christian man and his fiancée (cf. NRSV, TEV, NJB)
3. that this refers to a type of spiritual marriage which could be translated "partners in celibacy" (cf. NEB)

Literally the term is "virgin."

Option #1 is using the phrase "he who gives" (1 Cor. 7:38) as referring to a father giving his daughter to be married. Option #2 picks up on the phrase in 1 Cor. 7:36, "if she is past her youth." This option seems best in light of all the evidence, both textual and historical. Option #3 assumes a particular historical situation. Some first century traveling preachers may have taken Christian virgins as ministry helpers and lived with them, but remained celibate as a sign of their self-control.

▣ **"if"** This is a third class conditional sentence, which means potential action.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"she is past her youth"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"she is past the flower of her youth"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"his passions are strong"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"his passions are too strong"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"that things should take their due course"</b>

This may refer to (1) the normal time of marriage (cf. NASB, NKJV, and NJB) or (2) since the form is possibly masculine, not feminine, it may refer to the man becoming passionate (cf. NRSV, TEV).

For "past her youth" (*huperakmos*) see Special Topic: Paul's Use of *Huper* Compounds at 1 Cor. 2:1.

▣ **"let him do what he wishes"** This is literally "so ought to be what the one wishes." This phrase can either refer to the man or the woman. The pronouns throughout this context are extremely ambiguous and certainty in interpretation is impossible.

NASB	"let her marry"
NKJV, NRSV	"let them marry"
TEV	"they should get married"
NJB	"they should marry"

This is a perfect active imperative third person plural, literally "let them marry." This refers to (1) a man and his fiancée or (2) "partners in celibacy."

**7:37 "stands firm"** See Special Topic: Stand at 1 Cor. 15:1.

**7:38 "he who does not give her in marriage will do better"** This is not a disparaging comment on marriage, but a practical admonition in light of

1. the current crisis at Corinth
2. the soonness of the Second Coming
3. the normal human sexual passion of the Christians involved

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 7:39-40**

**<sup>39</sup>A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. <sup>40</sup>But in my opinion she is happier if she remains as she is; and I think that I also have the Spirit of God.**

**7:39 "A wife is bound as long as her husband lives"** This is a perfect passive indicative (cf. 1 Cor. 7:27). Verse 39 shows that remarriage after the death of a spouse is not evil (cf. 1 Tim. 5:14). It also shows how Paul is not trying to make hard and fast universal rules.

■ **"only in the Lord"** There are two possible interpretations: (1) a Christian must marry a Christian (cf. 2 Cor. 6:14) or (2) she must act as a Christian when she remarries. Often 2 Cor. 6:14 is used as a proof of option number one, but in context it is not specifically addressing this issue. However, by way of principle, it might be.

**7:40 "But in my opinion. . . I think that I also have the Spirit of God"** Paul is restating his recurrent theme and his sense of divine inspiration (cf. 1 Cor. 7:12,25).

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How do we apply the truth of chapter 7 to today?
2. How much of chapter 7 is cultural and how much is universal?
3. Is celibacy a higher spiritual state for Paul than marriage? If so, why?
4. Does the Bible allow for divorce?  
If so, does the Bible allow for remarriage? (1 Cor. 7:28,39)
5. What was the "present crisis" to which Paul refers in 1 Cor. 7:26?
6. Is the term "virgin" used differently in 1 Cor. 7:25 and 36?



# 1 CORINTHIANS 8

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Food Offered to Idols	Be Sensitive to Conscience	May A Christian Eat Food Consecrated to an Idol?	The Question About Food Offered to Idols	Food Offered to False Gods  (8:1-11:1) General Principles
8:1-6	8:1-13	8:1-3  8:4-6	8:1  8:2-3  8:4-6	8:1-6  The Claims of Knowledge
8:7-13		8:7-13	8:7-8  8:9-13	8:7-13

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

#### **CONTEXTUAL INSIGHT TO 8:1-13**

- A. The literary context runs from 8:1 through 11:1 as the outline above of NJB shows.
- B. The question of eating meat offered to idols seems very strange to moderns. But in the context of Paul's day and the people of Corinth it was a very important issue. Most social gatherings had religious connotations in Paul's day. Also, the meat that was sold in the marketplaces of Corinth was mostly, if not all, from one of the heathen temples.
- C. Theologically chapter 8 is parallel to Romans 14:1-15:13. See Special Topic at Contextual Insights from Rom. 14:1-15:13 at 1 Cor. 6:12, which are notes taken from my commentary on Rom. 14:1-15:13. Both of these deal with the complicated and difficult subject of how a Christian balances

his/her freedom in Christ and his/her responsibility in love to others.

Gordon Fee, *To What End Exegesis?*, pp. 105-128, thinks that this context refers not to just eating food sacrificed to an idol, but to actually attending and participating in the meal at the idol's temple (which often involved sexual activity as well, cf. 1 Cor. 10:6-22).

D. This chapter also emphasizes that knowledge, even revelatory knowledge, when it is not balanced with love for others, is only partially true (cf. 1 Cor. 13:1-13).

E. I think James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, p. 319, has a good summary statement.

"He would not stand for Jewish Christians narrowing down Christian liberty into legalism (Gal. 5:1ff; Phil. 3:2ff); but neither would he stand for Gentile Christians perverting Christian liberty into license and elitism (Rom. 16:17f; 1 Cor. 5-6; 8-10; cf 2 Thess. 3:6,14f)."

For Paul "the gospel for all," was the guiding principle! This is powerfully expressed in his own words in 1 Cor. 9:19-23!

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 8:1-3

**<sup>1</sup>Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies. <sup>2</sup>If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know; <sup>3</sup> but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him.**

**8:1 "Now concerning things sacrificed to idols"** This is another question (cf. 1 Cor. 7:1,25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1,12) that was asked by the Corinthian church in a letter which they wrote to Paul, brought by Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (cf. 1 Cor. 16:17).

NASB	"things sacrificed to idols"
NKJV	"things offered to idols"
NRSV	"food sacrificed to idols"
TEV	"food offered to idols"
NJB	"food which has been dedicated to false gods"

This is a compound term from *eidōlon*, which means a shape, figure, image, or statue; and *thuō*, which means to kill or to offer a sacrifice. This very term was used to prohibit eating meat offered to an idol in the letter sent to Gentile churches from the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15:29 (cf. Acts 21:25).

- **"we know that we all have knowledge"** Possibly this is
  1. a quote from the letter that the Corinthian church wrote to Paul
  2. a slogan of one of the factious groups
  3. a quote from Paul's earlier preaching, which the Corinthian church had misunderstood
- **"Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies"** Paul agrees with the statements contained in the Corinthian church's letter, but limits the concepts and shows their true meaning and application (this is also true of the false teachers' slogans in chapters 6-7).

Knowledge was one of the aspects of Greek culture in which some in the Corinthian church prided themselves. The problem with knowledge is that it tends to make one competitive and prideful (cf. 1 Cor. 4:6,18,19; 5:2; 8:1; 13:4; 2 Cor. 12:20). See full note at 1 Cor. 4:6. It focuses on the individual, not on the family, the body, the church.

The term "edify" is a building metaphor. Paul often speaks of "building up" or "edifying" the church or individual Christians (cf. Rom. 14:19; 15:2; 1 Cor. 8:1; 10:23; 14:3,5,12,26; 2 Cor. 10:8; 12:19; 13:10; Eph.

4:12,29; 1 Thess. 5:11).

Love is crucial in our Christian freedom. Knowledge will not solve the problem of pride; only self-limiting love can do this. Believers are to pursue that which builds up the church, not that which glorifies gifted individual Christians.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: EDIFY

**8:2 "If"** This is a first class conditional sentence, which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes (cf. 1 Cor. 8:3,5).

▣ **"anyone supposes that he knows anything"** This is a perfect active indicative followed by a perfect infinitive. This reflects the settled arrogance of the Corinthian church (cf. 1 Cor. 3:18).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"he has not yet known as he ought to know"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"he knows nothing yet as he ought to know"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"does not yet have the necessary knowledge"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"really don't know as they ought to know"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"and yet not know it as well as he should"</b>

Paul reveals their lack of spiritual knowledge. Worldly wisdom (i.e., human philosophy) causes divisions and arrogance, but God's knowledge of us (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12; Gal. 4:9) and our knowledge of the gospel free us to serve Him and His people.

**8:3 "but if anyone loves God"** This is a first class conditional sentence. There were those at Corinth who loved God. Notice Paul's emphasis is on love (i.e., present active indicative), not on knowledge (cf. 1 Cor. 13:1-13).

▣ **"he is known by Him"** This may be another example of the slogans of those who claimed to be more enlightened and spiritual. It is very similar to a later Gnostic phrase found in *Gospel of Truth* 19.33. The truly enlightened ones know that there are not divisions between humans, not between

1. Jesus - Gentile
2. slaves - free
3. males - females
4. strong - weak

All barriers are "down" in Christ!

Our knowledge of God is important, but knowledge about God is no substitute for a personal relationship, initiated by God, that issues in our love for one another which expresses our love for Him (cf. Gal. 4:6; 2 Tim. 2:19; 1 John 4:19).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 8:4-6**

**<sup>4</sup>Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one. <sup>5</sup>For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, <sup>6</sup>yet for us there is *but* one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.**

**8:4 "we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world"** There is a word play on the connotations in these verses between the Hebrew concept of "know" as personal relationship (cf. 1 Cor. 8:3; Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5) and the Greek connotation of "know" as facts about something or someone (cf. 1 Cor. 8:1,2,4).

In the OT idols were "empty" or "vain." They were not gods at all (cf. 2 Chr. 13:9; Isa. 37:19; 41:29; Jer. 2:11; Acts 14:15; Gal. 4:8). Paul, later in 1 Corinthians, asserts that demons use people's superstitions and idolatry (cf. 1 Cor. 10:20), but there is no reality to idols!

■ **"there is no God but one"** This is the theological affirmation of monotheism (cf. 1 Tim. 2:5-6). According to biblical revelation there is only one true God (cf. 1 Cor. 8:6; Deut. 4:35,39; Ps. 86:8,10). Often the OT speaks of other "*elohim*" (i.e., spiritual beings), but none like (i.e., in the same category, cf. Exod. 20:2-3; Deut. 32:39) YHWH (cf. Exod. 15:11; Ps. 86:8; 89:6). The Jewish prayer called the *Shema* from Deut. 6:4, is the Jewish affirmation quoted daily and at every worship service asserting the uniqueness and oneness of YHWH (cf. Mark 12:28-29).

## [SPECIAL TOPIC: MONOTHEISM](#)

**8:6 "yet for us there is *but* one God"** This is the theological affirmation of monotheism. See note at 1 Cor. 8:4.

In the history of religion there have been several categories of beliefs about deity.

1. animism, spiritual beings are related to natural processes or objects
2. polytheism, the existence of many gods
3. henotheism, many gods, but only one god for us (i.e., tribe, nation, geographical area)
4. monotheism, the existence of only one God (not the High God of a pantheon)

This text asserts the existence of many spiritual beings (cf. 1 Cor. 8:5), but only one true God (cf. 1 Cor. 8:4, see [SPECIAL TOPIC: MONOTHEISM](#) at 1 Cor. 8:4). For those in the Judeo-Christian tradition there is only one creator/redeemer God who exists in three eternal persons. See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 2:10.

■ **"the Father"** This is a wonderful intimate, personal, familial title for deity. It emphasizes God's immanence. This aspect of God can only be known by His self-revelation, not human philosophy or discovery.

Although this familial title appears in the OT sparsely (cf. Deut. 32:5-6; Isa. 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 31:9,20; Hos. 11:3-4; Mal. 1:6; 2:10), it was Jesus, the Son, who fully revealed this astonishing, intimate, metaphorical analogy (cf. "our Father," Matt. 6:9; 23:9; Eph. 4:6; *Abba*, Mark 14:36). See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:3).

■ **"from whom are all things"** This is affirmation of God as creator (cf. 1 Cor. 11:12; Rom. 11:36; 2 Cor. 5:18; Col. 1:16; Heb. 2:10). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: FIRSTBORN](#) at 1 Cor. 15:20.

■ **"and we exist for Him"** God made the world as a stage for humankind to have fellowship with Himself. Once the results of human rebellion (cf. Genesis 3) have been overcome in our salvation and restoration through Christ, we understand our intended purpose. Once the image of God in mankind is restored through Christ then the intimate, personal fellowship of Eden is restored.

■ **"one Lord, Jesus Christ"** The title "Lord" reflects an OT translation of YHWH, which is the Hebrew verb "to be" (cf. Exod. 3:14, see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 2:8). The Jews were afraid to pronounce this holy name lest they take it in vain, therefore, they substituted the Hebrew term *Adon* or Lord.

Calling Jesus Lord (i.e., *kurios* is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *Adon*) is a way of affirming His deity and oneness with YHWH (cf. Phil. 2:11). The concept of oneness is also significant (cf. Eph. 4:5; 1 Tim. 2:5).

Although Paul does not use *Theos* (i.e., God) for Jesus in this context, he does use it of Jesus in Acts 20:28; Rom. 9:5; and Titus 2:13 and *Theotētus* in Col. 2:9. There can be no doubt that in Paul's mind Jesus is divine. Paul was a strict monotheist. He never qualifies how one God can eternally exist in three personal manifestations, but that is the obvious conclusion. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY](#) at 1 Cor. 2:10.

■ **"by whom are all things, and we exist through Him"** Jesus was the Father's agent in creation (cf. John 1:3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2). This was the role of personified wisdom in Proverbs 8:22-31. Wisdom is feminine in Hebrew (cf. Pro. 8:1-21) because the noun "wisdom" (BDB 315) is a feminine gender noun. In this passage we see the tension between our affirmation of monotheism and the NT revelation of the Trinity. See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 2:10.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 8:7-13**

**7**However not all men have this knowledge; but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. **8**But food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat. **9**But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. **10**For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols? **11**For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died. **12**And so, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. **13**Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble.

**8:7 "However not all men have this knowledge"** In context this refers to the "weaker" and "stronger" Christian (cf. Rom. 14:1,2,14,22-23; 15:1). "Weak" in this context refers to superstition or legalism connected with one's past, unconverted life. This is a sarcastic glance back to 1 Cor. 8:1 and the arrogance of certain factions of the church of Corinth and their emphasis on wisdom and knowledge (cf. 1 Cor. 8:11).

■ **"and their conscience being weak is defiled"** Believers must act in faith on the light we have (cf. Rom. 14:23), even when this knowledge is erroneous or spiritually childish. Believers are only responsible for what they do understand.

Paul uses the term "conscience" often in the Corinthian letters (cf. 1 Cor. 4:4; 8:7,10,12; 10:25,27,28,29; 2 Cor. 1:12; 4:2; 5:11). It refers to that moral inner sense of what is appropriate or inappropriate (cf. Acts 23:1). The conscience can be affected by our past lives, our poor choices, or by the Spirit of God. It is not a flawless guide, but it does determine the boundaries of individual faith. Therefore, to violate our conscience, even if it is in error or weak, is a major faith problem.

The believer's conscience needs to be more and more formed by the Word of God and the Spirit of God (cf. 1 Tim. 3:9). God will judge believers by the light they have (i.e., weak or strong), but all of us need to be open to the Bible and the Spirit for more light and to be growing in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. See fuller note on "conscience" at 1 Cor. 10:25. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: WEAKNESS](#) at 2 Cor. 12:9.

■ **"defiled"** This term originally referred to unclean clothing (cf. Zech. 3:3-4; Jude 23; Rev. 3:4). It came to be used figuratively for moral pollution (cf. Rev. 14:4).

It is surprising that this term is chosen to describe what happens to weak believers who violate their own faith boundaries. God looks at the heart in every situation. Breaking our faith understanding, even if weak or inappropriate, is a serious breach of faith!

**8:8 "But food will not commend us to God"** This shows the faulty theology, both of those who affirm asceticism, or Jewish legalism, as well as those who affirm radical freedom. Neither eating or not eating will present us acceptable to God (cf. Rom. 14:14,23; Mark 7:18-23). Love for God expressed in self-limiting love for other brothers and sisters in Christ is the key to peace and maturity within the Christian fellowship.

■ **"commend"** See Special Topic: Abound at 2 Cor. 2:7.

■ **"if. . .if"** There are two third class conditional phrases in 1 Cor. 8:8, which show potential action.

**8:9**

**NASB, NRSV "But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow becomes a stumbling block to the weak"**

**NKJV "But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours becomes a stumbling block to**

**those who are weak"**

- TEV** "Be careful, however, not to let your freedom of action make those who are weak in the faith fall into sin"
- NJB** "Only be careful that this freedom of yours does not in anyway turn into an obstacle to trip those who are vulnerable"

This is a present active imperative. Christian freedom (i.e., *exousia*, cf. 1 Cor. 9:4,5,6,12,18) must be controlled by love or it becomes a license (cf. 1 Cor. 10:23-33; 13:1-13; Rom. 14:1-15:13). We are our brother's keeper!

This subject of Christian freedom and responsibility is also discussed in Rom. 14:1-15:13. See the Contextual Insights from my commentary on Romans, chapters 14 and 15 at 1 Cor. 6:12.

**8:10 "if"** This is another third class conditional, which means potential action. The grammar of 1 Cor. 8:10 expects a "yes" answer.

- NASB, NKJV** "someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol's temple"
- NRSV** "others see you who possess knowledge, eating in the temple of an idol"
- TEV** "Suppose a person whose conscience is weak in this matter, sees you, who have so-called 'knowledge' eating in the temple of an idol"
- NJB** "Suppose someone sees you who have the knowledge, sitting in the temple of some false god"

This phrase is translated ambiguously in NASB and NKJV. The idiomatic, dynamic equivalent translations of TEV and NJB capture the thought.

The knowledge Paul is referring to goes back to 1 Cor. 8:1-4. Strong believers know that there is only one God (cf. 1 Cor. 8:4). Weak believers are still influenced by the past. Strong believers bend over backwards so as not to offend their weak brothers or sisters in Christ or sincere seekers (cf. 1 Cor. 8:1).

True spiritual strength is not in knowledge only, but in loving actions toward other believers, even weak ones, superstitious ones, legalistic ones, ascetic ones, baby ones! True knowledge makes one a humble steward of the undeserved grace of God in Christ!

▣ **"dining in an idol's temple"** See notes at 1 Cor. 10:14-22.

- NASB** "be strengthened"
- NKJV** "be emboldened to eat"
- NRSV** "be encouraged to the point of eating"
- TEV** "will not this encourage him to eat"
- NJB** "may be encouraged to eat"

This is the term "build up" or "edify" as in verse 1. Here it is used in either

1. a sarcastic sense about the destructive influence of the stronger brother's actions
2. a possible quote from the Corinthian letter related to how to help those with weak faith

**8:11**

- NASB** "For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died"
- NKJV** "And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died"
- NRSV** "So by your knowledge those weak believers for whom Christ died are destroyed"
- TEV** "And so this weak person, your brother for whom Christ died, will perish because of your 'knowledge'"
- NJB** "And then it would be through your knowledge that this brother for whom Christ

## **died, vulnerable as he is, has been lost"**

The order of the Greek sentence emphasizes "your" (i.e., this so called superior knowledge you possess). When one Christian's freedom destroys another Christian, that freedom is a disaster (cf. Rom. 14:15,20).

This is a sarcastic comment as is 1 Cor. 8:10. The Corinthian church was proud of their knowledge (8:1). Here Paul shows knowledge can be a disaster. Paul always admonishes the "stronger" brother to have patience and concern for the "weaker" brother, because of Christ's love for them both.

The terms "ruined," "perish," or "destroyed" must be interpreted in light of Rom. 14:22-23, where it means "causing another to sin," which is analogous to the use of the term here. This is not ultimate destruction, but a temporary, yet serious, set-back in spiritual growth.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: DESTRUCTION (APOLLUMI)**

**8:12 "by sinning against the brethren. . .you sin against Christ"** This is a powerful statement. Our love for God is shown in our love for one another. Several times in the NT, people's actions against believers are seen as actions against Christ (cf. Acts 9:4,5) and people's actions for believers are seen as actions for Christ (cf. Matt. 25:40,45).

**8:13 "if"** This is a first class conditional sentence. Food issues were causing some believers to violate their personal faith assumptions.

■ **"stumble"** This is the Greek term that was used of trapping animals. Literally it referred to "a baited trap-stick."

■ **"I will never eat meat again"** This verse has a very strong triple negative construction (cf. Rom. 14:21). Freedom in Christ should edify, not destroy. The unstated implication is that Paul will not eat meat sacrificed to an idol or in an idol's temple. This does not imply that Paul became a vegetarian.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. It is obvious that this particular problem is not a contemporary one; however, the universal principle here is very significant. State that principle in your own words.
2. How does one relate demon activity to world religions in our day?
3. If there is only one God, how can Jesus be divine?
4. Explain the relationship between Christian freedom and Christian responsibility.
5. Define "weak" and "strong" believers.
6. Should all believers be vegetarians?

# 1 CORINTHIANS 9

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
				Food Offered to False Gods (8:1-11:1)
The Rights of an Apostle	A Pattern of Self-denial	Paul's Rights As an Apostle	Rights and Duties of an Apostle	Paul Invokes His Own Example
9:1-2	9:1-18	9:1-2	9:1-2	9:1-14
9:3-12a		9:3-7	9:3-7	
		9:8-12a	9:8-12a	
9:12b-18		9:12b-14	9:12b-14	
		Paul is Free to Waive His Apostolic Rights		
	Saving All Men	9:15-18	9:15-18	9:15-18
9:19-23	9:19-23	9:19-23	9:19-22	9:19-23
	Striving for a Crown		9:23-27	
9:24-27	9:24-27	9:24-27		9:24-27

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### ***FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL***

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

#### **CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 9:1-27**

A. This chapter is related to chapter 8 in the sense of seeking a balance between Christian rights and responsibility in love (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13 and 1 Cor. 8:1-11 and 13:1-13).

B. It is obvious from the context that Paul's leadership was being attacked by some group or groups in



the church at Corinth.

1. rhetorically trained Jewish itinerant teachers
2. incipient Gnostics

C. There is a variety of personal pronouns (and verb forms) used in this chapter.

1. First person singular, in 1 Cor. 9:1-3,6,8,15-23,26-27
2. First person plural, in 1 Cor. 9:4-5,10-11,25
  - a. since Barnabas is mentioned specifically in 1 Cor. 9:6 he is probably to be assumed in 1 Cor. 9:4-5
  - b. in 1 Cor. 9:10-11 Paul seems to include Apollos and possibly other visiting preachers, even Peter
  - c. often Paul used the editorial plural "we" to speak of himself
3. Second person plural, in 1 Cor. 9:13,24 refers to the Corinthians who claims such "full" knowledge of the things of God
4. Paul's use of pronouns is notoriously difficult and the source of many Greek manuscript variants

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 9:1-2

**<sup>1</sup>Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? <sup>2</sup>If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.**

**9:1 "Am I not free"** There is a series of questions in this context. USB<sup>4</sup> has fourteen, NASB has sixteen, NKJV has fifteen, NRSV has sixteen, TEV has fourteen, and NJB has twelve. It is uncertain if these are statements or questions (cf. Ellingworth and Hatton, *A Handbook on Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians*, p. 193). The questions in 1 Cor. 9:1-2 all expect a "yes" answer. The question in 1 Cor. 9:6,7,10, and 11 are stated so as to expect a "no" answer.

This is the use of "free" in the sense of spiritual freedom in Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 9:19; 10:29), not Roman freedom (i.e., political rights). In Christ the believer, now indwelt by the Spirit, now informed by the gospel, has the freedom "not to"! The power of the "fallen self," the "me first" of Genesis 3 has been replaced with "others first"! Freedom in the gospel is not "freedom to. . .," but "freedom no to. . ."! It is very different from political freedom which is really the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Fallen humanity cannot handle "freedom"! Neither can immature believers!

■ **"Have I not seen Jesus our Lord"** This is Perfect active indicative, which implies that a past action has resulted in a current state of being. Paul's apostleship was being attacked because he was not one of the original Twelve. The qualifications for an apostle were that one had been with Jesus during His earthly life and had seen the resurrection (cf. Acts 1:15-26). Paul asserts that he had seen the resurrected Christ (cf. Acts 9:3,17,27; 22:14; 1 Cor. 15:8). Paul's call was by a special act of Christ for a special mission to the Gentiles, which demanded special revelation (cf. Acts 18:9; 23:11).

Paul not only encountered Jesus personally on the road to Damascus, but several times during his ministry Jesus, or an angel as Jesus' representative, appeared to him to encourage him (cf. Acts 18:9-11; 22:17-21), in Acts 27:23.

■ **"Are you not my work in the Lord"** The evidence of Paul's apostleship was the numerous churches he had formed, of which Corinth was one (cf. 1 Cor. 4:15; 2 Cor. 3:1-3).

**9:2 "If"** This is a first class conditional sentence, which shows that Paul's authority was rejected by several different factions in the early church (cf. Acts 15 and Galatians).

■ **"for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord"** A seal in the ancient world was a warm blob of wax into which a signet ring was pressed to seal a letter or package. It was an assurance that the contents had not been opened; it showed who owned the contents; and it showed the genuineness of the contents, that it was sent by the right person. This type of seal became a metaphor of Christian certainty (cf. John 3:33; Rom. 4:11).

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: SEAL**

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 9:3-7**

**<sup>3</sup>My defense to those who examine me is this: <sup>4</sup>Do we not have a right to eat and drink? <sup>5</sup>Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? <sup>6</sup>Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working? <sup>7</sup>Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock?**

**9:3 "My defense"** This term (i.e., *apologia*) was used of a "legal defense" (cf. Acts 19:33; 22:1; 25:16; Phil. 1:7,17; 1 Pet. 3:15). Syntactically 1 Cor. 9:3 may go with 1 Cor. 9:2 or 1 Cor. 9:4. The USB<sup>4</sup>, NRSV, and TEV show it to go with 1 Cor. 9:4, while the NKJV and NJB do not break the paragraph at either point.

■ **"to those who examine me"** Paul was being criticized by some group or theological faction at Corinth (cf. 1 Cor. 2:15; 4:3). They were claiming

1. that he was not a true apostle
2. that he changed the Jerusalem apostles' message
3. that he only preached for money

**These charges are not specifically stated, but assumed from the historical setting and from the subjects Paul chose to address.**

**9:4** This begins a series of questions (cf. 1 Cor. 9:4-7) where Paul asserts his right as an Apostle to be supported by the local churches. However he personally chose not to exercise his rights (cf. 1 Cor. 9:15,18; 1 Thess. 2:6), but he affirms the rights of other Christian workers.

**9:5 "to take along. . . even as the rest of the apostles"** The context is not directly asserting the right of the Apostles to have wives, although this is surely implied, but the right of the Apostles to have the church support them and their wives.

The term "apostles" can refer to the Twelve or the wider usage of the term (cf. Acts 14:4,14; Rom. 16:6-7; 1 Cor. 4:9; Gal. 1:9; Eph. 4:11; Phil. 2:25; 1 Thess. 2:6). Because Peter is named separately, the latter group is implied. It is also possible that a group (i.e., one of the factions) in this church was elevating Peter's Apostleship (cf. 1 Cor. 1:12; 3:22).

**NASB, NKJV,**  
**NRSV, NIV**     **"a believing wife"**  
**TEV, NJB,**  
**NEB**           **"a Christian wife"**

In Greek there is a double pair of nouns, "a sister, a wife," which was idiomatic for "a believing wife." The historical problem is how is this related to

1. the women who accompanied Jesus and the Apostolic group and helped them (cf. Matt. 27:55; Mark 15:40-41)
2. the woman discussed in 1 Cor. 7:36-38 (i.e., a daughter or a virgin companion or a fiancée)
3. the ministry of the wives of church leaders similar to deaconesses of Rom. 16:1 or the "widows roll"

of the Pastorals (cf. 1 Tim. 3:11; 5:9-10)

Probably all of the original Twelve were married because singleness among Jews was very rare. Jews would marry because of the commandment in Gen. 1:28; 9:1,7.

■ **"even as the rest of the apostles"** The term "apostle" has several connotations in the NT.

1. those who were called by Jesus and followed Him during His earthly life
2. Paul called in a special vision on the road to Damascus
3. an ongoing gift in the church (cf. Eph. 4:11), which included several people

The textual issue here is what do we make of Paul's list.

1. the rest of the apostles
2. the brothers of the Lord
3. Cephas
4. Barnabas and Paul

■ **"the brothers of the Lord"** Jerome (a.d. 346-420) believed these were Jesus' cousins; Epiphanius (a.d. 310-403) said they were children from Joseph's previous marriage. Both of these interpretations are obviously related to the developing Roman Catholic presuppositions about Mary and not to the NT. Mary had further children after Jesus (cf. Matt. 12:26; 13:55; Mark 6:3; John 2:12; 7:3,5,10; Acts 1:14; Gal. 1:19).

It does imply that Jesus' half brothers, who were active in the church, were considered leadership. As a matter of fact, one of Jesus' relatives was the leader of the Jerusalem Church for several generations during the first century, starting with James.

■ **"Cephas"** This is the Aramaic form of the Greek *Petros*. It meant a large boulder or rock (cf. Matt. 8:14; John 1:42). Cephas was married (cf. Mark. 1:30).

Paul calls Peter "Cephas" in 1 Cor. 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5 and Gal. 1:18; 2:9. But in Gal. 2:7,8,11,14 he calls him Peter. There seems to be no theological distinction, rather, probably literary variety. He is called Peter everywhere in the Gospels except John 1:42.

It is interesting that the church has made so much of the connection between Peter (i.e., *Petros*) and "this rock" (i.e., *petra*) in Matt. 16:18. Jesus spoke Aramaic and there is no distinction at all between the two terms in that language.

**9:6 "Barnabas"** Barnabas is also called an apostle, which shows a wider use of the term (cf. Eph. 4:11) than simply the initial Twelve (cf. Acts 14:14, 18:5).

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: BARNABAS**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"not have a right to refrain from working"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"who have no right to refrain from working"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"who have no right to refrain from working for a living"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"the only ones who have to work for our living"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"the only ones who have no right to stop working"</b>

The rabbis asserted the dignity of manual labor. All rabbis had to have a secular job because it was considered sinful to receive money for teaching YHWH's truths (cf. Pirke Abot 1:13; 4:7). Paul chose not to take advantage of his rights as a preacher of the gospel (1 Cor. 9:18), possibly because of (1) his Jewish heritage or (2) the attacks of those who claimed he manipulated people for money (cf. Acts 20:33; 2 Cor. 11:7-12; 12:14-18).

**9:7-14** In these verses there are several examples from everyday life used as analogies to show the appropriateness of gospel workers receiving a living wage from the churches they served (cf. Rom. 15:27): (1) a soldier, v.7; (2) a vineyard owner, 1 Cor. 9:7; (3) a shepherd, 1 Cor. 9:7; (4) the ox, 1 Cor. 9:9; (5) a plowman and thresher, 1 Cor. 9:10; (6) a sower, 1 Cor. 9:11; and (7) a priest, 1 Cor. 9:13.

<sup>8</sup>I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things? <sup>9</sup>For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing." God is not concerned about oxen, is He? <sup>10</sup>Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to *thresh* in hope of sharing *the crops*. <sup>11</sup>If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? <sup>12</sup>If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ. <sup>13</sup>Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the *food* of the temple, *and* those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar? <sup>14</sup>So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.

9:8

NASB	"according to human judgment"
NKJV	"as a <i>mere</i> man"
NRSV	"on human authority"
TEV	"to limit myself to these everyday examples"
NJB	"merely worldly wisdom"

The Greek text has "not according to man" (i.e., *anthrōpos*, which refers to humans). Paul uses these contrasting phrases several times (cf. 1 Cor. 3:3; 9:8; 15:32; Rom. 3:5; Gal. 1:11; 3:15). It was his idiomatic way of contrasting earthly human ways with his new Spirit-led (i.e., Jesus' teaching or Spirit's insight) way of thinking and acting.

**9:9 "it is written in the Law of Moses"** The Jewish way of settling the question was with an authoritative quote, if possibly from the writings of Moses (i.e., Gen. - Deut.); therefore, Paul quotes Deut. 25:4 (cf. 1 Tim. 5:18).

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL'S VIEWS OF THE MOSAIC LAW](#)

▣ **"You shall not muzzle the ox"** This is a quote from the Septuagint of Deut. 25:4. The term "muzzle" is *phimōsies*, which occurs in the Greek manuscripts P<sup>46</sup>, κ, A, B<sup>3</sup>, C, D<sup>b,c</sup>, K, L, P, and most later minuscule manuscripts. This is also the term used in Paul's quote of the same text in 1 Tim. 5:18.

However, the UBS<sup>4</sup> editors preferred the variant *kēmōseis*, which also means "muzzle," found in MSS B<sup>\*</sup>, D<sup>\*</sup>, F, and G. Their reasoning was that the less-used word (possibly a slang term) was probably original because the other one was expected from the Septuagint and the quote in 1 Timothy so why would a scribe have changed it? The term chosen as original makes no interpretive difference, but it does illustrate the textual principles by which modern textual critics evaluate Koine Greek manuscripts in an attempt to recover the original wording of the autograph. See Appendix Two.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: TEXTUAL CRITICISM](#)

NASB	"God is not concerned about oxen, is He"
NKJV	"Is it oxen God is concerned about"
NRSV	"Is it about oxen God is concerned"
TEV	"Now, is God concerned about oxen"
NJB	"Is it about oxen that God is concerned here"

Verses 9 and 10 show how an OT text was expanded (i.e., to draw out the significance or application) to meet the needs of a new day (cf. Rom. 4:23-24; 15:4; 1 Cor. 9:10; 10:6,11). The OT exhibits special care for animals (cf. Exod. 21:33,35; 27:10-13; 23:5,12; Deut. 5:14; 22:4). Jesus alludes to this care of animals

(cf. Luke 13:15; 14:5, where He applies the "light and heavy" rabbinical principle). This is not to imply that God does not care about animals, but that He also cares about people, and in this context, gospel workers (cf. 1 Tim. 5:18). This is similar to Matt. 6:26-34. Jesus uses God's provisions in nature as a way of asserting God's provision for humanity made in His image. This was a typical rabbinical technique known as "lesser to greater" or "light and heavy," which was one of Hillel's principles (cf. Aboth. de Rab. Nathan XXXVII and Tosefta Sanhedrin c. 7). Remember, Gamaliel was Paul's rabbinical teacher (cf. Acts 5:34; 22:3). See Appendix Three (Rabbinical Hermeneutics) in Hebrews at [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org).

**9:10**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"Or does He say <i>it</i> altogether for us? For our sakes no doubt, <i>this</i> is written"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"Or does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was indeed written for our sake"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"Didn't he really mean us when he said that? Of course that was written for us"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"or is it not said entirely for our sake? Clearly it was written for our sake"</b>

Several times Paul asserts that the OT was written as an example for NT believers (cf. Rom. 4:23-24; 15:4; 1 Cor. 9:10; 10:6,11). Paul's rabbinical training taught him to apply the Law to current situations. Here he is using the rabbinical argument called "light and heavy" or the "lesser to the greater."

In the context of Deut. 25:4 this application would have been unknown and unnecessary. The hermeneutical question is, "Was Paul using the original intent of the inspired writer?" The answer is clearly, no! But is he using a valid application of a principle? Paul is inspired! He sees truth at a level we cannot! However, we are not inspired, but illumined by the Spirit. Modern interpreters cannot reproduce the hermeneutical method of the NT authors. Therefore, it is best to let them speak, but restrict ourselves to the historical-grammatical approach, which seeks the intent of the original author as the determinant meaning, but allowing many applications which are related to the original intent! See the Special Topics, Illumination and Inspiration, at the beginning to 1 Corinthians 2.

**9:11 "If. . .if"** These are both first class conditional sentences, which are assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes.

The real question is who are the others who claimed the right to have the Corinthian church support them? Was it traveling false teachers or those who were part of the local leadership? It probably refers to the other local leaders who would not allow the church to support them (cf. J. B. Phillips translation).

▣ **"sowed. . .reap"** The OT agricultural setting of harvest becomes a spiritual principle (cf. Job. 4:8; Prov. 22:8; Hos. 8:7; Hag. 1:6; John 4:37; 1 Cor. 9:11; 2 Cor. 9:6,10; Gal. 6:7-9).

▣ **"material things"** This is literally *ta sarkika*, "the fleshly things," but not in a sinful sense, rather in a physical sense as that which humans need to survive in this world (i.e., water, food, shelter, clothing, etc. cf. Rom. 15:27).

**9:12 "If"** This is another first class conditional sentence. Other leaders were exercising the right (i.e., *exousia*) to be materially compensated.

▣ **"do we not more"** This is an allusion to the fact that Paul started this church. He was their spiritual father (cf. 1 Cor. 4:15). Now they were rejecting his spiritual rights (1 Cor. 9:11,14; Rom. 15:27), but allowing others to demand material compensation.

▣ **"but we endure all things"** This is a metaphorical use of the Greek word for "roof," meaning "to cover," "to conceal," or "to endure" (cf. 1 Cor. 13:7).

▣ **"hindrance"** This was a strong military term. The word was used for breaking up a road to keep an enemy from using it.

▣ **"the gospel of Christ"** The term "gospel" is literally "good news." It involves several aspects.

1. the initial bad news of mankind's sin and rebellion
2. God's gracious provisions to deal with human sin (i.e., the death of Christ)
3. the open invitation for any or all to accept God's provision by repentance and faith

This good news about Jesus involves three aspects.

1. It is a person to welcome (i.e., Jesus).
2. It is truths about that person to believe (i.e., the NT).
3. It is a life which emulates that person (i.e., the Christlike life).

If any one of these three aspects is depreciated the gospel is damaged!

**9:13 "those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple"** This refers to OT priests and Levites (cf. Lev. 7:6,8-10,14,28-36; Deut. 18:1). Paul used a term that was used in the Septuagint for priestly work (cf. Num. 3:7; 8:15) as well as work in general (cf. Gen. 2:5,15; 3:23; 4:2,12; 29:27). Paul saw his gospel ministry as priestly service (cf. Rom. 15:16).

**9:14 "So also the Lord directed"** This must refer to Jesus' words in Matt. 10:10 and Luke 10:7. Paul always tried to allude to Jesus' teachings on a subject when possible.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 9:15-18**

**<sup>15</sup>But I have used none of these things. And I am not writing these things so that it will be done so in my case; for it would be better for me to die than have any man make my boast an empty one. <sup>16</sup>For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel. <sup>17</sup>For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me. <sup>18</sup>What then is my reward? That, when I preach the gospel, I may offer the gospel without charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.**

**9:15 "But I have used none of these things"** This is a perfect middle indicative. Paul never received compensation from Corinth, probably because there were those in this church who used anything to attack him. He did accept money from Philippi (cf. 1 Cor. 4:15) and Thessalonika (cf. 2 Cor. 11:9), but only later, not while he was there.

■ **" for it would be better for me to die"** What a strong statement related to accepting or refusing compensation. There is also a grammatical problem at this point that caused several Greek manuscript variants. Paul is very emotional about this subject. He took money and help from Philippi (cf. Phil. 4:15) and Thessalonika (cf. 2 Cor. 11:9), why not Corinth? Obviously because of this he is being personally attacked by some group, faction, or false teacher.

There is a suspension of Paul's thought in mid-sentence after "than." Notice how the NRSV and the NET Bible put a dash, while NJB puts dots, attempting to show the grammatical break. How this break affects the next phrase is uncertain. It seems he meant to assert that he would not take any money from the Corinthian church, but he leaves it unsaid! This is a highly emotional passage. Paul is hurting, reacting, pleading, not just teaching a point. His life illustrates the principle (i.e., all, everything, every time, with everyone for the gospel, cf. 2 Cor. 4:5-12; 6:3-13; 11:16-33)!

It is so hard to interpret Paul's letter when we do not have (1) the letter the church wrote to him or (2) specific knowledge about the local situation.

**9:16 "if. . .if"** These are both third class conditional sentences, which mean potential action.

■ **"I am under compulsion; woe is me if I do not preach the gospel"** Paul felt compelled to preach because of Christ's special call on the road to Damascus (cf. Acts 9:15; Rom. 1:14). He was like Jeremiah of old (cf. Jer. 20:9). He had to share the gospel (cf. Acts 4:20).

**9:17 "if. . .if"** These are both First class conditional sentences, which are assumed to be true from the

author's perspective or for his literary purposes.

■ **"I have a stewardship entrusted to me"** This is a perfect passive indicative. Gospel workers have both a covenant privilege and an awesome responsibility (cf. 1 Cor. 4:1; Gal. 2:7; Eph. 3:2; Col. 1:25). See fuller note on stewardship at 1 Cor. 4:1.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 9:19-23**

**<sup>19</sup>For though I am free from all *men*, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. <sup>20</sup>To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; <sup>21</sup>to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law. <sup>22</sup>To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. <sup>23</sup>I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.**

**9:19 "For though I am free from all *men*"** This is the emphasis on proper Christian freedom (cf. 1 Cor. 9:1; 10:29; Gal. 5:13). Martin Luther has said, "A Christian man is free lord over all things and subject to nobody. A Christian man is a ministering servant in all things, subject to everybody." See notes from Romans 14 and 15 at 1 Cor. 6:12.

■ **"I have made myself a slave to all"** This is the emphasis on proper Christian responsibility (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13; 2 Cor. 4:5). Because Paul was a slave of Christ, he was a slave of all who Christ came to serve and save, both the believer and the unbeliever. See Special Topic: Servant leadership at 1 Cor. 4:1.

■ **"so that I may win more"** This is the term "gain" (i.e., *kerdainō*). It is used in a variety of senses in the NT. In this context Paul uses the term in an evangelistic sense (cf. 1 Cor. 9:19,20,21,22 and 1 Pet. 3:1). This is the proper evangelistic goal of all of our actions (cf. 1 Cor. 9:22-23). Evangelistic intentionality in every area of our lives, not a particular methodology, is the key to a proper balance between Christian freedom and Christian responsibility.

**9:20** This verse expresses Paul's intentionality. Paul's main concern was evangelism (cf. 1 Cor. 9:20-23; 10:31-33). Therefore, he circumcised Timothy so as to work with Jews (cf. Acts 16:3), but would not circumcise Titus (cf. Gal. 2:3-5) so as not to compromise the freedom of the gospel among Gentiles.

■ **"though not being myself under the Law"** It is interesting that the Textus Receptus (i.e., known as the Western Text), which is known for its expansionistic tendencies, does not include this obviously original phrase. It is found in the Greek manuscripts P<sup>46</sup>,  $\kappa$ , A, B, C, D\*, F, G, P and the Vulgate, Syriac, Coptic, and Armenian translations. We must relate Paul's words here to Jesus' words in Matt. 5:17-20. Paul is not doing away with the Mosaic Law, but seeing its true fulfilling in Christ. The Law is not the means of salvation, but it is still (1) a true revelation and (2) a reflection of God's will for humanity in society. It functions in progressive sanctification, but not justification. See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 9:9.

**9:21 "but under the law of Christ"** This is a NT way of referring to the New Covenant of Jer. 31:31-34. There are several different ways it is phrased by Paul and James ("the law of the Spirit of life," Rom. 8:2; "the law of Christ," Gal. 6:2; "the perfect law, the law of liberty," James 1:25 and 2:12; "the royal law," James 2:8).

**9:22 "To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak"** The meaning of "weak" is uncertain here because it has been used in this context for over-scrupulous or superstitious Christians (cf. 1 Cor. 8:7,10). It possibly relates to superstitious pagans (cf. 1 Cor. 9:21). The Williams' translation even

translates it as "the over-scrupulous," which is a good rendering. See Special Topic: Weakness at 2 Cor. 12:9.

▣ **"I have become all things to all men so that I may by all means save some"** Notice the number of "alls" (i.e., forms of *pas*) in this phrase. Paul's inner self has been transformed from self-centered to gospel-centered. He is free to serve Christ, to serve the gospel, to serve the Kingdom (cf. Rom. 6:11; 7:4). Flexibility, intentionality, and love are crucial aspects of Paul's life and ministry!

Paul's mind was always on evangelism (cf. Rom. 11:14; 1 Cor. 1:21; 7:16; 10:31-33; 1 Tim. 1:15). However, it is sad to say that the last phrase gives a hint that most who heard him did not respond in faith to his message. Why some hear (with spiritual ears) and some do not, is the mystery of election and free will!

**9:23** This is a summary verse, a transition verse. It can go with 1 Cor. 9:19-22 or 24-27 or stand alone. This verse is not advocating a salvation by works. Paul is not saved because he evangelizes. He does it because he has accepted the gospel and knows its peace and urgency.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 9:24-27**

**<sup>24</sup>Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but *only* one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. <sup>25</sup>Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then *do it* to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. <sup>26</sup>Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; <sup>27</sup>but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.**

**9:25 "Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things"** Paul is using athletic metaphors from the Isthmian games held in Corinth every two years. The emphasis here is on the supreme effort used by competing athletes, not half-hearted attempts (cf. Heb. 12:1-3). The Christian does not compete to win salvation, but because he has experienced salvation.

We have won the race in Christ, now run the race for Christ!

▣ **"a perishable wreath"** The winners of the Corinthian's athletic contest received wreaths of pine (at Athens an olive wreath; at Delphi a laurel wreath), which soon withered. Believers receive the crown of (1) rejoicing (cf. 1 Thess. 2:19); (2) righteousness (cf. 2 Tim. 4:8); (3) life (cf. James 1:12; Rev. 2:10); and (4) glory (cf. 1 Pet. 5:4). These are wreaths that never fade. Should believers' commitment and enthusiasm be any less than athletes? They strive for that which cannot last. We strive for that which cannot fade!

**9:26-27 "I run. . .I box. . .beating"** These are athletic metaphors to illustrate the need for rigid self control and discipline. The Christian life does have some rules and requirements. These relate to rewards, not salvation. Paul must have enjoyed the sporting events of his day, he uses them often as metaphors for the Christian life.

#### **SPECIAL TOPIC: DEGREES OF REWARDS AND PUNISHMENT**

**9:27 "I discipline my body"** This term, discipline, literally refers to being hit in the face just below the eyes. It is used figuratively in Luke 18:5.

Paul was serious about self-control in the Christian life. The body is not evil, but it is the battleground of temptation. If believers do not control the flesh/body it will control them (cf. Rom. 8:1-11). This is not an easy one-time victory, but a long-term marathon of self-discipline for the cause of Christ. Self-control is the final virtue of the fruit of the Spirit in Gal. 5:23.

The term "body" (*sōma*) refers to Paul's entire person. It is not one of three aspects of mankind. It often stands for the whole person (cf. 1 Cor. 7:4; 13:3; Rom. 12:2; Phil. 1:20). The Bible presents mankind as a unity (cf. Gen. 2:7), not a dichotomy or trichotomy (cf. George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*,



pp. 464-466. See fuller note at 1 Cor. 7:34.

**NASB, NKJV** "so that. . .I myself will not be disqualified"  
**NRSV** "I myself should not be disqualified"  
**TEV** "to keep myself from being disqualified"  
**NJB** "I, myself may be disqualified"

This term "disqualified" is a metaphor related to breaking the rules of the athletic games and thereby being unable to win the contest (cf. 1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7). It is from the root "to test" with a view toward approval (i.e., *dokimazōi*), but with the alpha privative, which negates it (cf. 2 Cor. 13:5).

This does not refer to Paul's salvation (although it is used in this sense in 2 Tim. 3:8); even though the previous paragraph seems to (cf. 1 Cor. 9:19-23). This would violate too many other doctrinal passages by Paul, especially in Romans and Galatians. He is discussing in this paragraph his fear of being undisciplined and being rejected as a proclaimer of the gospel. The NT records several who were disqualified (cf. 1 Cor. 15:12; 1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 4:10). Paul wanted evangelistic fruit from converts and churches.

The training of young men for Greek games is mentioned in (1) *Ars Poetica*, 412 and (2) *Ad Martyres*, 3. It entailed ten months of strenuous physical, dietary, and social restrictions and regimens. Yet there is another valid way of viewing this text (cf. *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, by Kaiser, Davids, Bruce and Branch):

"In so writing the author strikes the balance found throughout the New Testament. The New Testament authors write out of an experience of the grace of Christ and a firm conviction that they are on their way to a greater inheritance in heaven. At the same time, they write with a concern that they or their readers could apostatize and thus lose what they already have. So long as people are following Christ, then the New Testament authors never express any hope that without repentance such people will enter heaven. This is a sobering, but not a fear-producing, type of tension seen in Paul (1 Cor 9:27; Gal 5:2, 7-10; Phil 3:12; 2 Tim 4:7, sometimes speaking of the tension in his own life and sometimes speaking of his concern for others), James (James 5:20, the purpose of the letter being to 'save [a sinner, meaning a believer who has turned to the world] from death'), Jude (Jude 23) and John (1 Jn 5:16-17 KJV, the emphasis being on praying for people before they commit the 'sin unto death'). The call to the modern reader is to pay attention to the warning and 'to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised' (Heb 6:12) so that the author would say of us as well, 'We are confident of better things in your case—things that accompany salvation'" (p. 683).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How is chapter 9 related to chapter 8?
2. Is it proper for a preacher to receive support from the church?  
If so, why did Paul not allow this church to support him?
3. How can Paul act differently toward different groups and not be considered a hypocrite?
4. In verses 24-27 the athletic metaphor is emphasized. How does this metaphor apply to our Christian lives?

# 1 CORINTHIANS 10

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
				Food Offered to False Gods (8:1-11:1)
Warning Against Idolatry 10:1-13	Old Testament Examples 10:1-13	A Warning Against Over Confidence 10:1-5 10:6-13	Warning Against Idols 10:1-5 10:6-10 10:11	A Warning and the Lessons of Israel's History 10:1-13
	Flee from Idolatry 10:14-22	Application: Sacrifices Idols Again 10:14-22	10:12-13 10:14-17 10:18-22	Sacrificial Feasts: No Compromise with Idolatry 10:14-22
Do All to the Glory of God 10:23-11:1	All to the Glory of God 10:23-11:1	Principles: Our Freedom and Responsibility for Others 10:23-30 10:31-11:1	10:23-24 10:25-26 10:27-29a 10:29b-30 10:31-11:1	Food Sacrificed to Idols: Practical Solutions 10:23-11:1

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph

4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 10:1-11:1

- A. Chapters 8 through 10 are integrally related in their attempt to bring balance to the discussion of Christian freedom versus Christian responsibility in love. Paul does not focus on hard and fast rules, but on the priorities of interpersonal relationships that strengthen believers and draw unbelievers to Jesus.
- B. Paul's discussion of the Lord's Supper, beginning in 1 Cor. 10:14 and continuing through 1 Cor. 10:22, is a foreshadowing of the fuller discussion in 1 Cor. 11:17-34.
- C. Paul possibly addresses the "weak" believers in 1 Cor. 10:14-22 and the "strong" believers in 1 Cor. 10:23-33. If this is not the structure, one wonders how these two paragraphs do not contradict each other: 1 Cor. 10:14-22, don't eat sacrificial food; 1 Cor. 10:23-33, eat if it is not questioned. Possibly the first refers to a public meal at a pagan temple and the second a private meal at home.
- D. The United Bible Societies' *Handbook on Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians*, by Ellingworth and Hatton has an interesting outline of 1 Cor. 10:1-13.
- "The general structure is as follows:
- I. Introduction-verse 1a.
  - II. Positive aspects.
    - A. Four positive examples from the Old Testament-verses 1b-4a-the last example being expanded in verse 4b.
    - B. Conclusions drawn from the positive examples-verse 5.
    - C. Application to the readers-verse 6a.
  - III. Negative aspects.
    - A. Five negative Old Testament examples-verses 6b-10.
    - B. Application to the readers-verses 11-13.

The word **all** is repeated five times in verses 1-4, giving great emphasis to the fact that all the people of Israel shared God's protection and blessings during the exodus and the following years of wandering in the desert. **All** contrasts with **most of them** in verse 5 and with **some of them**, which is repeated four times in verses 7-10" (p. 214).

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-5

**<sup>1</sup>For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; <sup>2</sup>and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; <sup>3</sup>and all ate the same spiritual food; <sup>4</sup>and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. <sup>5</sup>Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness.**

**10:1 "For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren"** This phrase is a literary technique used often by Paul to introduce a conclusion (cf. Rom. 1:13; 11:25; 1 Cor. 10:1; 12:1; 2 Cor. 1:8; 1 Thess. 4:13).

■ **"our fathers"** This reflects (1) a believing Jewish element in the Church or (2) NT Gentiles becoming grafted into the natural olive tree, Israel (cf. Rom. 10; Gal. 6:16), and are now one in Christ (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13).

- **"all. . .all"** This inclusive term (i.e., *pantes*) is used twice in 1 Cor. 10:1 and once in 1 Cor. 10:2,3, and 4. It is a way to emphasize the unity of all Israelites in the experience of God's grace and judgment, called the Wilderness Wandering Period (i.e., Numbers).
- **"the cloud"** This refers to the unique symbol of the presence of YHWH. It was called by the rabbis the *shekinah* cloud of glory (cf. Exod. 13:21-22, 14:19). The Hebrew word *shekinah* meant "to dwell with." YHWH was with His people during this period of judgment in such intimate and caring ways that the rabbis began to call this the "honeymoon" period between YHWH and Israel.
- **"all passed through the sea"** This is an allusion to YHWH's splitting of the Red (literally "reed" or "weed") Sea. Today scholars are uncertain as to which specific body of water this refers. The same term, *yam suph* is used in the OT to refer to (1) the Gulf of Aqaba (cf. Exod. 21:4; Deut. 2:1; 1 Kgs. 9:26; Jer. 49:21) or (2) the Indian Ocean. Apparently it referred to the mysterious waters to the south. It is interesting that "water" is not said to have been created by God in Genesis 1. Often the Mesopotamian creation myths speak of the waters (i.e., salt and fresh) as gods who desired human destruction. YHWH delivers His people from watery chaos and defeat.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE RED SEA**

**10:2 "were baptized into Moses"** The Greek manuscripts vary between passive voice (i.e., MSS  $\kappa$ , A, C, D) and middle voice (i.e., MS B). It seems to me the middle voice is contextually appropriate in emphasizing the volitional decision of the Israelites to follow Moses and the historical fact the Jewish proselyte baptism was self administered. This is an unusual phrase, found only here in the NT. It implies a parallel between the responsibility and privilege of the Mosaic covenant, and our new covenant in Christ; both are from God and in some ways are similar. Here baptism is used as a symbol for one who follows.

There is a rabbinical tradition going back to Hillel (cf. b Ker 9a; bYeb 46a) which relates proselyte baptism to the Red Sea event. See Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, pp. 102-103.

**10:3 "spiritual food"** This refers both to manna (cf. Exod. 16) and quail (cf. Exod. 16:13; Num. 11:31-32), which were God's supernatural provisions during the wilderness wandering period.

**10:4 "same spiritual drink"** This refers to the miraculous provision of water (Exod. 17:6; Num. 20:8ff).

- **"they were drinking from a spiritual rock"** Rock is a title for YHWH in the OT which emphasizes His strength and permanence (cf. Deut. 32:4,15; Ps. 18:2; 19:14). It is also used of the Messianic Kingdom as a destroying force (cf. Dan. 2:45).

- **"which followed them"** These seem to refer to a rabbinical legend based on Exod. 17:6 and Num. 20:11ff, that the rock followed the Israelites and that it was the Messiah. This tradition is specifically mentioned in the Koran.

- **"and the rock was Christ"** This is a rabbinical typology (the personification of the rock may have come from Num. 21:17 or Deut. 32:4,15,18,30, cf. Targum Onkelos on Numbers 21). God provided life-giving water during the wilderness wandering period. Paul sees an analogy between God's provision then and God's life-giving provision now. Paul's theology viewed Christ as pre-existent and as the Father's agent of life and blessing. Jesus has always been God the Father's fullest provision and greatest blessing.

**10:5 "Nevertheless"** This is the Greek *alla*, which shows a strong contrast. See Contextual Insights, D.

- **"with most of them God was not well-pleased"** This is an attention-arresting understatement: all but two of that generation died. Only those under twenty years of age (i.e., not yet old enough to be in the military) and Joshua and Caleb (i.e., the two spies who brought a positive faith report) entered the

Promised Land (cf. Jude 1:5).

■ **"they were laid low in the wilderness"** This word implies their bones were scattered along the desert route (cf. Num. 14:16). They were God's chosen people, but He judged their unbelief. These OT believers saw the miraculous provision of God. They knew His will through their God-given leaders (i.e., Moses, Aaron, and Miriam), yet still they acted in unbelief and rebellion (cf. Hebrews 3-4).

Paul has just commented on his own strenuous efforts at self-control (cf. 1 Cor. 9:24-27). In chapter 11 he is alluding to those who try to separate theological knowledge from godly lifestyle (i.e., Gnostics and other intellectuals). Even the common fellowship meal (i.e., the *agape* feast) cannot be eaten by godless believers (cf. 1 Cor. 11:27-32). Physical death can be a temporal, divine judgment suffered by disobedient believers.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 10:6-13**

**<sup>6</sup>Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved. <sup>7</sup>Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play." <sup>8</sup>Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. <sup>9</sup>Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. <sup>10</sup>Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. <sup>11</sup>Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. <sup>12</sup>Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall. <sup>13</sup>No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.**

**10:6 "Now"** The NRSV, TEV, and JB also mark a paragraph division at this point to show the transition from historical analogies to present application.

■ **"these things happened as examples for us"** The Greek term *tupoj*, "examples," (singular *tupos*) has a wide semantical field. It was the mark left by a blow. This can refer to a physical beating (cf. Matt. 24:49; 27:30) or a metaphor for it (cf. 1 Cor. 8:12).

It came to be used for an imprint left by a blow of a hammer (cf. John 20:25). This imprint could refer to a physical image—an idol (cf. Acts 7:43) or a printed image (cf. Acts 23:25; Rom. 6:17). From this it came to stand for a pattern (cf. Acts 7:44; Phil. 3:17; 1 Thess. 1:7; 2 Thess. 3:5; 1 Tim. 4:12; Heb. 8:5; 1 Peter 5:3).

The best parallels to this term's use in this text (i.e., "type" 1 Cor. 10:6) are 1 Cor. 10:11 and Rom. 5:14, where it refers to (1) a foreshadowing type; (2) a figurative counterpart; or (3) a symbolic example.

Verses 6 and 11 remind NT believers that the OT has spiritual relevance for them (cf. Rom. 4:23-24; 15:4; 1 Cor. 9:10; 10:6,11). The revelations of God are eternal and the principles are relevant.

■ **"so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved"** Notice that Paul is comparing OT covenant people and NT covenant people. Evil is a recurrent problem. It can rob a human of eternal life, of intimate fellowship with God. Evil corrupts every level of mankind's existence. Salvation does not free us of the struggle (cf. Romans 7; Eph. 6:10-19). The Corinthian church was in danger in the areas of both orthodoxy and orthopraxy! Godliness, not information, is the goal!

The term "crave" (used twice) reflects the strong compound Greek term *epithumeō*, which is made up of the preposition "upon" and "to rush." It refers to a strong feeling or emotion overtaking and controlling the mind and heart of a person. It can be used in a positive sense as in Phil. 1:23, but usually is used in a negative sense (cf. 2 Tim. 2:22). Paul may be reflecting the strong desire and disobedience of the Israelites recorded in Num. 11:31-35, because he alludes to Num. 25:9 in 1 Cor. 10:8 and Num. 16:4-5; 17:5,10 in 1 Cor. 10:10.

**10:7 "Do not be idolaters"** This is a present middle (deponent) imperative with the negative particle, which usually means stop an act already in process. This OT quote refers to the idolatrous orgy of Exodus 32.

The exact idolatrous practice that Paul is referring to in Corinth is uncertain. Somehow the believers were in danger of offending God. From chapter 7 and the historical situation at Corinth it might have been pagan sexual worship practices or from chapter 8 pagan idolatrous sacrifices.

■ **"The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play"** This is an allusion to Aaron's making the golden calf in Exodus 32 and the children of Israel feasting before it and committing sexual acts (cf. Exod. 32:6,19). The sexual aspect of the term "dancing" is seen in the same Hebrew word used in Gen. 26:8 of Isaac making love to Rebekah.

**10:8 "Nor let us act immorally"** This shows the pagan setting of Corinth and also the tendency of pagans, even redeemed pagans, to be prone to immorality in the name of religion.

■ **"twenty-three thousand fell in one day"** This is a reference to Num. 25:1-9. There is an obvious discrepancy between this and the Hebrew text of Num. 25:9, which has twenty-four thousand. This does not seem to be a copyist error. This discrepancy is in all Greek manuscripts. It could be a lapse of memory on Paul's part. This does not mean to imply a lack of inspiration or trustworthiness, but the ancient world was not as precise in their use of numbers as modern western people.

In Archer's *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, pp. 141, 401, he asserts that the OT passage Paul is referring to is not Num. 25:1-9, but Exodus 32. He makes a good point in that 10:7 quotes from Exod. 32:4 and that Exod. 32:35 mentions the Lord's smiting of the people apparently even beyond the 3,000 of 1 Cor. 10:28. This is surely a viable contextual option.

**10:9 "Nor let us try the Lord"** This is the term *peirazō* with the preposition *ek*, which intensifies it (cf. Matt. 4:7; Luke 4:12; 10:25). See Special Topic: Greek Terms for Testing at 1 Cor. 3:13. The Corinthian Church was acting in a similar manner to the Israelites in the wilderness (cf. Num. 21:5-6). God does use temporal judgment to correct His people.

The term "Lord" (cf. NASB, TEV, NJB, and NIV) is found in the ancient Greek manuscripts  $\kappa$ , B, C, P, and the Armenian translation. It would fit the OT allusion best, referring to YHWH in Numbers 21.

The term "Christ" (cf. NKJV, NRSV) is found in manuscripts P<sup>46</sup>, D, F, G, and the Vulgate and Peshitta translations. It fits Paul's immediate audience best.

While the UBS<sup>4</sup> favors "Christ" with a "B" rating (i.e., almost certain), a strong argument for "Lord" is made by Bart D. Ehrman in *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, pp. 89-90.

See Special Topic: Greek Terms for "Testing" and Their Connotations at 1 Cor. 3:13.

■ **"were destroyed by the serpents"** This is a reference to Num. 21. See Special Topic: *Apollumi* at 1 Cor. 8:11.

**10:10 "Nor grumble, as some of them did"** The first phrase is a present active imperative with the negative particle, which usually means to stop an act in process. This refers to Num. 16:41-50, which is referred to in Num. 17:5,10. The Corinthian church was grumbling just like Israel of old.

■ **"the destroyer"** This alludes to the plague in Num. 16:49. It was a theological way of showing that death was in the hands of YHWH (cf. Exod. 12:23,29; 2 Sam. 24:16; 1 Chr. 21:15; Heb. 11:28). There is no "grim reaper"! There is no chance, fate, or luck! There is God, the God of Israel, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. He and He alone is in control of life and death!

**10:11 "to them"** This is referring to the people in the OT who died at the Destroyer's hands.

■ **"example"** See note at 1 Cor. 10:6. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL'S VIEWS OF THE MOSAIC LAW](#) at 1 Cor. 9:9.

■ **"ends of the ages have come"** This is a perfect active indicative. It is a metaphor for the prophesied new age (similar phrase in Heb. 9:26). Believers live in the Kingdom of God, inaugurated at Jesus' first coming, to be consummated with His Second Coming. We live in the tension of the "already and the not yet"!

See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THIS AGE AND THE AGE TO COME](#) at 1 Cor. 1:20.

**10:12 "let him who thinks he stands take heed"** The self assurance and arrogant pride of the Corinthian factions were a major problem, as the same attitude is today (cf. Rom. 11:20; 2 Pet. 3:17). God has and will judge His own people (cf. Jer. 25:29; 1 Pet. 4:17). Self deception is a curse of religious people! Those in Christ must continue to exercise diligence (cf. 1 Cor. 9:24-27)!

**10:13 "temptation"** This word is used three times in this verse and means to tempt with a view toward destruction (see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 3:13). There are three sources of temptation in the NT:

1. fallen human sin nature
2. personal evil (i.e., Satan and the demonic)
3. the fallen world system (cf. Eph. 2:1-3; James 4:1,4,7)

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"but such as is common to man"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"except such as is common to man"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"that is not common to everyone"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"the kind that normally comes to people"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"none. . . is more than a human being can stand"</b>

Other humans have faced the same temptation as the Corinthian believers. Jesus also has experienced and overcome all temptation which is common to human beings (cf. Heb. 4:15).

■ **"God is faithful"** This is such a crucial descriptive statement! Biblical faith rests on the character of God. Our hope is in His gracious character, sure promises and redemptive acts.

This aspect of God's character is first stated in Deut. 7:9, which is an amplification of Deut. 5:9-10. God's justice moves through time to three and four generations, but His lovingkindness (i.e., covenant loyal love, *hesed*) to a thousand generations. This same affirmation is continued in Isa. 49:7.

This is a major theme in the Corinthian letters (cf. 1 Cor. 1:9; 10:13; 2 Cor. 1:18, as well as 1 Thess. 5:24 and 2 Thess. 3:3). Believers are to faith God's faithfulness; to trust God's trustworthiness. This is the essence of biblical faith!

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"at the time you are put to the test, he will give you the strength to endure it, and so provide you with a way out"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"with any trial will also produce a way out by enabling you to put up with it"</b>

This Greek word was used of a way of escape for a trapped military unit. Believers do not face temptations alone!

The problem in this text is how one relates "provide the way out" with "be able to endure it." Do some get a way out and others bear it or is God's way out really a means of enduring? Does the testing stop or do believers work through the testing by faith? Although this ambiguity cannot be settled, the good news is that God is with us in the problems (cf. Ps. 23:4). God will not leave us or forsake us. The exact mechanism of victory is not clearly revealed, but the victory is!

**14**Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. **15**I speak as to wise men; you judge what I say. **16**Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? **17**Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread. **18**Look at the nation Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar? **19**What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? **20**No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons. **21**You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. **22**Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we?

**10:14 "Therefore"** Paul is concluding the previous discussion and moving on to a conclusion.

**NASB, NKJV "my beloved"**

**NRSV, TEV,**

**NJB "my dear friends"**

Paul's Corinthian letters (and Galatians) are his hardest words to churches. Therefore, he wants to remind them how precious they are to him even when he speaks so harshly to them (cf. 1 Cor. 4:14; 10:14; 15:58; 2 Cor. 7:1; 12:19).

This term was used by God the Father of Jesus (cf. Matt. 3:17; 12:18; 17:5). Paul, Peter, Jude, and John, in their letters, use this adjective to denote the followers of Jesus. They are beloved because of their relationship to Christ; beloved by God, by Christ, and by the writers of the NT letters.

■ **"flee from idolatry"** This is a present active imperative. Notice "idolatry" has the definite article. God provides a way, but believers must choose to take advantage of it (cf. 1 Cor. 6:18). One way to handle temptation is to flee its presence. Believers must not put themselves into the arena of temptation.

"Idolatry" in the OT was the image and worship of pagan gods. In our day it is anything that replaces God in our priority structure (cf. 1 Cor. 10:7,14). As Jesus said, where your treasure is there will your heart be (cf. Matt. 6:21). Moderns reveal their priorities by time, money, and thought life. Religion is often a significant appendage, but not the core priority. True faith does not deal with excess, but with the essence of life. The book of 1 John closes with "guard yourselves from idols" (cf. 1 John 5:21).

**10:15** This shows Paul's approach to leadership. He was an Apostle of Christ, yet he admonishes these prideful believers to judge his words for themselves (cf. 1 Cor. 14:39-40). It is surely possible that Paul is being sarcastic. He used this same word (i.e., wise man) in 1 Cor. 4:10 and 2 Cor. 11:19 in a sarcastic sense.

**10:16** This verse is constructed as two rhetorical questions (although TEV translates it as indicative statements).

■ **"the cup of blessing"** This probably refers to the third cup in the Jewish Passover service. It was what Jesus used to inaugurate the Lord's Supper.

The term "blessing" is *eulogia* from the verb *eulogeō*, which means "to praise," "to flatter," "to bless," or "to benefit." See note at 2 Cor. 9:5. We get the English term eulogy from this Greek root. When Jesus enacted this ordinance he took both the cup and bread and gave thanks to God. The Greek term for thanks or thanksgiving is *eucharistia*, from which we get the term Eucharist. Both of these Greek terms are used in a synonymous way in 1 Cor. 14:16.

It is interesting, but not theologically significant, that the normal order of the cup and bread (cf. 1 Cor. 11:24-27) is reversed here. The order is not the issue, rather fellowship with Christ at His communal meal versus fellowship with pagan deities at their communal meals.



## SPECIAL TOPIC: PASSOVER (ORDER OF SERVICE)

■ **"sharing"** This is the Greek word *koinonia*, which means "joint participation with." This is the origin of the English word "communion," used for the Eucharistic symbolic meal, which emphasizes fellowship now, but a more intimate fellowship in the future. See Special Topic: *Koinonia* at 1 Cor. 1:9.

■ **"in the blood of Christ"** This is an emphasis on the death of Christ in its sacrificial OT context (cf. Leviticus 1-7). The blood symbolized the life (cf. Lev. 17:11,14).

■ **"the bread which we break"** This is the source of the English phrase we use for the Lord's Supper, "breaking bread" (cf. Acts 2:42). This was the symbol Jesus chose to represent the New Covenant in His broken body on the cross. He purposely did not choose the Passover Lamb, which was a symbol of the old covenant experience (cf. Exod. 12).

■ **"sharing in the body of Christ"** The symbol of the "body of Christ" is twofold: (1) His physical body was sacrificed for human sin and (2) His followers became His spiritual body, the church (which also has two aspects in 1 Corinthians: [a] local church and [b] the universal church).

**10:17** This is an emphasis on the unity of Christ and His church expressed in the Lord's Supper symbolism (i.e., one bread). This same unity of Christ's body is in 1 Cor. 12:12-13 in relation to spiritual gifts.

**10:18 "the nation Israel"** This is literally "Israel according to the flesh" (see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:26). This is another symbolic way (i.e., historical allusion) to show the unity of those who partake of the Lord's Supper.

**10:19 "What do I mean then"** Paul's writings are some of the easiest biblical texts to interpret because he logically develops his thought. Logical markers such as this phrase allow modern interpreters to outline Paul's thoughts at paragraph level, which is a key in interpreting his books.

Paul develops his thought throughout this context by a series of rhetorical questions (cf. NASB, 1 Cor. 10:16 (two); 1 Cor. 10:18 (one); 1 Cor. 10:19 (two or three); 1 Cor. 10:22 (two); 1 Cor. 10:29 (one); 1 Cor. 10:30 (one)).

■ **"or that an idol is anything"** As an example of how ancient scribes unintentionally altered the texts they were copying, this phrase was accidentally left out in the very early ancient Greek manuscripts (i.e., P<sup>46</sup>,  $\kappa^*$ , A, and C). For further discussion of Textual Criticism see Appendix Two.

**10:20 "sacrifice to demons"** Paul, going back to the OT, understood idolatry as related, not to the reality of the image, but to the reality of spiritual forces in the physical creation (cf. Lev. 16:8; 12:7; Deut. 32:17; Ps. 96:5; 106:37; Isa. 65:11; Rev. 9:20; 16:14). Behind all human activity is the spiritual realm (cf. Deut. 32:8 [LXX]; Daniel 10; Eph. 6:10-18). Although it is never stated specifically that the fallen angels of the OT are the demonic of the NT, Paul refers to these fallen spiritual forces by other terms in Rom. 8:38-39; 1 Cor. 15:24; Eph. 1:21; 3:10; Col. 1:16; 2:10,15. Paul uses the term "demon" only here and in 1 Tim. 4:1. See Special Topic: Personal Evil at 1 Cor. 7:5.

## SPECIAL TOPIC: THE DEMONIC (UNCLEAN SPIRITS)

■ **"sharers in demons"** Follow Paul's analogy. Christians are one with Christ's body (i.e., the church) because they are one with His sacrifice (i.e., His body crucified on Calvary) because they share in the bread of the Lord's Supper that symbolized His broken body. Therefore, pagans who share in the eating of meat sacrificed to a non-existent idol participate in spiritual idolatry relating to the demons behind world religions. As believers share in the historical events of Jesus' life by means of ritual (i.e., Romans 6), so too, unbelievers share in the demonic.

**10:21** This phrase refers to the pagans' sacrifices and rituals in the pagan temples of Corinth. A believer cannot affirm the exclusiveness of Christianity (i.e., one and only one true God and Jesus His Messiah) and still spiritually participate in pagan worship. If they do, it is spiritual idolatry!

**10:22 "provoke the Lord to jealousy"** This seems to be an allusion to Deut. 4:25; 32:16,21; Ps. 78:58; or Isa. 65:3. The term Lord in 1 Cor. 10:21 obviously refers to Jesus, but in 1 Cor. 10:22 to YHWH. This type of transfer is one of the ways that NT authors assert the deity of Jesus of Nazareth.

The term "jealousy" is a powerful love word. One is only jealous about someone they love. YHWH is emotionally involved with His people, who reflect His character and take His name to the world. Idolatry destroys this fellowship and the evangelistic purpose.

▣ **"We are not stronger than He, are we"** The grammar expects a "no" answer. This terminology implies two different Christian groups being referred to: the weak brother in 1 Cor. 10:14-21 and the strong brother in 1 Cor. 10:23-33. Verse 22 shows the difficulty of trying to deal with the mindset of these two groups of believers (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13). Paul is trying to walk a theological tightrope between two Christian philosophies/world views (i.e., freedom and bondage to past experiences).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 10:23-30**

**<sup>23</sup>All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify. <sup>24</sup>Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor. <sup>25</sup>Eat anything that is sold in the meat market without asking questions for conscience' sake; <sup>26</sup>for the earth is the Lord's, and all it contains. <sup>27</sup>If one of the unbelievers invites you and you want to go, eat anything that is set before you without asking questions for conscience' sake. <sup>28</sup>But if anyone says to you, "This is meat sacrificed to idols," do not eat *it*, for the sake of the one who informed *you*, and for conscience' sake; <sup>29</sup>I mean not your own conscience, but the other man's; for why is my freedom judged by another's conscience? <sup>30</sup>If I partake with thankfulness, why am I slandered concerning that for which I give thanks?**

**10:23** This is a return to the subject begun in chapter 6:12 about how to balance Christian freedom and responsibility (cf. Rom. 14:19). Verses 23-33 address the strong brother.

▣ **"All things are lawful"** This phrase is repeated twice. Some translations put this phrase in quotes (cf. NRSV, TEV, NJB) because they think it was a slogan of one of the factious groups at Corinth or a cultural proverb. This is the emancipated world view of the "strong" Christian (cf. 1 Cor. 6:12; 10:26; Rom. 14:14,20).

#### **SPECIAL TOPIC: CHRISTIAN FREEDOM VS. CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY**

▣ **"but not all things edify"** The practical, spiritual test is, "Does it edify the body (i.e., the believing community)?" (cf. 1 Cor. 6:12; 14:3-4,26; 2 Cor. 12:19; Rom. 14:19; 15:2). This must be the test in all believers do or say. One's freedom in Christ must not hurt another for whom Christ died (cf. Rom. 14:15).

Just a personal word, this is not to imply that spirituality must float at the lowest level of the weakest believer, but that mature believers must not flaunt their freedom at the expense of fellow-believers. Some believers are dogmatic, Pharisaic legalists. I do not have to succumb to their rules, but I must love them, pray for them, fully accept them, and not publicly embarrass them or flaunt my freedom. I am spiritually responsible for my fellow believers! See [SPECIAL TOPIC: EDIFY](#) at 1 Cor. 8:1.

**10:24 "Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor"** This is a present active imperative. Mature Christianity puts the welfare of others to the forefront (cf. 1 Cor. 10:33; 12:7; 13:5; Rom. 14:7; 15:2; Phil. 2:1-5,21).

**10:25,27** This is the voice of emancipated faith. But "strong" faith publicly yields to "weak" faith (cf. 1 Cor. 10:28-29).

**10:25 "conscience"** There is not an OT counterpart to the Greek term "conscience" unless the Hebrew term "breast" implies a knowledge of self and its motives. Originally the Greek term referred to consciousness related to the five senses. It came to be used of the inner senses (cf. Rom. 2:15). Paul uses this term twice in his trials in Acts (i.e., 23:1 and 24:16). It refers to his sense that he had not knowingly violated any known religious duties toward God (cf. 1 Cor. 4:4).

Conscience is the developing understanding of believers' motives and actions based on (1) a biblical worldview; (2) the indwelling Spirit; and (3) a lifestyle knowledge based on the word of God. A Christian conscience is made possible by the personal reception of the gospel. See fuller note at 1 Cor. 8:7.

**10:26 "For the earth is the lord's and all it contains"** This is the affirmation of the goodness of all created things (cf. 1 Cor. 6:12; 10:26; Rom. 14:14,20), taken from a combination of Ps. 24:1 and 50:12, which was used by the OT Jews as a blessing at meals.

The Textus Receptus repeats 1 Cor. 10:26 at the end of 1 Cor. 10:28. This is not original. It is missing in the Greek manuscripts  $\kappa$ , A, B, C, D, F, G, H\*, and P, also it is not included in the Vulgate, Syriac, or Coptic translations.

**10:27** This verse is crucial in making a distinction between participation in public idolatrous feasts versus common daily socializing with unbelievers. Paul does not have hard and fast rules. He prioritizes personal relationships (i.e., evangelism and discipleship). People are priority. People are eternal. People are the purpose of Christ's death, not food! Verses 29-33 show us Paul's summary on this issue.

**10:27,30 "If"** Both of these are first class conditional sentences, which are assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes.

**10:28 "If"** This is a third class conditional sentence, which means potential action.

▣ **"do not eat it"** This is a Present active imperative with the negative particle which usually means stop eating it. If the Christian is informed he/she must not eat because the very fact the issue is brought up shows the presence of weak faith or a seeking faith (cf. 1 Cor. 10:29).

**10:29**

**NASB** "why is my freedom judged by another's conscience"

**NKJV** "why is my liberty judged by another man's conscience"

**NRSV** "why should my liberty be subject to the judgment of someone else's conscience"

**TEV** "why should my freedom to act be limited by another persons' conscience"

**NJB** "why should my freedom be governed by somebody else's conscience"

The NRSV punctuates this as if these were Paul's words. The TEV translates this as if they were another question asked by a supposed objector. This is the literary technique called diatribe (cf. 1 Cor. 6:12,13).

This is the crucial question you must answer for yourself. Each of us, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, must define the boundaries of our self-limitation for others, out of love and respect for Christ.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: JUDGING (SHOULD CHRISTIANS JUDGE ONE ANOTHER?)**

**10:30** This refers to a meal for which the believer has given thanks and eaten. The question sets the stage for the universal principle about how to exercise our Christian rights, which follows in 1 Cor. 10:31.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 10:31-11:1**

<sup>31</sup>Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. <sup>32</sup>Give no

**offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; <sup>33</sup> just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the *profit* of the many, so that they may be saved. <sup>11:1</sup> Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.**

**10:31 "do all to the glory of God"** This is the universal principle applicable in every area of the believer's life (cf. Eph. 6:7; Col. 3:17,23; 1 Pet. 4:11). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY \(DOXA\)](#) at 1 Cor. 2:7.

**10:32 "Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God"** This seems to refer to three groups. The first two are related to evangelism; the last group to fellowship in the church.

The term "church" is obviously being used in a universal sense as in Matt. 16:18. The term is used in the NT in

1. a local sense (most occurrences)
2. a regional sense (cf. Acts 9:31; Gal. 1:2)
3. a universal sense (cf. Phil. 3:6; Heb. 12:23)
4. a cosmic sense of all the saints of all ages alive and dead (cf. Eph. 1:22; 5:23,24,25,27,29,32; Col. 1:18,24)

■ **"church"** See Special Topic: Church at 1 Cor. 1:2.

**10:33 "just as I also please all men in all things. . .so that they may be saved"** Evangelism, not self-rights, is the priority of mature believers (cf. 1 Cor. 9:19-22).

■ **"the many"** In English this might be understood as a large part of the whole group. However, in Hebrew thought it is just a literary variation of "the all." This parallelism can be seen in

1. Isaiah 53:11, "the many"  
Isaiah 53:12, "of many"  
Isaiah 53:6, "of us all"
2. Romans 5:18, "to all men. . .to all men"  
Romans 5:19, "the many. . .the many"
3. In Corinthians 10:17, "we who are many" (here Paul uses the term "many" to refer to the whole group of believers)

■ **"so that they may be saved"** This is the goal of gospel preaching and Christian living (cf. 1 Cor. 9:19-22). God's promise of Gen. 3:15; 12:3 has now been fulfilled. The broken fellowship (i.e., the marred image of God in mankind) has been restored through Christ. "Whosoever will" may come (cf. Ezek. 18:23,32; John 1:12; 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9).

**11:1** This verse seems to go with chapter 10, not 11. Paul's evangelistic motives and actions parallel the life and teachings of Jesus. As Paul mimicked Him the believers at Corinth were to focus on (1) the good of the body (the church) and (2) the salvation of the unbelieving world.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Were the Israelites who died in the wilderness spiritually lost?
2. What is the major purpose of the Lord's Supper?
3. How does one balance Christian freedom and Christian responsibility?
4. What should be the main goal of our freedom?

# 1 CORINTHIANS 11

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
		Problems in Community Life (11:2-14:40)		Decorum in Public Worship (11:2-14:40)
Covering the Head in Worship 11:2-16	Head Covering 11:2-16	Propriety in Dress at Public Worship 11:2-16	Covering the Head in Worship 11:2-12  11:13-16	Women's Behavior at Services 11:2-6  11:7-12  11:13-15  11:16
Abuses at the Lord's Supper 11:17-22	Conduct at the Lord's Supper 11:17-22	Directions in the Face of Abuses at the Lord's Supper 11:17-22	The Lord's Supper 11:17-22	The Lord's Supper 11:17-22
The Institution of the Lord's Supper 11:23-26	Institution of the Lord's Supper 11:23-26	11:23-26	11:23-26	11:23-27
Partaking of the Supper Unworthily 11:27-34	Examine Yourself 11:27-34	11:27-34	11:27-32  11:33-34	11:28-32  11:33-34

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 11:2-34

- A. Chapters 11 through 14 deal with matters of gathered worship. They form a unified literary unit.
1. men's and women's attire and actions (1 Cor. 11:2-16)
  2. observance of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:17-34)
  3. the exercise of spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12-14)
- B. When I say "gathered worship" there are two possible settings.
1. small groups meeting regularly in houses throughout, some in wealthy neighborhoods, some in ethnic quarters, some in slave quarters
  2. periodically (exact time frame uncertain) these small house churches gathered together for a city-wide worship event (i.e., the *agapē* meal with the celebration of the Eucharist)
  3. whether there is a different set of protocols for the house churches vs. the gathered event is uncertain
- C. There have been several ways to understand 1 Cor. 11:2-16.
1. This context primarily deals with proper decorum (cf. 1 Cor. 11:13) in gathered worship, not the relationship between men and women (cf. 1 Cor. 11:11-12).
  2. This context deals with the new freedom in Christ which the Roman men and women in the church at Corinth were using to flaunt their social status (men) and independence from tradition and culture (women).
  3. This context deals with the creation relationship between husbands and wives (cf. Eph. 5:22-31; 1 Tim. 2:9-15). The proper relationship is based on Genesis 2-3, which shows the priority of men because of the original creation of Adam and the initial rebellion of Eve.
  4. Paul's discussion of head coverings is not limited to women, but is also addressed to men. As usual in Corinth the problem is from two directions. As a sign of their elite social status some men were covering their heads when they led in gathered worship as they had done in paganism. As a sign of their social emancipation women were removing their marriage veils when they led in gathered worship (cf. Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, pp. 121-141). This text uniquely suits Roman Corinth. In Jewish life and Greek life women did not normally wear head coverings.  
It seems that this ambiguous context is open to multiple interpretations. These interpretations say more about the interpreter's biases than Paul's intent. A text which has been and can be understood in so many ways by sincere believers must surely not be used in a definitive, dogmatic way to restrict or advocate the place and function of women in the church or the relationship between men and women in all ages and cultures. It amazes me that some believers relegate the chapter 11 discussion of head coverings for men and women to a cultural issue (even though Paul appeals to Genesis 1-3), while at the same time, demanding Paul's limits on women in church as a principle for all ages. It is this lack of consistency that causes so much trouble in interpretation. The best brief discussion of this complicated and emotional issue is in *Howto Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Fee and Stuart, pp. 61-77 or *Gospel and Spirit*, by Gordon Fee.
- D. This chapter helps us see that some theological symbols and privileges must be limited or expanded in relationship to the culture in which the mature Christian finds himself/herself. A book that has helped me in this area is Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How To Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 71-89.
- E. This is the earliest written account of the Lord's Supper/Eucharist/Communion.
- F. The purposes of the Lord's Supper
1. unity and fellowship of the church

2. expression of Jesus' presence
3. expression of Jesus' historical sacrifice
4. expression of our new relationship to God through Christ
5. an act of proclaiming the past event and the future coming of Christ
6. a serious act of worship

From 1 Cor. 10:16-17 it is certain that Paul viewed this experience as more than merely symbolic or memorial (cf. 1 Cor. 11:24-25). However, this concept is not developed. Possibly John 6:41-71 (although nothing in the immediate context relates to the Lord's Supper) is an aspect of this spiritual unity. Christianity is primarily a personal faith relationship with the Triune God.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 11:2-16

**<sup>2</sup>Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you. <sup>3</sup> But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ. <sup>4</sup>Every man who has *something* on his head while praying or prophesying disgraces his head. <sup>5</sup>But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head, for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved. <sup>6</sup>For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her cover her head. <sup>7</sup>For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. <sup>8</sup>For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; <sup>9</sup>for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake. <sup>10</sup>Therefore the woman ought to have *a symbol of authority* on her head, because of the angels. <sup>11</sup>However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. <sup>12</sup>For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man *has his birth* through the woman; and all things originate from God. <sup>13</sup>Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God *with her head* uncovered? <sup>14</sup>Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him, <sup>15</sup>but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering. <sup>16</sup>But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God.**

**11:2** In light of the previous chapters, one wonders if this verse is irony or sarcasm. This church was not remembering Paul's words and was not following his teaching (cf. 1 Cor. 11:17,22). It is possible that this is another question that the church wrote to Paul about.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"hold firmly to the traditions"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"keep the traditions"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"maintain the traditions"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"follow the teachings"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"maintaining the traditions"</b>

This is a present active indicative. Believers are to continue to cling to the truths that Paul preached (cf. 2 Thess. 2:15). This is the covenantal balance to election.

The term "traditions" (*pardosis*) is used in several senses:

1. in 1 Cor. 11:2,23; 15:3 for gospel truths
2. in Matt. 15:6; 23:1ff; Mark 7:8; Gal. 1:14 of Jewish traditions
3. in Col. 2:6-8 of Gnostic speculations
4. Roman Catholics (Eastern and Russian Orthodox) use this verse as a biblical proof-text for

Scripture and church traditions being equal in authority

5. in this context it refers to Apostolic truth, either spoken or written (cf. 2 Thess. 3:6)

■ **"to the traditions"** Much of the information about Jesus was passed orally from individual to individual until it was written down some 30 to 60 years after His death.

■ **"just as I delivered them to you"** There is a Greek wordplay between "traditions" (*paradoseis*) and "delivered" (*paredōka*), which are both forms of *paradidōmi*. Paul was not the originator, but simply a link in the chain of revelation. The term "traditions" was used of Christian truths being passed from one person to another (cf. 1 Cor. 11:23; 15:3).

Paul received information about the gospel from several sources.

1. Stephen's sermon (cf. Acts 7)
2. Christians he persecuted (cf. Acts 8:1-3; 9:1-2; 22:4,19)
3. Ananias (cf. Acts 9:10-18)
4. His time in Arabia with Christ (cf. Gal. 1:11-17)
5. His time in Jerusalem with Peter and James (cf. Gal. 1:18-19)
6. Barnabas (cf. Acts 9:20-27; 11:25-26)

**11:3 "Christ is the head"** In his commentary *1 and 2 Corinthians*, p. 103, F. F. Bruce asserts that in this context *kephalē* follows the Hebrew *rosh* in the sense of origin or source. This meaning of *kephalē* is not documented in the Greek Lexicons by:

1. Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, Danker
2. Moulton, Milligan
3. Louw, Nida
4. Moulton

This shows how the context (i.e., 1 Cor. 11) determines the definition, not a dictionary. In this context "source" or "origin" fits best in 1 Cor. 11:3 in relation to Gen. 1:26-27; 2:18 (cf. Kaiser, Davids, Bruce, and Brauch, *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 599-602).

Jesus was the Father's agent in creation (cf. John 1:3,10; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2). Humans, male and female, were created by Him, in His image. However, the Son is submissive to the Father (cf. 1 Cor. 3:23; 11:2; 15:28). This appropriate submission extends to men and women. They are both created in the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27), but there is an order, man first, then woman (cf. Gen. 2:18) related to function (at least in a patriarchal system), but not inequality! See Special Topic following.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: HEAD (KEPHALĒ)**

■ **"man is the head of a woman"** The terms "man" and "woman" can mean husband and wife (cf. NRSV, TEV). In this context this is not the intended emphasis, but the order of creation reflected in Genesis 2.

■ **"and God is the head of Christ"** This is a repeated truth in 1 Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor. 3:23; 11:3; 15:28). The order within the Trinity has nothing to do with inequality, but is a division of function. This truth can also be implied from the discussion of male and female. Mutuality was surely the model before the Fall in Genesis 3. This mutuality is reinstated in believers' restored relationship with the Father through the Son (i.e., Jesus has restored the image in both male and female believers).

**11:4**

**NASB** "Every man who has *something* on his head while praying. . .disgraces his head"

**NKJV** "Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head"

**NRSV** "Any man who prays or prophesies with something on his head disgraces his head"

**TEV** "So a man who prays or proclaims God's message in public worship with his



**NJB**                    **head covered disgraces Christ"**  
**"For any man to pray or prophesy with his head covered shows disrespect for his head"**

This is a word play on "head." The second use of the word "head" refers to Christ (cf. TEV). Paul is dealing with a Roman culture whose forms and symbols are exactly opposite of Jewish culture (i.e., men cover their heads). The real issue is not who covers whose head, but the symbol of (1) origin or (2) submission, which are both theologically significant.

It has been suggested that the historical situation in Corinth:

1. the social, political, and financial leaders led worship with a head covering to differentiate themselves from the common man
2. that Jews in the synagogue in Corinth had women wear a veil and believing Jews expected the same in the church

There is a theological tension between this verse, which seems to affirm women in leadership roles in public worship with the socially acceptable covering compared to 14:34-35, where women (or at least "wives," 1 Cor. 11:35) are forbidden to speak in church.

Some groups proof-text chapter 11, while others use chapter 14. It must be admitted that the key to this passage is the first century cultural setting of Corinth, but which specific aspect is not clear to us today. The first century church knew of women's leadership in the OT and was aware of Paul's use of women in his ministry (cf. Romans 16). They understood the issue in Corinth and the Roman culture as we do not. Dogmatism is inappropriate!

A recent book, *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change*, by Bruce W. Winter, pp. 121-141, offers some very helpful insights from Roman literature and art. This and other articles (i.e., E. Fantham, "The 'New Woman': Representation and Reality," in *Women in the Classical World*, chapter 10, and P. W. J. Gill, "The Importance of Roman Portraiture for Head Coverings in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16," *TynB* 41.2 (1990): pp. 245-260 and "In Search of the Social Elite in the Corinthian Church," *TynB* 44.2 (1993): pp. 323-337), shows modern interpreters how first century Corinth was Roman, not Greek, in culture.

With these new documented insights from first century Roman Corinth, it is possible to begin to see the cultural issues Paul faced in this book.

1. Paul is not addressing Jewish culture nor Greek culture at all in this context.
2. Paul is addressing two groups with elite social status.
  - a. Wealthy, socially elite, male believers were showing off their positions by covering their heads while leading public worship, as was customary for this social class, while leading civic Greco-Roman religious worship. They were flaunting themselves.
  - b. The wealthy, elite wives were removing their culturally expected veil to flaunt their equality, not only in Christ, but also as a social statement, as were other Roman women of the period.
3. The citizens of Roman Corinth, who were curious about the Christian faith and worship practices, would send a "messenger" (i.e., angels of 1 Cor. 11:10 may refer to servants or representatives sent on behalf of masters) to check out the meeting.

This historical/cultural/social information makes good sense of a very difficult and disputed text. It also fits other texts in 1 Corinthians, which obviously reflects a unique first century, Corinthian setting!

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: WOMEN IN THE BIBLE**

**11:5 "But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying"** This implies strongly that with her head covered she may pray and prophesy in public meetings. The term "prophesying" in this book means "sharing the gospel" or "preaching publicly" (cf. 1 Cor. 14:39). Verses 4 and 5 are parallel relating to what men and women do while participating in group worship. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: NEW TESTAMENT PROPHECY](#) at 1 Cor. 14:1.

■ **"disgraces her head"** Corinth was a Roman colony and reflected Roman culture. Roman women were marriageable in their early teens. The veil was a cultural aspect of the marriage service. It was expected to

be worn outside the home by Roman women. Its absence would be seen as

1. a shamed woman
2. a prostitute
3. a dominant lesbian partner
4. a "new" woman (i.e., a social movement of equality and freedom active among Roman society in the first century)

A woman flaunting herself in this manner would have publicly shamed her husband and given the wrong impression about the church to visitors and the community. Christ makes males and females free, but each has an obligation to limit freedom for the cause of Christ. Women and men, wives and husbands who are believers are called on to live for the health and growth of the Kingdom! This is the theme of 1 Corinthians 8-10 and is continued in chapter 11.

■ **"she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved"** This is a Perfect passive participle. There are several possibilities for understanding this phrase.

1. it refers to the common attire of local prostitutes
2. it is a cultural act of an adulterous woman's public shaming
3. it showed that shamed women were characteristic in the Mediterranean world for followers of the "Mystery Religions"
4. it refers to the culturally unexpected act of Christian women cutting their hair extremely short to show their new freedom (i.e., a cultural trend in first century Rome and its colonies)

In many commentaries option #1 is stressed. It is asserted that this must refer to the temple prostitutes of Diana. However, this temple on the Acropolis was destroyed by an earthquake 150 years before Paul's time and there is no historical evidence that it still functioned. There is also no evidence that prostitutes in Greece shaved their heads.

The key question is "What topic is Paul is addressing?"

1. appropriate or culturally expected worship attire and actions
2. abuse of personal freedoms
3. the appropriate relationship between
  - a. men and women
  - b. husbands and wives
  - c. angels and women (1 Cor. 11:10)
  - d. culture and women (1 Cor. 11:13)

I have come to understand #1 as the best option, addressing both husbands and wives not being led by their new freedom in Christ, but by their dogged refusal to put aside their cultural privileges and work toward the unity and growth of the church.

**11:6 "if. . .if"** There are two first class conditional phrases in this verse which are assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purpose. There were Christian women in the church who refused to cover their heads, but still wanted to be active in gathered worship. It was socially unacceptable.

Believers must limit their new freedoms in Christ for

1. the weaker ones within the church (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13)
2. the cultural expectation of the society the church is seeking to evangelize and incorporate

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"does not cover her head"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"is not covered"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"will not veil herself"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"does not cover her head"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"go without a veil"</b>

Historical data on the use of face coverings (i.e., veils) or shoulder-length head coverings by ancient Mediterranean people is very helpful. I have documented the latest evidence in the notes at 1 Cor. 11:4. Roman women who were married, not widowed, and not a prostitute, were culturally expected to wear a

veil in public as a sign that they were married. There were very few single women in the ancient Mediterranean world.

In Jewish culture the facial veil was used as a sign of

1. leprosy, Lev. 13:45
2. mourning for the dead, Ezek. 24:17,22
3. embarrassment, Micah 3:7
4. marriage, Gen. 24:65
5. prostitution, Gen. 38:14-15

However, remember Paul is not referring to Jewish culture at all because in that culture men cover their heads in worship.

■ **"let her also have her hair cut off"** This is an aorist middle imperative. This is not meant to be taken literally. Paul is not advocating a public shaming of Christian women, but he is asserting the cultural consequences for inappropriate activity!

■ **"let her cover her head"** This is a Present middle imperative. Christian women for Christ's sake conform to the expected culture in order to reach people for salvation and church membership. The forms will change from culture to culture and age to age! The goal remains the same (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8).

**11:7 "he is the image and glory of God"** This refers to Gen. 1:26-27, yet in the context of this verse Gen. 1:26 the word "man" is generic. Theologically it is uncertain exactly to what "image and likeness" in Gen. 1:26-27 refers. Most scholars would relate them to personality, self-consciousness, moral perspective, ability to choose, ability to relate to other "selves." There is an obvious mutuality between men and women in both Gen. 1:26-27 and 2:18. The problem comes in Gen. 3:16! See [SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY \(DOXA\)](#) at 1 Cor. 2:7.

**11:8**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"For man is not from woman, but woman from man"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"indeed, man was not made from woman, but woman from man"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"for man was not created from woman, but woman from man"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"for man did not come from woman; no woman came from man"</b>

The term "originate" is not in the Greek text. It is only the preposition *ek* (i.e., out of), as is 1 Cor. 11:12. Paul is asserting the order of creation in 1 Cor. 11:7 and 9 from Genesis 2 (i.e., Adam first, then Eve). However in 1 Cor. 11:8-9,11, Paul asserts their mutual dependance (which alludes to Gen. 1:27 and 2:18).

**11:9 "man was not created for the woman's sake"** We must remember that Paul's statement in Gal. 3:28 on the equality of women does not minimize the created distinctions between the sexes, at least in this age. The full equality of men and women in Christ does not automatically remove all cultural/traditional role expectations. Believers (male and female) do not flaunt personal freedoms, which may damage the reputation of the church among the unbelieving culture. Mature believers limit their freedom in Christ for the sake of His Kingdom. Believers have a corporate responsibility to (1) the body of Christ and (2) the unbelieving community!

**11:10 "Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head"** This text, as all the others in this context, can be understood in several ways. The key issue is what does "authority" (i.e., *exousia*) represent?

First, it should be noted that *exousia* is often related to *dunamis*. Otto Betz has an interesting article on *exousia* in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 2, pp. 606-611. Here are five examples.

"It is characteristic for the NT that *exousia* and *dunamis* are both related to the work of Christ, the

consequent new ordering of cosmic power-structures and the empowering of believers" (p. 609).

"The *exousia* of believers. The authority of a Christian believer is founded on the rule of Christ and on the disarming of all powers. It implies both freedom and service" (p. 611).

"He is free to do anything (1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23 *exestin*); this assertion, which was made initially by the sectarian enthusiasts at Corinth, was taken up by Paul who acknowledged it to be correct" (p. 611).

"In practice, however, this theoretically unrestricted freedom is governed by consideration of what is helpful to other individual Christians and the congregation as a whole in view of the fact that complete redemption is still to come (1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23)" (p. 611).

"'All things are lawful [*exestin*] for me,' but not all things are helpful. 'All things are lawful [*exestin*],' but not all things build up. Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor" (1 Cor. 10:23ff). The quotation within these quotations are probably the slogans of the libertines at Corinth. Paul counters them by admitting their truth, but by showing that it is not the whole truth" (p. 611).

Paul uses these two terms often in his letters to the church at Corinth.

1. *exousia*, 1 Cor. 7:37; 9:4,5,6,12 (twice),18; 11:10; 2 Cor. 13:10

2. *dunamis*, 1 Cor. 1:18; 2:4,5; 4:19,20; 5:4; 15:24,43; 2 Cor. 4:7; 6:7; 8:3 (twice); 12:9; 13:4 (twice)

Rights and power were major issues for both the legalists and the libertines. Paul tries to walk a fine line between both extremes. In this context Christian women are encouraged to accept the God-given order of creation (i.e., Christ-man-woman) for the purpose of the furtherance of the Kingdom. Paul asserts the original mutuality (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 2:18) in verses 11-12. It is very theologically dangerous to

1. isolate one verse in this context

2. apply a rigid systematic denominational grid on the issue of the relationship of men and women/husbands and wives of the first century to every culture in every century

3. to miss Paul's balance between Christian freedom and Christian corporate covenant responsibility

Where did Christian women get the freedom to participate as a leader in gathered (i.e., house-church) worship? Surely not from the synagogue. Was it a cultural trend from first century Roman society? This is surely possible and in my opinion helps explain many aspects of this chapter. However, it is also possible that the power of the gospel, the restoration of the original "image of God" lost in the Fall, is the source. There is a shocking new equality in all areas of human life and society. But this equality can be turned into a license for personal abuse. This inappropriate extension is what Paul is addressing.

F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, has really helped me think through many of the controversial issues related to the church traditions of modern western Christianity. As an exegete I had always thought that women's covering was meant to show God's giftedness (or the co-equality of Gen. 1:26,27), not her husband's authority. However, I could not find this interpretation among the biblical resources that I use, therefore, I was reluctant to put it in the commentaries or preach/teach it. I still remember the excitement and freedom I felt when F. F. Bruce thought the same thing (see *Answers to Questions*, p. 95). I think all believers are called, full-time, gifted ministers of Christ!

■ **"because of the angels"** There are three lines of interpretation of this passage that relate to angels.

1. that the reference is to angels as representatives of God that are present in our worship services as observers, 1 Cor. 4:9; 1 Tim. 5:21; Ps. 138:1; and also the Dead Sea Scrolls

2. that these are evil angels with sexual desires similar to the angels in Gen. 6:2; 2 Pet. 2:4; and Jude 6; angels are mentioned often in 1 Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor. 4:9; 6:3; 11:10; 13:1)

3. translate *añgelous* as "messengers" instead of "angels"

The terms for messenger and angel are the same in both Hebrew (i.e., *malak*) and Greek (i.e., *añgelos*). This theory is based on first century social customs (cf. Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, pp. 133-138). A person of status would not visit a house church without sending someone to check out the meeting first. This makes more sense than trying to link 1 Cor. 11:10 to lustful angels or angels concerned with appropriate decorum (cf. Ps. 138:1) in gathered worship.

## 11:11-12 "in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman"

These verses emphasize the mutuality between men and women (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 2:18; Gal. 3:26-29).

This freedom (i.e., return to the initial creation model of Gen. 1:26-27) must be expressed in appropriate ways within one's fallen culture. There is no doubting Paul's affirmation of Jesus' redemption totally changing every believer's status! We are all one in Christ. Our goal now is helping our fallen neighbors and citizens find this same redemption. There are still societal issues in every culture. Because believers can, does not mean believers should!

The use of "from" (i.e., *ek*, literally "out of") in this context (twice) seems to reinforce the use of "head" as "origin." Woman is out of man; man is out of God. The Genesis narrative also provides the basis for "head" as a proper order of creation. Both freedom in Christ and submission (cf. Eph. 5:21) are appropriate when the good of the church is the ultimate goal.

**11:13-15** Paul uses this same approach in 1 Cor. 10:15 where it could be sarcastic, based on his use of "wise men" (cf. 1 Cor. 4:10; 2 Cor. 11:10), but here it does not seem sarcastic rather in the sense of "thinking culturally." Paul uses Corinthian/Greco-Roman/first century etiquette.

1. Married women should be veiled in public or in worship acts (1 Cor. 11:13).
2. Young men in Corinth cut their long hair at the transition to manhood (i.e., at ten years old). To keep the long hair was a cultural sign of femininity or homosexuality (1 Cor. 11:14).
3. Women with short hair were identified as either
  - a. one who had been publicly shamed
  - b. a prostitute (1 Cor. 11:15).

These are not spiritual insights nor biblical insights (i.e., they do not fit Jewish customs), but cultural insights.

**11:13 "yourselves"** This is emphatic.

**11:14-15 "if. . .if"** These are both third class conditional sentences, which speak of potential action.

Different English translations punctuate these verses as question(s) (i.e., NRSV, NJB); statements (i.e., NASB, TEV); or one question and one statement (i.e., NKJV). The particle denoting a question in 1 Cor. 11:14 indicates a question that expects a "yes" answer.

**11:16 "if"** This is a first class conditional which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. There were contentious Christians in the church at Corinth.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"one is inclined to be contentious"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"anyone seems to be contentious"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"anyone is disposed to be contentious"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"anyone wants to argue about it"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"anyone wants to be contentious"</b>

The verb is a present active indicative, which implies continual action. This contentiousness is a continuing attitude for them. They love strife and contention!

The term "contentious" is a compound of *philos* (i.e., love) and *veikos* (i.e., strife). It is used of the Apostles at the Last Supper in Luke 22:24.

▣ **"we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God"** (cf. 1 Cor. 11:4:17). Paul is not giving them something special (cf. 1 Cor. 4:17; 7:17; 11:16; 14:33). This church was glorying in its wisdom and freedom. They thought they had the right to live differently from other Christian churches. Paul asserts they do not!

▣ **"church"** See Special Topic: Church (*ekklesia*) at 1 Cor. 1:2.

**17**But in giving this instruction, I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse. **18**For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part I believe it. **19**For there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you. **20**Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper, **21**for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk. **22**What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you.

**11:17** Paul is starting a new subject, but the prideful attitudes of some Corinthian believers are still in focus. The subject changes, but the basic problem does not change.

1. their elitism
2. their emphasis on personal freedom
3. their assumption of wisdom

All of the subjects Paul addresses (cf. 1 Cor. 7:1,25; 8:1; 16:1), which were sent to him by letters, revolve around these same issues.

Even their collective love feast (cf. Jude 1:12) was turned into a "more for me" feast! Right, ability, and status superceded love, service, and the health of the Body.

■ **"I do not praise you"** Paul has affirmed them in 1 Cor. 11:2, but in this area he can only scold them.

■ **"come together"** This is the Greek compound term *sunerchomai*. Paul is very fond of *sun* compounds. The preposition basically means "together with." This term expresses the same idea as synagogue, which refers to the collective meeting of believers. Chapters 11-14 deal with gathered worship (cf. 1 Cor. 11:17,18,20,33,34; 14:23,26).

I wonder how this "coming together" worked. There apparently were several different house churches in Corinth, possibly the source of some of the factious groups. Does Paul imply here that all the house churches meet jointly for the Lord's Supper?

**11:18 "in the first place"** This phrase can be understood in two ways.

1. of first importance (NKJV)
2. the first of two or more issues, however, there is no mention of a "second," etc. in the context
3. the same grammatical feature is found in Rom. 1:8

■ **"divisions exist among you"** These divisions are first mentioned in 1 Cor. 1:10-17 and 3:3-4, but their presence is assumed throughout the book. In this context the division is not over leaders, but is characterized by socio-economic factors. This may define the factions as representing social classes as well as theological emphases.

**11:19**

**NASB, NKJV** "For there must also be factions among you"

**NRSV** "Indeed there have to be factions among you"

**TEV** "(No doubt there must be divisions among you"

**NJB** "that there should be differing groups among you"

The term is "faction" (1 Cor. 11:19, i.e., *hairesis*), from which we get the English word heresies. Its basic etymology is "to choose" or "select," but with the added connotation of showing special favor, choosing one and rejecting other choices (cf. Acts 24:14; 1 Cor. 11:19; Gal. 5:20). It can be used to describe (1) a person who believes false teaching (cf. Titus 3:10) or (2) the false teaching itself (cf. 2 Pet. 2:1).

There is a different term used in 1 Cor. 11:18, "divisions" (i.e., *schisma*), from which we get the English word schism. Its basic etymology is "to split" (cf. Matt. 27:51). It was used of groups dividing over an issue

(cf. John 7:43; 9:16; 10:19; Acts 14:4; 23:7; 1 Cor. 1:10; 11:18).

Paul mentions a theological purpose (i.e., *hina*) and necessity (i.e., *dei*) for the presence of these differing groups. They were necessary for the true spiritual leaders to be clearly revealed. Mature leaders will become evident in times of crisis.

The other option is that some groups and their leaders will show by their actions that they are not Christians at all (cf. 1 John 2:19; Mark 4:16-19).

■ **"that those who are approved"** See Special Topic: Greek Terms Used for Testing at 1 Cor. 3:13.

**11:20 "it is not to eat the Lord's Supper"** These privileged socially elite faction(s) were acting in a manner totally alien to the communal, self-giving precedent of Jesus' last meal with His disciples. The verses that follow clarify his point (cf. 1 Cor. 11:22).

■ **"the Lord's Supper"** This is the only occurrence of this phrase in the NT. This is another possible example of sarcasm. Nothing about their attitudes and actions compares with Jesus' attitudes and actions in giving Himself for sinful mankind!

The worship event goes by several names.

1. the Lord's Supper
2. "the table of the Lord" (1 Cor. 10:21)
3. "breaking bread" (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 10:16; 11:24 [cf. Luke 24:30])
4. thanksgiving (i.e., *eucharist*) or blessing (i.e., *eulogia*, Matt. 26:26-27; 1 Cor. 10:16; 11:24)

**11:21 "each one takes his own supper first"** The early church combined the Lord's Supper and a fellowship meal called "the Agape" (cf. 2 Pet. 2:13; Jude 12, and possibly Acts 20:7).

It is possible to understand this phrase in several ways.

1. The wealthy/educated/influential/high-born came early and ate their meal quickly so that when the poor arrived there was nothing, or hardly anything, left to eat.
2. Each person was to bring his own meal. The elite believers ate theirs quickly in the presence of the poor, or slave members of the church, who brought little or nothing.

The problem was selfishness and gluttony based on social distinctions instead of self-giving love, as Jesus' actions and precedent clearly taught. The Corinthian church did not believe that they were one in Christ. There was a radical dichotomy between

1. social haves vs. have nots
2. wealthy vs. poor
3. men vs. women
4. freedmen vs. slaves
5. Romans vs. all others
6. spiritual elite vs. common believer

These distinctions are clearly spelled out in 1 Cor. 11:21 and 22.

■ **"one is hungry and another is drunk"** Whether this was caused by Roman societal distinctions or selfishness, an unacceptable situation is clearly shown. The purpose of the memorial meal and the communal fellowship had been forgotten. This was a serious matter (cf. 1 Cor. 11:23). This verse cannot be used to advocate total abstinence. It is obvious that wine was a part of this experience. It is the abuse that is condemned.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: BIBLICAL ATTITUDES TOWARD ALCOHOL AND ALCOHOLISM**

■ **"Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink"** Some legalists and literalists have tried to use this as a proof-text for not eating in the church. History and context are always crucial in the interpretation of ancient literature. By quoting small parts of Scripture one can make the Bible/God say almost anything! As Gordon Fee says, "A book that can mean anything, means nothing!"

There is a series of rhetorical questions which reveal the emotion with which Paul is writing. He is

shocked at the actions of some of the church (cf. James 2:6).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23-26**

**<sup>23</sup>For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; <sup>24</sup>and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." <sup>25</sup>In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." <sup>26</sup>For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.**

**11: 23 "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you" Paul was not present at the Lord's Supper. He claims in Gal. 1:11-17 to have received revelation directly from Jesus and in Gal. 1:18-19, not to have received it from other Apostles or Jerusalem leaders. However, his words here reflect a knowledge of the Synoptic Gospels' traditions.**

■ **"took bread"** It is significant that Jesus did not use the Passover lamb as a symbol. It was linked too strongly with the Old Covenant (cf. Exod. 12). The loaf became the new symbol of unity (10:16-17).

**11:24 "and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said"** This points toward a specific historical act (i.e., the Passover meal in the upper room the night before Jesus was betrayed). Many Christians call the ordinance the *Eucharist*, which is from the Greek term for "to thank" (i.e., *eucharisteō*, cf. Matt. 26:27; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"This is my body, which is for you"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"This is my body, that is for you"</b>
<b>TEV, NJB</b>	<b>"This is my body, which is for you"</b>

This is obviously metaphorical. Cannibalism would be a horror to any Jewish person. Jesus is using the broken bread as a symbol of His broken body on Calvary. As bread gives physical nourishment and life to those who eat it, so Jesus' actions give spiritual life to those who receive it.

There has been much theological debate about the meaning of Jesus' words. Much of the discussion is based on (1) the nature of the event and (2) the way God provides grace. Those who see this as a sacrament rely heavily on John 6, which in context, has nothing to do with the Lord's Supper.

There are several Greek manuscript variations in this phrase.

1. the Textus Receptus adds, "take, eat." This is found in the Greek MSS C<sup>3</sup>, K, L, and P. It is not original.
2. Paul's short phrase "for you" (cf. MSS P<sup>46</sup>, κ<sup>\*</sup>, A, B, C<sup>\*</sup>) has been expanded by the early scribes in several ways:
  - (a) "broken for you" (cf. MSS κ<sup>2</sup>, C<sup>3</sup>, D<sup>2</sup>, F, G)
  - (b) "shed for you" (cf. MS D<sup>\*</sup>)
3. (c) "given for you" (cf. Luke 22:19)

UBS<sup>4</sup> rates the shorter text (to *hyper humōn*) as "A" (certain).

**11:24-25 "do this in remembrance of Me"** This is either a present active indicative or a present active imperative. The imperative fits the context best. This symbolic meal is to be repeated regularly until Jesus returns.

It is interesting that in the record of the Lord's Supper in Matthew and Mark's Gospel the phrase "do this in remembrance of Me" is not included. However, it does appear in Luke 22:19 and 1 Cor. 11:24-25. It is so surprising that an obviously significant event in Jesus' life, which was to be repeated, is recorded with such variety in the Gospels and Paul's writings.



The NT does not specify how often this is to be repeated. Some groups of believers never do it (i.e., Quakers), others do it every week. Those Christian groups that have a sacramental view of the Supper obviously make it a recurrent (i.e., weekly) and central event. The early Palestinian believers may have observed it once a year in conjunction with the Passover (i.e., the Ebionites, cf. Origen and Epiphanius). Those Christians who are nervous about repeated rituals losing their impact and significance and do not see it as a channel of grace, usually observe the Supper less often (i.e., Southern Baptists' once a quarter).

**11:25 "This cup is the new covenant"** This new covenant is specifically mentioned in Jer. 31:31-34 (described in Ezek. 36:22-38). The Greek term for covenant originally meant "a will" or "last testament," but the meaning here reflects the Septuagint's use of the term as "covenant."

The concept of a "new covenant" must have been shocking to Jewish people. They were trusting in the permanency of the Mosaic covenant. Jeremiah had to remind them that YHWH's covenants were conditional on a faith-repentant response.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT**

■ **"in My blood"** This refers to the Hebrew concept of Jesus' sacrificial death (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21). Blood is an OT Hebrew idiom referring to a sacrifice given to God (cf. Lev. 17:11,14; Deut. 12:23). The first covenant was ratified with shed blood (cf. Exod. 24:8).

**11:26**

**NASB, NKJV**

**NRSV** "For as often as you eat. . .drink"

**TEV** "That every time you eat. . .drink"

**NJB** "Whenever you eat. . .drink"

Notice that there is no specific times given here, or elsewhere, in the NT. In Acts the characteristic phrase to describe the Lord's Supper, "broke bread," is used of (1) a daily experience (2:42,46) or (2) Sunday worship (20:7,11). However, the phrase is also used of a regular meal (27:34-35).

■ **"you proclaim the Lord's death"** This clearly shows the sacrificial aspect of Christ's death. The Lord's Supper is a backwards look at the death of Christ.

■ **"until He comes"** The Lord's Supper is a forward look to the Second Coming (cf. 1 Cor. 1:7; 4:5; 11:26; Mark 14:25).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 11:27-32**

**<sup>27</sup>Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup>But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. <sup>29</sup>For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. <sup>30</sup>For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. <sup>31</sup>But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. <sup>32</sup>But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.**

**11:27**

**NASB, NKJV**

**NRSV** "whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord"

**KJV** "whoever eats this bread and drinks *this* cup of the Lord"

**TEV** "that if one of you eats the Lord's bread or drinks from his cup"

**NJB** "therefore anyone who eats the bread drinks the cup of the Lord"

"And" is not in the original text of 1 Cor. 11:27, but it is in 1 Cor. 11:28 and 29. "Or" is in the Greek text. The King James Version translators were afraid of the Roman Catholic understanding where the priest drinks the wine and the laity the bread, and intentionally mistranslated this verse! The NKJV has corrected this intentional mistranslation (see Bart Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, p. 154).

**NASB, NKJV,**  
**NRSV** "in an unworthy manner"  
**TEV** "in a way that dishonors him"  
**NJB** "unworthily"

The context implies this refers to the disrupted unity of the church caused by the factious groups' arrogance and pride, but some have understood this to refer to the mandate for a proper spiritual attitude when observing the Lord's Supper (cf. Heb. 10:29).

**11:28 "But a man must examine himself"** This is a present active imperative. The term "examine" has the connotation of "to test with a view toward approval." See Special Topic: Greek Terms for "Testing" at 1 Cor. 3:13. In one sense all Christians are unworthy because they all have and continue to sin. In this context it refers specifically to the disunity and factious spirits of some in the church at Corinth (cf. 2 Cor. 13:5).

**11:29**  
**NASB** "if he does not judge the body rightly"  
**NKJV** "not discerning the Lord's body"  
**NRSV** "without discerning the body"  
**TEV** "if you do not recognize the meaning of the Lord's body"  
**NJB** "without recognizing the body"

"His body" seems not to refer to (1) the physical body of Jesus nor (2) the participants, but to the Church as a group (cf. 1 Cor. 10:17; 12:12-13,27). Disunity is the problem. A spirit of superiority or class distinctions destroys the fellowship.

■ **"judge"** See note at 1 Cor. 4:7 and Special Topic at 1 Cor. 10:29.

**11:30** Paul is asserting in plain language that believers who violate the unity of the church may suffer temporal physical consequences, even death (cf. 1 Cor. 3:17). This is directly connected to a lack of respect for the body of Christ, the church, the people of God (cf. Acts 5; 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:20).

**11:31 "if"** This is a second class conditional sentence, which is called "contrary to fact." It should be translated "if we had judged ourselves rightly, which we did not, then we should not be judged, which we are." See note at 1 Cor. 4:7.

**11:32 "disciplined by the Lord"** It is difficult to know when Christians are suffering because

1. they live in a fallen world
2. they are reaping the consequences of their sinful acts
3. they are being tested by the Lord for spiritual maturity (cf. Heb. 5:8)

God does test and discipline (cf. Heb. 12:5-11). It is an evidence of His love and our family status.

■ **"so that we will not be condemned along with the world"** The temporal judgment of believers who are hurting God's church may be an act of love in sparing them a more severe judgment related to destroying the church (cf. 1 Cor. 3:10-17).

I like a quote from George Ladd in *A Theology of the New Testament*.

"The world also has its religion that holds men in a bondage of asceticism and legalism that may have the appearance of wisdom and promote a kind of devotion and self-discipline, but it ultimately fails to provide a solution for the moral dilemma with which man is faced (Col. 2:20ff). Viewed from this point of view the world stands under the judgment of God (1 Cor. 11:32) and is in need of

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 11:33-34**

**<sup>33</sup>So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. <sup>34</sup>If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you will not come together for judgment. The remaining matters I will arrange when I come.**

**11:33 "when you come together to eat, wait for one another"** This refers to 1 Cor. 11:21. They were acting like selfish individuals, not a family, a body. They were acting in exactly the opposite way from Jesus' self-giving act of love.

**11:34 "If"** This is a First class conditional sentence, which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes.

▣ **"let him eat at home"** This is a present active imperative. If believers are so hungry that they act in an aggressive, selfish way at the Lord's Supper, then they should satisfy their hunger before they join a fellowship meal.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"The remaining matters I will arrange when I come"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"And the rest I will set in order when I come"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"About the other things I will give instructions when I come"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"As for the other matters, I will settle them when I come"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"The other matters I shall arrange when I come"</b>

Notice that God has not seen fit to pass on all the detailed description that Paul gave to this church. It is uncertain if this relates only to the Lord's Supper or other matters. The structure of 1 Corinthians (answering many unrelated questions) implies that it does. The essence of the Lord's Supper is not found in a rule book of liturgy, but in a relationship with Jesus Christ. The details of religious rituals are not as significant as a good heart toward God, which issues in a love for the church.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Are modern Christians to duplicate all of the rituals and forms of the NT church?
2. What does 11:2-16 say about female participation in leadership roles in public worship?
3. What does the veil correspond to today?
4. Explain the problem of unveiled women and veiled men in a Roman first century culture.
5. What is Paul's major purpose in discussing the Lord's Supper in chapter 11?
6. How do you explain 1 Cor. 11:30?

# 1 CORINTHIANS 12

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
				Decorum in Public Worship (11:2-14:40)
Spiritual Gifts	Spiritual Gifts: Unity in Diversity	Variety of Spiritual Gifts	Gifts from the Holy Spirit	Spiritual Gifts
12:1-3	12:1-11	12:1-3	12:1 12:2-3	12:1-3 The Variety and the Unity of Gifts
12:4-11		12:4-11	12:4-11	12:4-11
One Body with Many Members	Unity and Diversity in One Body	The Body Requires a Variety of Members	One Body Many Parts	The Analogy of the Body
12:12-31a	12:12-31	12:12-13 12:14-26 12:27-31	12:12-13 12:14-20 12:21-26 12:27-31a 12:31b	12:12-17 12:18-21 12:22-26 12:27-30

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### ***FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL***

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 12:1-31

A. Chapters 11-14 form one literary unit which deals with gathered worship. There were many problems in the Corinthian house churches. Paul addresses many of these issues, which apparently the church had written to him about (cf. 1 Cor. 7:1,25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1,12). The issues related to gathered worship were:

1. how to pray and prophesy
  - a. man uncovered
  - b. woman covered
2. pride and abuse related to spiritual gifts
3. how to implement gifts into worship
  - a. tongue speakers and interpreters
  - b. singers
  - c. prophets

B. There are three tests related to spiritual gifts.

1. chapter 12 - do they motivate Christocentric unity?
2. chapter 13 - do they motivate love?
3. chapter 14 - do they build the body?

C. There are several lists of spiritual gifts in the NT (cf. Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12-14; Eph. 4:11; and 1 Pet. 4:10-11). The lists are not the same, nor is the order of gifts the same. They are representative samples, not definitive lists. Some of the gifts function in gathered worship, but others focus outside corporate worship meetings.

The emphasis which Paul places on spiritual giftedness is surprising, but he says little about how one finds or identifies his/her gift. I am reluctant to affirm many of the "spiritual tests" that have been developed in our day. They test only for the gifts listed in the NT. Many of the gifts listed are not clearly defined (i.e., the gifts of leadership in Eph. 4:11). The most helpful guide I have found in this area is the IVP booklet entitled *Affirming the Will of God* by Paul Little. The same Christian wisdom that helps us find God's will also helps us identify our effective gift for ministry.

1. pray specifically
2. ask mature Christians who know you what strengths they see in you
3. look for open doors of opportunity to try different areas
4. follow the desires of your heart

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 12:1-3

<sup>1</sup>Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware. <sup>2</sup>You know that when you were pagans, *you were* led astray to the mute idols, however you were led.

<sup>3</sup>Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

**12:1 "Now concerning"** This is a recurring phrase in 1 Corinthians that shows Paul is answering specific questions from the church (cf. 1 Cor. 7:1,25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1,12).

**NASB, NKJV "spiritual *gifts*"**

**NRSV**

**(footnote)**

**"spiritual persons"**

**TEV**

**"the gifts from the Holy Spirit"**

**NJB**

**"gifts of the Spirit"**

The Greek term is a genitive plural of *pneuma*. This can refer to persons, gifts, or spiritualities (i.e., spiritual matters, cf. 1 Cor. 14:1).

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: SPIRIT IN THE BIBLE**

■ **"brethren"** Paul often uses "brethren" to signal a change of subjects. This first verse has three of Paul's contextual markers of a subject change: (1) now concerning; (2) brethren; and (3) I do not want you to be unaware. Chapters 11-14 deal with different aspects of gathered worship.

The messages that Paul sent to Corinth were so difficult that he often used "brethren" to remind them of their unity in God's family (cf. 1 Cor. 1:10,11,26; 2:1; 3:1; 4:6; 6:5,8; 7:24,29; 5:12; 9:5; 10:1; 11:2,33; 12:1; 14:6,20,26,39; 15:1,6,50,58; 16:11,12,15,20; 2 Cor. 1:8; 8:1,23; 9:3,5; 11:9; 13:11).

■ **"I do not want you to be unaware"** This is a recurrent phrase in Paul's writings (cf. Rom. 1:13; 11:25; 1 Cor. 10:1; 11:3; 12:1; 2 Cor. 1:8; 1 Thess. 4:13). It was one of his ways of introducing a significant new topic.

**12:2 "you were pagans"** This is an imperfect indicative. These believers were once pagans, but now they must shed this mind-set and related activity. The church at Corinth was deeply influenced by (1) pagan worship practices and (2) Roman culture. Both were coloring the gospel in inappropriate ways.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"you were led astray"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"carried away. . .however you were led"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"you were enticed and led astray"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"you were led astray in many ways"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"you were irresistibly drawn"</b>

This phrase has two related verbals from the root "to lead." The first is a Periphrastic imperfective passive indicative and the second is a present passive participle, "you were and continue to be led."

The second term is also intensified by the preposition *apo*, which implies "to lead as a prisoner" (cf. Mark 14:44; 15:16). These former pagans had been continuously controlled by the demonic in their worship practices (cf. 1 Cor. 10:20) before their conversion.

■ **"to mute idols"** This refers to gods who could not speak or help (cf. Isa. 46:5-7; Jer. 10:5; Hab. 2:18-19) in contrast to the Holy Spirit.

**12:3 "no one speaking by the Spirit of God"** This is a Hebrew idiom for inspiration (cf. 1 Sam. 10:10; 19:23-24). This reminds believers that not everyone who claims to speak for God does so. Every believer must evaluate those who claim to speak God's message (cf. 1 Cor. 12:10; Deut. 18:20-22; Matthew 7; 1 John 4:1-3).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"Jesus is accursed"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"calls Jesus accursed"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"Let Jesus be accursed"</b>
<b>TEV, NJB</b>	<b>"a curse on Jesus"</b>

This is a shocking statement. Why would anyone (except traditional Jews) who claims to speak for God say this? The term (i.e., *anathema*) itself had an OT background (i.e., Hebrew, *herem*). It related to the concept of Holy War, where a city was devoted to God and, therefore, it became holy. This meant that everything in it that breathed, human or animal, had to die (cf. Jos. 6:17; 7:12).

The theories of how this term was used in Corinth are

1. that it has a Jewish setting relating to the synagogue oaths (cf. Acts 26:11, i.e., later, rabbinical curse formulas were used to remove Christians from the synagogue). To remain a member one had to reject or curse Jesus of Nazareth.
2. that it has a Roman setting relating to Emperor worship where only Caesar could be called "Lord."

3. that it has a pagan worship setting where the curses were called on people by the use of a god's name. This could then be translated, "May Jesus curse \_\_\_\_\_" (cf. 1 Cor. 16:22).
4. that someone related the phrase to the theological concept of Jesus bearing the OT curse for us (cf. Deut. 21:23; Gal. 3:13).
5. Recent studies from Corinth (cf. footnote #1 p. 164 in Bruce Winter's *After Paul Left Corinth*) document the curse tablets found on the ancient acropolis at Corinth. Biblical scholars have assumed that a linking verb "is" should be provided in the phrase, "Jesus is accursed," but this archaeological evidence clearly shows that these first century Roman period curses from Corinth lack the verb (as do some of the curses in the LXX of Deut. 22:15-20), as does 1 Cor. 12:3. There is further archaeological evidence that Christians in first century Roman Corinth used curse formulas in burial curses (i.e., Byzantine period), found on Christian graves (J. H. Kent, *The Inscriptions*, 1926-50. Princeton: American School of Classical Studies, 1966, vol. 8:3, no. 644).

Some segments of the church were reverting to pagan curses in Jesus' name against other members of the church. Not only is the method a problem, but also the hateful motive. This is another example of the tension within this church. Paul wants them to build up the church, edify the church. They want to curse part of the church!

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: CURSE (ANATHEMA)**

- **"Jesus is Lord"** This was the early church's confession of faith (cf. both Rom. 10:9-13 and Acts 2:21 quote Joel 2:33; also note Phil. 2:11). It was a way of affirming Jesus' deity and Messiahship.
- **"except by the Holy Spirit"** The Holy Spirit's task is to convict the world of sin and draw people to Christ (cf. John 16:8-14). No fallen humans can turn to God or Christ unaided (cf. John 6:44,65). This is the mystery of a sovereign God who loves all humanity made in His image yet His covenant mandate is that they must respond (and continue to respond) in repentance, faith, obedience, service, and perseverance!

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 12:4-11**

**<sup>4</sup>Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. <sup>5</sup>And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. <sup>6</sup>There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. <sup>7</sup>But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. <sup>8</sup>For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; <sup>9</sup> to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, <sup>10</sup>and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another *various* kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. <sup>11</sup>But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.**

#### **12:4-6**

<b>NASB, NRSV</b>	<b>"varieties"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"diversities"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"different kinds"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"different"</b>

This term means (1) to distribute or (2) variety (cf. 1 Cor. 12:4,5,6). There is an obvious literary parallel between 1 Cor. 12:4,5, and 6, which unites the work of all three persons of the Trinity (see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 2:10).

**12:4-6 "Spirit. . . Lord. . . God"** Note the action of the Trinity which emphasizes unity amidst diversity, not uniformity. The church is a group of gifted individuals. We need each other! Each one is important. Each one is gifted for ministry. The term "Trinity" is not a biblical term, but the concept is. See Special Topic:

Trinity at 1 Cor. 2:10.

**12:4 "gifts"** This is a different word than the one used in 1 Cor. 12:1. This is the Greek term *charisma*. This is from the root term "*chairō*," which means to rejoice, or be full of joy (cf. 1 Cor. 7:30; 13:6; 2 Cor. 2:3; 6:10; 7:7,9,16 and the compound with *sun* in 1 Cor. 12:26 and 13:6). From this develops several concepts.

1. *chara* - joy, rejoicing
2. *charis* - generous gift (cf. 1 Cor. 16:3; 2 Cor. 8:4,6)
  - a. grace (cf. 1 Cor. 1:4; 15:10)
  - b. thanks (cf. 1 Cor. 15:57)
3. *charizomai*
  - a. give generously
  - b. forgive (cf. 2 Cor. 2:7-10; 12:13)
  - c. cancel a debt
4. *charisma* - a free gift (cf. Rom. 5:15,16; 6:23; 2 Cor. 1:11) or divinely conferred adornment (cf. 1 Cor. 12:4,9,28,30,31)

God has freely gifted His church. The gifts are for building up and growing the body of Christ. In reality they are the work of Christ divided among His followers. Believers must unite their giftedness with love and cooperate with each other so that the church may win and disciple a lost world (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8).

**12:5 "ministries"** This is the Greek term *diakonos*. It has several uses in the NT.

1. *diakonos*
  - a. a servant (cf. Matt. 20:28; 22:13; 23:11; John 2:5)
  - b. a minister/preacher (cf. 1 Cor. 3:5; 2 Cor. 3:6; 6:4; 11:15[twice],23)
2. *diakoneō*
  - a. to serve (cf. 1 Pet. 4:11)
  - b. deacon (cf. Rom. 16:1; 1 Tim. 3:8,10,13; also note Phil. 1:1)
  - c. administer (cf. Acts 6:2; 2 Cor. 3:3; 8:19,20)
3. *diakonia*
  - a. rendering aid (cf. Acts 6:1; 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:1,12,13)
  - b. ministry for the gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 12:5; 16:15; 2 Cor. 4:1; 5:8; 6:3; 11:8)
  - c. a revelation from God (cf. 2 Cor. 3:7,8,9)

The key idea is serving and helping others in need (i.e., spiritual or physical). God equips His church to serve-serve themselves and serve a lost and needy world.

**12:6**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"effects. . .works"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"activities. . .works"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"activities. . .activates"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"abilities. . .ability"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"activity. . .work"</b>

This is a play on the term *energēs* from which we get the English term energy. Its basic meaning is to effectively accomplish a task. This sentence has the noun and the matching participle (present active). Paul used this term often in his Corinthian letters.

1. *energēs, energeia, energeō, energēma*, 1 Cor. 4:12; 9:6; 12:6,10,11; 16:9,10; 2 Cor. 1:6; 4:12
2. *ergon* and *sunergeō*, 1 Cor. 3:13,14,15; 9:1; 15:58; 16:10; 2 Cor. 6:1; 9:8; 11:15

God's work is effective work. It accomplishes its purpose. Believers are called to active service, but the energy and effectiveness is of God.

**12:7**

**NASB** **"But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good"**



<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"The Spirit's presence is shown in some way in each person for the good of all"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"The particular manifestation of the Spirit granted to each one is to be used for the general good"</b>

This truth is so important for the life and ministry of the church.

1. Every believer has a freely-given grace gift given by the Spirit for ministry at salvation.
  - a. Every believer is important.
  - b. Every believer is gifted.
  - c. Every believer is a minister.
2. The purpose of God's gift is not the elevation of the individual, but for the health and growth of the whole body. We need each other!

This truth was desperately needed by the factious, arrogant, assertive believers at Corinth (and in every age). The "common good" or "profit" (*sumpheron*, cf. 1 Cor. 6:12; 7:35; 10:33; 2 Cor. 8:10) is for the body and not the individual. Believers must take personal responsibility to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (cf. Eph. 4:2-3). This is so radically different from western individualism.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: CHRISTIANITY IS CORPORATE**

**12:8**

<b>NASB, NKJV</b>	<b>"word of wisdom. . .the word of knowledge"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"the utterance of wisdom. . .the utterance of knowledge"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"a message full of wisdom. . .a message full of knowledge"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"the gift of utterance expressing wisdom. . .the gift of utterance expressing knowledge"</b>

These are two different Greek terms, "wisdom" (i.e., *sophia*) and "knowledge" (i.e., *gnōsis*). They reflect the Hebrew distinction between "wisdom" and "knowledge." The first is practical and the second, more academic. The first relates to living the Christian life and the second to a proper explanation of Christian doctrine.

**12:9 "faith"** This refers not to saving faith like Mark 1:15; John 1:12, because the gifts are only given to believers, but to miracle working faith, which is made clear from 1 Cor. 13:2 (cf. Matt. 17:20; 21:21).

▣ **"healing"** This term (*iaomai*) is plural (cf. 2 Cor. 12:7-9,28,30), which is literally "gifts of cures." Healing is a gift from the Spirit in this context and a ministry of the "elders" in James 5:14. Physical healing was/is an evidence of the love and care of God and a sign of spiritual healing (i.e., forgiveness of sins, salvation). For the Jews there was a connection between sin and sickness, righteousness and health (cf. Deuteronomy 27-28). However, Job and Psalm 73 clarify the issue as does John 9. The mystery is why some are healed and some are not. One's faith cannot be the key ingredient, but God's will. It is never how much faith we exercise, but the object of our faith (faith the size of a mustard seed moves mountains, cf. Matt. 17:20).

Thank God for healing, healers, and caring churches!

**12:10 "the effecting of miracles"** This seems to be parallel to 1 Cor. 12:9a (i.e., miracle-working faith). Since this is a list, they cannot be completely synonymous. The exact distinction is uncertain.

▣ **"prophecy"** There are at least two ways to understand this term: (1) in the Corinthian letters this refers to sharing or proclaiming the gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 14:1), (2) the book of Acts mentions prophets (cf. 1 Cor. 11:27-28; 13:1; 15:32; 21:10, even prophetesses, 21:9).

The problem with this term is, how does the NT gift of prophecy relate to OT prophets? In the OT prophets are the writers of Scripture. In the NT this task is given to the original twelve Apostles and their

helpers. As the term "apostle" is retained as an ongoing gift (cf. Eph. 4:11), but with a changed task after the death of the Twelve, so too, the office of prophet. Inspiration has ceased, there is no further inspired Scripture (cf. Jude 1:20). New Testament prophets' primary task is proclamation of the gospel, but also a different task, possibly how to apply NT truths to current situations and needs. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: NEW TESTAMENT PROPHECY](#) at 1 Cor. 14:1.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY](#)

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"distinguishing of spirits"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"discerning of spirits"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"discernment of spirits"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"the ability to tell the difference between gifts that come from the Spirit and those that do not"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"the power of distinguishing spirits"</b>

There are three sources of human giftedness: (1) by nature (i.e., natural talents); (2) by the Spirit; and (3) by the devil. This gift is the ability to differentiate among these sources (cf. 1 Tim. 4:1; 1 John 4:1-3).

■ **"various kinds of tongues"** This is the Greek term for "tongue" (i.e., *glossa*). It was used in the OT as a synonym for "nation." In Greek it was used for speaking the language of a nation. This would imply that it had the connotation of a known human language. However, the need for an interpreter, which also is a spiritual gift, instead of a translator, along with Paul's fuller discussion in chapter 14, leads one to think this was an ecstatic utterance at Corinth.

Exactly how the "tongues" of Corinth are related to the tongues at Pentecost recorded in Acts is uncertain. The miracle in Acts 2 is of the ear (cf. 1 Cor. 2:6,8,11), not the tongue. The tongues experiences of Acts communicated the gospel directly to the Jews of the Diaspora who were present. It also functioned as a way to recognize the presence, power, and will of God for the inclusion of other groups, like the Samaritan (cf. Acts 8) and Cornelius, a Roman army officer (cf. Acts 10). The tongues in Acts were a sign to the believing Jews that God had opened the door for Gentiles to be included (cf. 1 Cor. 15:8). Notice no need for an interpreter in Acts!

Tongues at Corinth are similar to the ecstatic speech of the Greek religions (e.g., Delphi). Corinthian tongues were apparently being misused or over-glorified (cf. 1 Cor. 13:1 and 14:1-33).

Tongues were a way for an individual believer to intimately commune with God, but without understanding. It is a valid gift (cf. 1 Cor. 14:39), but it is not for all believers (cf. 1 Cor. 12:29-30, which has a series of questions that expect a "no" answer). It is not a gift that proves one is saved or shows one is a spiritual person. Tongues plus interpretation was another means of communicating the gospel and its relevance.

■ **"interpretation of tongues"** Corinth was a cosmopolitan city, Roman in culture, Greek in geography. The city's location combined with the danger of sailing around the cape of Greece in the winter combined to make it a commercial crossroads of the eastern empire and the western empire. Every nationality would be in Corinth, but tongues needed a spiritual gift to communicate its message for the church, not just a translator. Tongues in Corinth was not a known language.

**12:11** This verse emphasizes the truth that the Spirit gives to each believer a ministry gift (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7,18). Also, which gift is the Spirit's choice, not the believer's. There is no hierarchy of gifts. All the gifts are to serve the body of Christ, the church (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7). They are not merit badges, but servant towels.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE PERSONHOOD OF THE SPIRIT](#)

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-13**

<sup>12</sup>For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. <sup>13</sup>For by one Spirit we were all

**baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.**

**12:12** This starts a new paragraph that uses the inter-relationships of the human body as a metaphor for the church (cf. Eph. 4:4,16). It emphasizes unity amidst diversity. The focus is not on any part, but on the functioning whole; not the individual, but the family.

The OT and NT have a corporate emphasis (see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 12:7). This is not meant to depreciate the fact that people become Christians on an individual basis, but that once one is a Christian, the focus is always the health, unity, and well-being of the whole!

**12:13 "by one Spirit"** This preposition (*en*) can mean "in," "with," or "by means of." Be careful of using Koine Greek prepositions to make doctrinal affirmations. This is parallel to Eph. 2:18; 4:4.

The Spirit is the means by which God convicts people of sin, draws them to Christ, baptizes them into Christ, and forms Christ in them (cf. John 16:8-14). This is the age of the Spirit. His activity is the sign that the new age of righteousness has come. The gift is the Spirit and the Spirit gives gifts which reflect His task of revealing Christ, drawing the lost to Christ, and forming Christlikeness in believers.

■ **"were all baptized into one body"** Water baptism is a metaphor of a previous spiritual experience that occurred at conversion (cf. Eph. 4:5). In several ways Eph. 4:4-6 parallels this passage. This baptism refers to initial salvation, which incorporates believers into the body of Christ, the Church. The often-used contemporary phrase "the baptism of the Holy Spirit" is confusing because biblically it refers to one trusting Christ as savior, but it is used today of an empowering, yielding, later experience in the lives of believers. I do not deny the reality of this subsequent experience, but I prefer the term "Lordship experience." In reading the biographies of great Christians a pattern emerges: (1) trusting Christ; (2) trying to serve Him; (3) failing to produce lasting fruit; (4) frustration at personal efforts; (5) yielding to the need for God to do His own work; (6) empowering for ministry; and (7) all glory to God, not the human vessel.

■ **"whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free"** There are no more worldly human distinctions and barriers between those who trust Christ (cf. Joel 2:28 quoted by Peter in Acts 2:14-36; Gal. 3:27-28; Col. 3:11). This truth surely asserts the equality of all human believers. However, it does not necessarily remove all distinctions. All believers are called, gifted servants, but a Christian may still be a slave.

This equality would have been shocking to Roman society in Corinth, where the man was the supreme authority over (1) his wife; (2) his children; and (3) his domestic slaves. There was a rigid social hierarchy. Paul's radical theology, based on Jesus' teachings and actions, was a drastic paradigm shift and shocking new worldview which had to be lived out in the fellowship of the church (cf. Eph. 5:18-6:9). It is specifically in this area that the church at Corinth was deviant.

■ **"we were all made to drink of one spirit"** This term was used of irrigating water. It literally meant "saturated." This was interpreted as referring to the Lord's Supper by Augustine, Luther, and Calvin, but because of John 7:37-39 it may refer to the Spirit. It is a metaphor of unity and community brought about by one agent, the Spirit.

Both "baptized" and "made to drink" are aorist passive indicatives, which imply a finished work in past time. The tense and parallelism show they do not refer to Christian water baptism and the Lord's Supper, but one past complete event (i.e., conversion by the Spirit, i.e., the passive voice, or by Christ, cf. Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16; Acts 1:5, or by the Father, cf. Acts 2:33).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 12:14-18**

**<sup>14</sup>For the body is not one member, but many. <sup>15</sup>If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. <sup>16</sup>And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. <sup>17</sup>If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? <sup>18</sup>But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.**

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**12:14-26** Paul uses the physical body as an analogy to show the mutual relationship between the individual parts of the body necessary for the functioning of the whole. Each individual part is needed for the health and effectiveness of the whole.

**12:14** This is the summary truth repeated several times in this chapter (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12,13,14,20,25,27).

**12:15-16 "If. . .if"** These are both third class conditional sentences, which denote potential action. These verses show the tension that existed between not only the factious groups, but their over-evaluation of certain spiritual gifts. All gifts are from God and He chooses which one for each believer (cf. 1 Cor. 12:11,18).

**12:17,19 "If. . .if"** These are incomplete second class conditional sentences (i.e., no verb in 1 Cor. 12:17 and no concluding clause in all three). The first part is false (i.e., the whole body is not an eye, 1 Cor. 12:17; the whole body is not an ear, v, 17; and the whole body is not one member, 1 Cor. 12:19, cf. A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament In Light of Historical Research*, pp. 1015,1023 and *Short Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, p. 166).

**12:18 "God has placed"** This is an aorist middle indicative, which implies a complete and personal action. In 1 Cor. 12:11 the Spirit is said to distribute the gifts. This is an obvious identification of the Spirit as divine! See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 2:11.

▣ **"God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired"** The reference is to creation but the analogy is to spiritual gifts (cf. 1 Cor. 12:27). We don't choose; God places.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 12:19-25**

**<sup>19</sup>If they were all one member, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup>But now there are many members, but one body. <sup>21</sup>And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." <sup>22</sup>On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; <sup>23</sup>and those *members* of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable *members become* much more presentable, <sup>24</sup> whereas our more presentable *members* have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that *member* which lacked, <sup>25</sup>so that there may be no division in the body, but *that* the members may have the same care for one another.**

**12:22-24 "weaker. . .less honorable. . .less presentable. . .that member which lacked"** This may refer to those parts of the human body which are covered by clothing. This discussion reveals that some of the less obvious, less culturally desired, less "showy" gifts were still necessary for a healthy, happy body. God/Spirit gave the gifts, all gifts are needed, all gifts have honor. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: WEAKNESS](#) at 2 Cor. 12:9.

▣ **"abundant honor"** This term is in both 1 Cor. 12:23 and 24. See Special Topic at 2 Cor. 2:7.

**12:25** This verse expresses Paul's main point (i.e., a *hina* clause, purpose clause). The church is to be one, not divided. Believers are to care for one another (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7), not do their own thing!

The verbs are subjunctive, which introduces a contingency. This is what they should do, but there is some doubt about their doing it.

The term "care" usually means anxiety or worry (cf. Matt. 6:25,27; 10:19; 13:22; 2 Cor. 11:28; Phil. 4:6). It can also express legitimate concern, as in this text and 7:32,33,34 and Phil. 2:20.

■ **"divisions"** This is the Greek term *schisma*, from which we get the English term schism and schismatic. Paul has mentioned these "divisions" before (cf. 1 Cor. 1:10; 11:18). They are the basic problem in Corinth. The divisions were related to (1) certain leaders; (2) certain theological emphases; (3) Roman social standing; (4) magnification of certain gifts; or (5) residue of a pagan mind set.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 12:26**

**<sup>26</sup>And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.**

**12:26 "if. . .if"** These are first class conditional sentences (*eite* with present indicative, cf. 2 Cor. 1:6; with no verb, cf. Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 3:22; 8:5; 14:27; 2 Cor. 5:10) which express Paul's desire as to how believers should treat each other (cf. Rom. 12:15).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 12:27-31a**

**<sup>27</sup>Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it. <sup>28</sup>And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. <sup>29</sup>All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? <sup>30</sup>All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they? <sup>31</sup>But earnestly desire the greater gifts.**

**12:28 "God has appointed"** This is an aorist middle indicative. This is theologically parallel to 1 Cor. 12:18.

■ **"church"** See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:2.

■ **"apostles"** The Greek term is from one of the Greek verbs "to send." It was used by the rabbis for someone sent as an official representative of another. In the Gospel of John it takes on the implication of Jesus the Messiah who was sent by God. The Sent One sends His followers (cf. John 20:21). See Special Topic: Send at 1 Cor. 4:9.

Originally this referred to the Twelve, but later it was used of others: (1) Barnabas (cf. Acts 14:4,14); (2) Andronicus and Junia (cf. Rom. 16:7); (3) Apollos (cf. 1 Cor. 4:9); (4) James the half brother of Jesus (cf. Gal. 1:19); (5) Epaphroditus (cf. Phil. 2:25; (6 & 7) Silas and Timothy (cf. 1 Thess. 2:6). The gift is mentioned in Eph. 4:11 as an ongoing gift.

■ **"prophets"** See Special Topics: NT Prophecy at 1 Cor. 14:1 and OT Prophecy at 1 Cor. 12:10.

■ **"teachers"** This gift is mentioned in Acts 13:1 in combination with prophecy, but in Ephesians 4:11 it is linked with pastors. In 2 Tim. 1:11 Paul says he is a preacher, apostle, and a teacher. Here it seems to stand independent as it does in Rom. 12:7. It is also discussed separately in James 3:1ff. This implies that these leadership gifts can be combined in different ways in different believers to meet the need of the church in that day or area. Each of these gifted leaders proclaimed the gospel, but with different emphases.

■ **"miracles"** Notice in 1 Cor. 12:9 and 10 this gift is mentioned twice, here but once. Miracles were a way to confirm the gospel. They are prominent in the Gospels and Acts and mentioned in the Apostolic letters. They are still common in areas where the gospel is new.

■ **"healings"** This gift functions both to reveal the love of God and confirm the gospel. The question is not does God still heal, but why some and not others? James 5:13-18 give further guidelines about how this should be dealt with in a local church. In James it is a ministry of the local elders, not a spiritual gift.

<b>NASB, NKJV</b>	<b>"helps"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"forms of assistance"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"power to. . .help others"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"helpful acts"</b>

This term is used of "helpful deeds." It is a general term and may refer to the regular ministry of deacons (cf. Phil. 1:1 and M. R. Vincent, *Word Studies*, vol. 2, p. 793).

<b>NASB, NKJV</b>	<b>"administrations"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"forms of leadership"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"those who are given the power. . .to direct them"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"the gifts of. . .guidance"</b>

This term was originally used of a ship's pilot (cf. Acts 27:11; Rev. 18:17). It was used metaphorically for church leaders who function as guides. This is the ability to lead others to accomplish spiritual tasks.

A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures In Greek New Testament*, vol. 4, says that "helps" refers to the work of deacons helping the poor and sick and that "administrations" refers to the work of bishops/elders/pastors, pp. 173-174.

■ **"various kinds of tongues"** See 1 Cor. 12:10.

**12:29-30** This series of questions all begin with a negative particle (i.e., *mē*), which denotes that the questions expect a "no" answer. This is an important passage in refuting the theological overstatement that "tongues" is a gift for every believer, a sort of confirming sign of salvation and/or a special mark of true spirituality. It is a valid gift, but not for everyone. The other extreme is to reject "tongues" as passing away in the Apostolic era. This is also a theological overstatement (cf. 1 Cor. 14:39).

The whole point of this chapter is that there is one body, but many parts. No one part (i.e., gift) is pre-eminent.

### **12:31a**

<b>NASB, NIV</b>	<b>"But earnestly desire the greater gifts"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"But earnestly desire the best gifts"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"But strive for the greater gifts"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"Set your hearts, then, on the more important gifts"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"Set your mind on the higher gifts"</b>

This is either (1) a present active indicative (i.e., a statement of fact) or (2) a Present active imperative (i.e., a continuing command). W. Randolph Tate, *Biblical Interpretation*, prefers the indicative, "you are striving for the better gifts" as another of Paul's sarcastic comments (p. 22).

The second part of this verse should go with chapter 13. The greater gifts would refer to (1) faith, hope, and love of 1 Cor. 13:13, with love being greatest or (2) the gifts which edify the whole body, 1 Cor. 14:1ff, which would be preaching and teaching (cf. 1 Cor. 12:28).

This admonition seems to refer to the church as a whole, not the individual. Focusing on the individual is a common western predisposition. The focus of this chapter is corporate. The church should ask the Spirit for more of His giftedness (i.e., believers) that proclaims the gospel and builds up the body.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why was there such a problem over spiritual gifts at Corinth?
2. When does the believer receive his/her spiritual gift? Does everyone have one? Can one have more than one spiritual gift? Can one ever choose his/her gift?
3. What is the purpose of spiritual gifts?

## **SOME PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR HOW BELIEVERS CAN KNOW THEIR GIFTS**

1. Ask God specifically to show you.
2. Ask other mature believers who know you what they think your gift might be.
3. Explore your natural desires.
4. Move in the direction of the best light you have and your desire.
5. Give it a try and look for personal contentment and spiritual fruit.

These are taken from a wonderful booklet by Paul Little, *Affirming the Will of God*, published by IVP. It gives Christian wisdom, not Scripture, on how to know God's will, which is analogous to how to know one's spiritual gift.

However, believers need to remember that the lists of gifts are not the same. Being able to name our gift is not as important as recognizing that we have one. Believers, all believers, are called and gifted to ministry (cf. Eph. 4:11-12).

# 1 CORINTHIANS 13

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
				Decorum in Public Worship (11:2-14:40)
Love	The Greatest Gift	Love, the Greatest Gift and Way	Love	The Order of Importance in Spiritual Gifts and Love
12:31b-13:3				12:31-13:3
	13:1-13	13:1-3	13:1-3	
13:4-7		13:4-7	13:4-7	13:4-7
13:8-13		13:8-13	13:8-10	13:8-12
			13:11-12	
			13:13	13:13

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

#### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 13:1-13

- A. This chapter forms an integral part of Paul's discussion of spiritual gifts. This "love chapter" is set right in the midst of the conflict over spiritual gifts.
- B. The church at Corinth had tried to magnify some of the gifts. Paul affirms all the gifts and sets the bounds on their function and purpose in gathered worship in chapters 12-14.
- C. The second major test of spiritual gifts (see Contextual Insights, chap. 12, B) is, "Are they exercised in love?"



## BASIC OUTLINE

- A. The necessity of love as the motive for exercising spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 13:1-3).
- B. The character of love is expressed in relationships with people (1 Cor. 13:4-7)
- C. The ultimacy of love as a characteristic of God's family (1 Cor. 13:8-13).

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 12:31b-13:3

**12:31** And I show you a still more excellent way. **13:1** If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. **2** If I have *the gift of prophecy*, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. **3** And if I give all my possessions to feed *the poor*, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

**12:31b "a still more excellent way"** The term "excellent" is a Greek term made up of *huper* (i.e., over or beyond) and *ballō* (i.e., to throw). It is metaphorical for that which goes beyond. Paul uses this metaphor often in 2 Corinthians (cf. 2 Cor. 1:8; 3:10; 4:7; 9:14; 11:23; 12:7). See Special Topic: Paul's Use of *Huper* Compounds at 1 Cor. 2:1.

The term "way" is an OT metaphor for godly lifestyle (cf. Deut. 5:32-33; 31:29; Ps. 27:11; Isa. 35:8). OT faith, like NT faith, was not simply a correct creed (orthodoxy), but a life of obedience (orthopraxy). The title of the early church was "The Way" (cf. Acts 9:2; 19:9,23; 24:14,22). God's best is a life of self-giving love, modeled by Himself and His Son.

**13:1 "If"** This is a series of third class conditional sentences, which mean potential action, in 1 Cor. 13:1, 2, and 3 (twice).

**NASB, NKJV "I speak with the tongues of men and of angels"**

**NRSV "I speak with the tongues of mortals and of angels"**

**TEV "I may be able to speak the languages of human beings and even of angels"**

**NJB "though I command languages both human and angelic"**

This is obviously a reference to the gift of tongues mentioned in 1 Cor. 12:10,28-29, a gift which the Corinthian church magnified and Paul possessed (cf. 1 Cor. 14:1,5,6,18-19).

Since I think that "tongues" in Acts were different from "tongues" in Corinth, this dual reference makes me wonder if possibly Paul also understood tongues to be human languages (i.e., Pentecost) and an ecstatic utterance (i.e., language of heaven). For sure, he affirms that a complete linguistic ability alone is inadequate unless energized by love! Christianity is more than a message; it is a person, a self-giving, loving, obedient person-Jesus.

■ **"love"** This is the Greek term *agapē*. It was one of several words for "love" in Classical Greek, but was used infrequently (i.e., the noun form). The early church seems to have chosen this term and infused it with a new Christian connotation (i.e., God and Christ's self-giving love, cf. 1 John 4:10) because of its use in the Septuagint (e.g., Gen. 22:2) and rabbinical Judaism. In the OT God's covenant love and loyalty to His promises and covenants was expressed by *hesed*. In many ways *agapē* expresses this concept of "covenant love" by paralleling it with "the Kingdom of God." It becomes the NT's term for God's character, which He wishes His followers to emulate (cf. 1 John 4:7-21).

Just a note about the relationship of *agapē* to *philos*. In some contexts there seems to be a distinction (cf. John 21:15-19). However, in Koine Greek they are regularly synonymous (cf. John 3:35 and 5:20).

## SPECIAL TOPIC: LOVINGKINDNESS (HESED)

NASB, NRSV	"a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal"
NKJV	"as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal"
TEV	"no more than a noisy gong or a clanging bell"
NJB	"a gong booming or a cymbal clashing"

Historically in the first century Roman world this was used by the cults of Dionysus and Cybele in worship to attract their deities. In the context of the Corinthian abuse it may mean metaphorically "a fanfare of trumpets" (cf. Matt. 6:2), which brought attention to a speaker as did men covering their hair in gathered worship or women uncovering their short hair in gathered worship (cf. 1 Cor. 11:4-5).

The city of Corinth was known in the ancient world for its bronze ware. One use of this material was for "resonance enhancers" in theaters (cf. *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, p. 172).

Paul's parallelism shows the intensity of his feelings about spiritual activities without love.

1. "I have become a noisy gong" (perfect tense), 1 Cor. 13:1
2. "I am nothing" (present tense), 1 Cor. 13:2
3. "it profits me nothing" (present tense), 1 Cor. 13:3

**13:2 "gift of prophecy"** In this book this term is best understood as "sharing the gospel message" (cf. 1 Cor. 11:4,5; 14:39). The first three terms of 1 Cor. 13:2 relate to the gifts of wisdom and knowledge (cf. 1 Cor. 12:8). There was a problem in this area as Paul's negative statements of 1 Cor. 1:17,19,20,21,22,24; 2:1,4,5,6,13; 3:19 show. Prophecy without love, as wisdom and knowledge without love, is not pleasing to God. Spiritual gifts can be used in appropriate ways.

For the concept of "prophecy" in the OT see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 12:10 and NT prophecy at 1 Cor. 14:1.

■ **"and know all mysteries and all knowledge"** Paul uses this in 1 Cor. 4:1 for gospel truths and in 1 Cor. 15:51 for the specific truths about the resurrection body. In this context this phrase seems to refer to knowledge in its every form, which the believers at Corinth were prizing and seeking. Even perfect knowledge without love is not pleasing to God. See Special Topic: The Mystery at 1 Cor. 2:1.

■ **"all faith"** This refers to miracle-working faith (cf. 1 Cor. 12:9,28; Matt. 17:20; 21:21), but notice in Matt. 7:21-23 that miracle-working power without love does not please God or even know God.

For the concept of "faith" in the OT see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:9 and NT at 1 Cor. 2:4.

### 13:3

NASB	"I give all my possessions"
NKJV	"I bestow all my goods"
NRSV	"I give away everything I have"
TEV	"I may give away everything I have"
NJB	"I should give away. . .all that I possess"

This implies the giving away of all that one has, personally, piece by piece (cf. John 13:26,27,30). This may be an allusion to Jesus' discussion with the rich young ruler (cf. Matt. 19:16-29; Mark 10:17-30; Luke 18:18-30).

NASB, NKJV	"to feed <i>the poor</i> "
NRSV	-omits phrase-
TEV	-omits phrase-
NJB	"to the poor"

This phrase is not in the Greek text, but is implied in the action of this verb.

NASB, NKJV,

TEV, NJB      "my body to be burned"  
NRSV          "my body so that I may boast"

There are two manuscript options: "burned" (i.e., *kauthēsomai*) and "glory" (i.e., *kauchēsōmai*) are both found in early Greek manuscripts and the early church fathers. The phrase, "that I may glory," has the strongest manuscript support (i.e., MSS P<sup>46</sup>, κ, and B), but UBS<sup>4</sup> is unable to make a decision between them. It is also a term used often by Paul (cf. 2 Cor. 8:24; Phil. 2:16; 1 Thess. 2:19; 2 Thess. 1:4). Martyrdom by burning was unknown in the early church, but became more common in later persecutions (i.e., Nero and Domitian). Therefore, one can see how a later scribe might have changed "glory" to "burn."

For a full discussion of the textual variants see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, pp. 563-564. For the opposite opinion see *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, p. 270 footnote.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-7**

**<sup>4</sup>Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, <sup>5</sup>does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, <sup>6</sup>does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; <sup>7</sup>bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.**

**13:4-7** This may have been a hymn or poem about love, written or quoted by Paul. All of these descriptions of love are active. Love is an action, not simply an emotion. These all describe the ministry of Jesus (the full and complete revelation of YHWH) as He dealt with imperfect people. Love is a person!

**13:4 "patient"** This verb (present active indicative) has the connotation of patience with people (cf. Pro. 19:11; 1 Thess. 5:14; James 5:7,8; 2 Pet. 3:9) who act unjustly toward us, without retaliation. This is one of the fruits of the Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:22). It is a characteristic of God (cf. Rom. 2:4; 9:22; 1 Tim. 1:16; 1 Pet. 3:20). It (the noun) should characterize new age believers, indwelt by God's Spirit (cf. 2 Cor. 6:6; Col. 1:11).

▣ **"kind"** This verb is found only here and is also a people-focused term. It implies "be gentle to all." Peter also uses the same term for Jesus in 1 Pet. 2:3. It is also one of the gifts of the Spirit in Gal. 5:22.

▣ **"not jealous"** This describes a strong desire, literally "to boil." Love does not desire for itself the possessions of or control over people.

▣ **"not brag"** This rare term refers to a self-flattering person who is seen by others as a braggart or windbag. It was often related to intellectual or rhetorical pride or boasting in Greek literature.

▣ **"not arrogant"** This term refers to those who overestimate and flaunt themselves. It is used often in 1 Corinthians (1 Cor. 4:6,18,19; 5:2; 8:1) and here. It truly reflects the character of this church. See note at 1 Cor. 4:6.

**13:5 "act unbecomingly"** This is not an easy term to define. It is used in 1 Cor. 7:36 in a more positive sense. Here its connotation is negative. The term was used in the Egyptian papyri implying a cursing or oath-taking connected with a violent or inappropriate act (cf. 1 Cor. 12:3). It connotes rudeness instead of graciousness.

▣ **"does not seek its own"** This is an oft repeated truth (cf. 1 Cor. 8:9; 10:24,33; Rom. 14:16; Phil. 2:3). This may be theologically related to Eph. 5:21, being submissive to one another out of respect for Christ.

▣ **"not provoked"** This term is literally "to sharpen." It is used metaphorically to "stir up." It can be positive as in Acts 17:16 or negative, as here. The Phillips translation has "is not touchy," used in the sense of "not easily irritated or angered." This noun is used of Paul and Barnabas' fight over John Mark (cf. Acts 15:39).

NASB	"does not take into account a wrong <i>suffered</i> "
NKJV	"thinks no evil"
NRSV	"or resentful"
TEV	"does not keep a record of wrongs"
NJB	"does not store up grievances"

This is an accounting term for the ledger of unpaid bills (cf. 2 Cor. 3:5; 12:6). It refers to someone who harbors a vengeful spirit. An example might be Acts 15:36-41 and 2 Tim. 4:11 over John Mark.

It is possible that this is an allusion to the Septuagint's translation of Zech. 8:17 "and let none of you devise evil in his heart against his neighbor." However, since the surrounding phrases are not OT allusions, it weakens the possibility that this one is.

**13:6** This is both a negative and positive statement of truth. In this context it may refer to gossip within the Christian community. It is unusual that the term "unrighteousness" is contrasted with "truth." Probably "unrighteousness" is the opposite of "right living" and "truth" refers to the gospel message.

▣ **"with the truth"** See Special Topic at 2 Cor. 13:8.

**13:7 "bears all things"** The term "all things" (i.e., *panta*) is fronted four times in this verse for emphasis. Love is inclusive. "All things" is used in the sense of "at all times" (i.e., all four *verbs* are present tense) and "on all occasions."

The term "bear" is from the Greek word for "roof" (cf. Matt. 8:8). It is metaphorical for (1) covering (cf. 1 Pet. 4:8, different term, but same concept) or (2) putting up with (cf. 1 Cor. 12:9; 1 Thess. 3:1,5). The Moffat translation has "slow to expose."

▣ **"believes all things"** In this context this implies "sees the best in others" or "gives a fellow Christian the benefit of the doubt." It always keeps the faith (cf. Gal. 5:22).

▣ **"hopes all things"** In this context love holds out hope of a fellow believer's eventual development in the faith. It does not despair.

▣ **"endures all things"** This is a strong term for enduring temptation and testing (cf. Matt. 10:22; 24:13; Heb. 10:32; James 1:12). Here it speaks of voluntary, steadfast endurance. This phrase emphasizes no personal retaliation or rejection, but steadfast perseverance, especially with people.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 13:8-13**

**<sup>8</sup>Love never fails; but if *there are gifts* of prophecy, they will be done away; if *there are tongues*, they will cease; if *there is knowledge*, it will be done away. <sup>9</sup>For we know in part and we prophesy in part; <sup>10</sup>but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. <sup>11</sup>When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. <sup>12</sup>For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. <sup>13</sup>But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.**

**13:8** Several translations begin a new paragraph at 1 Cor. 13:8. Paul's discussion about Christian love is slightly changing and developing in a new direction (i.e., qualities and activities of this age versus the consummation of the new age, which has been inaugurated).

▣ **"Love never fails"** This term had two relevant metaphorical usages: (1) it was used of an actor being hissed off the stage or (2) it was used of a flower that dropped its petals because of inclement weather conditions (cf. James 1:11; 1 Pet. 1:24). God's love never gives up!

NASB	"if there are. . .if there are. . .if there is"
NKJV	"whether. . .whether. . .whether"
NRSV	"as for. . .as for. . .as for"
TEV	"there are. . .there are. . .there is"
NJB	"if there are. . .if. . .if"

The grammatical form *eite* (three first class conditional sentences) implies there are spiritual gifts.

■ **"prophecy. . .will be done away. . .tongues. . .will cease. . .knowledge. . .will be done away"**

Notice the parallel structure. These were the spiritual gifts which the Corinthian Church was magnifying (cf. 1 Cor. 13:1-3). This verse has often been used to depreciate tongues because a different verb and voice are used. However, the context is affirming that all spiritual gifts will stop, but love will never stop. There is no emphasis in this context on the time element of one gift versus another. Spiritual gifts are a part of time, not eternity. Love is eternal!

This term for "done away" is in 1 Cor. 13:8,10, and 11. See Special Topic: *Katargeō* at 1 Cor. 1:28.

**13:9** This begins a series of verses that emphasizes the partiality and incompleteness of spiritual gifts. This partiality is due to human weakness, fallenness, and finitude, not a lack connected with God's giftedness.

**13:10 "when the perfect comes"** This term (i.e., *teleios*) means "maturity, completeness," or "fully equipped for an assigned task" (cf. 1 Cor. 2:6; 13:10; 14:20). The question has always been, "To what does it refer?":

1. Some have asserted that it refers to the NT. Nothing in this context points toward this. This is only a theory used to claim that the spiritual gifts have ceased in post-apostolic times.
2. Some have asserted that it refers to spiritual maturity because of 1 Cor. 13:11 (i.e., child then adult) or the proper use of spiritual gifts.
3. Some have asserted that it refers to the Second Coming of Christ and the consummation of the New Age of righteousness because of 1 Cor. 13:12 (i.e., "see face to face").
4. For me it seems to be a combination of both #2 and #3.

The different uses and connotations of *teleios* can be seen in its use in the book of Hebrews. See Special Topic below.

**SPECIAL TOPIC: END OR FULL (TELOS)**

**13:11 "I did away with"** This is the Greek term *katargeō*, which Paul uses so often. See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:28. In this context Paul asserts that

1. prophecies will be brought to an end, 1 Cor. 13:8 (future passive indicative)
2. knowledge will be brought to an end, 1 Cor. 13:8 (future passive indicative)
3. every gift will be brought to an end, 1 Cor. 13:10 (future passive indicative)
4. spiritual infancy will be brought to an end, 1 Cor. 13:11 (future active indicative)

**13:12 "mirror"** Corinth was famous for its polished metal mirrors. They were the best available in that day, but they reflected a distorted image. Humans, even redeemed humans, are hindered by (1) sin nature; (2) finitude; (3) limited perspective; (4) culture-affected conscience and worldview; (5) time as chronological sequence; and (6) human language to explain and describe a spiritual realm.

Notice the parallelism

1. 1 Cor. 13:9, know in part, prophesy in part vs. when the perfect comes
2. 1 Cor. 13:11, a child vs. an adult
3. 1 Cor. 13:12, a Corinthian mirror vs. face to face and know in part vs. fully known

These seem to reflect a present reality versus a future reality, therefore, the Second Coming, which consummates the New Age, is the focus.

■ **"dimly"** This is literally "a riddle" (cf. NJB). The rabbis believed God spoke to Moses in riddles (cf. Num. 12:6,8).

■ **"face to face"** This is a metaphor for intimate fellowship (i.e., comparable to Num. 12:8). In the OT seeing YHWH meant death (cf. Gen. 32:30; Exod. 33:20; John 1:18). In the new age this will be normal (cf. Matt. 5:8; 2 Cor. 5:7; 1 John 3:2; Rev. 22:4).

■ **"I know in part. . . I will know fully. . . have been fully known"** This is obviously a play on the connotation of the Hebrew and Greek terms "know." In the OT it referred, not to cognitive facts (i.e., Greek concept), but personal relationship (cf. Gen. 4:1 and Jer. 1:5).

In this verse there is also a play on the Greek word for "know" (i.e., *ginōskō*). The first usage is the basic term. The second and third are the compound term (i.e., *epiginōskō*), which implies experiential, full knowledge. Believers will know God in the new age as He has known us (cf. 1 Cor. 8:3; Gal. 4:9). The "new covenant" is characterized by God's people each knowing Him (cf. Jer. 31:31-34). There will be no need for preachers/teachers!

The theological concept of "knowing" is related to the concept of election. The mystery of how election (i.e., God's choice) relates to covenant response (i.e., human choice) is uncertain. Following the logic of these OT verses: Ps. 1:6; Jer. 1:5; Amos 3:2 and these NT verses: Rom. 8:29; 11:2; 1 Cor. 8:3; 13:13; Gal. 4:9, believers are known by God before time, in time, and beyond time. Believers, however, know God in stages similar to justification, sanctification, glorification. We know Him in time through the OT, Jesus, and the gospel; through time by our growth to Christlikeness through the Spirit; and beyond time we will know Him in face-to-face, relational intimacy with perfect knowledge of the New Age of righteousness.

**13:13 "hope"** This Greek term does not have the ambiguity and uncertainty of the English term. It is a confident assurance that God's promises will be reality in His timing.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: HOPE**

■ **"But now faith, hope, love abide"** The verb is singular (cf. Gal. 5:22). Paul often uses this triad (cf. Rom. 5:2-5; Gal. 5:5-6; Eph. 1:15-18; Col. 1:4-5; 1 Thess. 1:3; 5:8; Hebrews) and other NT writers also (cf. Heb. 6:10-12; 1 Pet. 1:21-22).

■ **"the greatest of these is love"** It is greatest because these others will cease at the consummation of the new age. Faith will turn to sight and hope will have its fulfillment, but love remains because it is the basic character of God (cf. John 3:16; 1 John 4:8,16).

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Give the central idea of this chapter in your own words, in one sentence.
2. Why did Paul insert a chapter on love between his discussion of spiritual gifts?
3. Define *agapē* love in your own words.
4. Why have 1 Cor. 13:8-13 become a battleground over spiritual gifts in our day?

# 1 CORINTHIANS 14

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
				Decorum in Public Worship (11:2-14:40)
Tongues and Prophecy	Prophecy and Tongues	Among Gifts, Prophecy Outranks Tongues	More About Gifts from the Spirit	Spiritual Gifts: Their Perspective Importance in the Community
14:1-5	14:1-5	14:1-5	14:1-4	14:1-5
	Tongues Must be Interpreted		14:5-6	
14:6-19	14:6-19	14:6-12		14:6-12
			14:7-12	
		14:13-19	14:13-17	14:13-19
	Tongues a Sign to Unbelievers		14:18-19	
14:20-25	14:20-25	14:20-25	14:20-22	14:20-25
			14:23-25	
All Things To Be Done In Order	Order In Church Meetings		Order in the Church	Regulating Spiritual Gifts
14:26-33a	14:26-40	14:26-33a	14:26-33a	14:26-33a
14:33b-36		14:33b-36	14:33b-35	14:33b-35
			14:36-38	14:36-38
14:37-40		14:37-40		14:39-40
			14:39-40	

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

#### 1. First paragraph

2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 14:1-40

- A. This continues Paul's guidelines for gathered worship begun in chapter 11. The church at Corinth was worshiping in inappropriate, non-standard ways in several areas.
- B. The main criteria for evaluation of worship practices is, "Does this edify the whole church?" Gathered worship has two foci:
1. the needs of the lost who are present
  2. the needs of the believers who are present
- This follows Jesus' Great Commission (cf. Matt. 28:19-20). *Hard Sayings of the Bible* says, "Paul's operative principle for congregational life and worship is constant. Whatever hinders the movement of the gospel, causes confusion rather than growth, offends rather than encourages or strengthens, builds up the self at the expense of others—all this is contrary to God's intention. And insofar as the women in Corinth and elsewhere in the young churches used their gifts contrary to God's intention, the injunction to silence is an appropriate, authoritative word. The principle which underlies the injunction is authoritative for both men and women in all churches" (p. 616).
- C. Now about the contentious issue of women's participation in gathered worship. If you read five commentators you get five different views. The problem seems to be that we all come to this chapter with personal, denominational, experiential, and hermeneutical agendas! None of us is neutral. We take the Bible seriously, but in the Bible, even Paul speaks with two voices (cf. 1 Cor. 11:5 vs. 14:34).
- Some commentators even try to remove 1 Cor. 14:34-35 as scribal additions (MSS D, F, G put these verses after 1 Cor. 14:40) or relegate them to Paul quoting a slogan of the false teachers. Either way these approaches make the chapter say exactly opposite of what it seems to say.
- D. Paul's words in 1 Cor. 14:34-35 fit Jewish custom and Greco-Roman culture. However, in many significant ways Paul's ministry is against Jewish customs and Greco-Roman culture.
- E. The first century Mediterranean world was a society based on slavery and male domination. For Jesus or Paul to have radically altered either of these social institutions would have negatively affected the church's growth, even its survival. Both Jesus and Paul affirm the dignity and worth of all humans. The gospel in time will destroy both aspects of abuse. It is safe to say that they spoke to their day with inspired power and that their words pointed to a future day of dignity and equality.
- F. Women or slave leaders in the early church would have negatively affected evangelism. The same is true today, but from the opposite end. In our society articulate women gifted for ministry will reach an aspect of our society more effectively than others. This in no way is to desire a majority feminine clergy, but the realization that all believers are called, gifted, gospel ministers; all believers! I am not advocating women for any particular ministry task, but forcefully asserting the ministry of all believers (cf. Eph. 4:12).

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 14:1-5**

**<sup>1</sup>Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual *gifts*, but especially that you may prophesy. <sup>2</sup>For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands,**



but in *his* spirit he speaks mysteries. <sup>3</sup> But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. <sup>4</sup> One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church. <sup>5</sup> Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but *even* more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying.

**14:1 "Pursue love"** This is a present active imperative (cf. Rom. 14:19; 1 Thess. 5:15; 1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22). It shows the contextual link with chapter 13. Love is the characteristic of God and His people (cf. Gal. 5:22; 1 John 4:7-21). Remember, chapters 11-14 are a literary unit on problems related to gathered worship in Corinth.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"desire earnestly spiritual gifts"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"desire spiritual gifts"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"strive for the spiritual gifts"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"set your hearts on spiritual gifts"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"be eager, too, for spiritual gifts"</b>

This is another present active imperative from the root "to boil" (cf. 1 Cor. 12:31). This shows the contextual link with chapter 12. In a sense chapter 13 breaks into the context. Remember that chapters 12-14 are one unified account on the appropriate use of spiritual gifts.

The term "spiritual" is the same one used in 1 Cor. 12:1 (cf. 1 Cor. 2:13,15; 3:1; 9:11; 10:3,4; 14:37; 15:44,46). It can relate to gifts, people, things, etc. Context determines connotation.

■ **"but especially that you may prophesy"** The term "prophesy" is used in 1 Corinthians in a specialized sense. It does not refer to the prophetic activity of OT prophets (i.e., written Scripture), but to a clear communication of the gospel whether by public preaching or private witness. It is to be desired for all believers (cf. 1 Cor. 14:39), but it is also a spiritual gift (cf. 1 Cor. 12:10,28-29). All believers participate at some level in all of the gifts of the Spirit, but one or another is energized and empowered by the Spirit within individual believers for special effectiveness. This diversity demands a co-operative and loving spirit between believers. We are called to unity, not uniformity, for the gospel. We are only effective corporately! We desperately need other believers. The church is a community of called, gifted, full-time ministers. We are gifted for the spread of the gospel and the health and wholeness of the church.

This gift is compared with tongues by the criteria of "does it edify the whole church?" It means in this context "proclaiming the gospel," which is then a blessing to the whole church as well as visitors. Speaking in tongues is only a blessing to the individual believer until it is interpreted for the whole church. This term is not to be understood in its OT sense of inspired revelation (see [SPECIAL TOPIC: OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY](#) at 1 Cor. 12:10).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: NEW TESTAMENT PROPHECY**

<b>14:2</b>	
<b>NASB, NKJV,</b>	
<b>NRSV, NJB</b>	<b>"in a tongue"</b>
<b>KJV</b>	<b>"in an unknown tongue"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"in strange tongues"</b>

This is the Greek word *glōssa*, which was used metaphorically to refer to a particular human language or dialect. The experience of "tongues" at Pentecost obviously referred to a known human language (cf. Acts 2:6-10). The miracle seems to be at the ear (i.e., "they were each one hearing them speak in his own language"). This same phenomena occurred several times in Acts for the purpose of assuring the Jewish believers that God had accepted another group of people (i.e., Samaritans, Roman military people, Gentiles).

However, 1 Corinthian "tongues" seems more in line with the ecstatic utterances of the Greek oracles, like Delphi, where a woman went into a trance and another person interpreted what she said. Corinth was a cosmopolitan city. People from all over the known world were in Corinth, yet the text assigns "interpretation of tongues" as a spiritual gift (cf. 1 Cor. 12:10,30; 14:26), not just a person who happens to speak a foreign language.

■ **"does not speak to men but to God"** Corinthian tongues are a private conversation between God and a believer (cf. 1 Cor. 14:24). Tongues are in themselves not a means of communication, but intimate fellowship with God. Only if they are interpreted do the speaker and the hearers understand.

■ **"for no one understands"** Tongues at Corinth seem to be unknown, articulated sounds. At Delphi one special person (usually a woman) would utter inarticulate sounds, then another would interpret these for the ones present. This procedure seems to parallel the experience of "tongues" at Corinth. There is no "interpreter" in Acts!

**14:3 "edification"** This is the third test used to evaluate spiritual gifts (see contextual insights at chapter 12, C). Do they edify, or build up, the church? This theme is repeated over and over again in this chapter, 1 Cor. 14:3,4,5,12,17,26. This is why "prophecy," understood as sharing the gospel, is to be desired more than "tongues." Prophecy proclaims the gospel to all present, while tongues only blesses the speaker unless they are interpreted. If interpreted, tongues and their interpretation serve the same purpose of proclaiming the gospel (i.e., prophesying). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: EDIFY](#) at 1 Cor. 8:1.

■ **"and exhortation and consolation"** The purpose of gospel proclamation is not for evangelism exclusively, but also for the encouragement of the church (i.e., edification, exhortation, and consolation).

**14:4 "One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself"** Corinthian tongues without interpretation are individual-oriented gifts.

■ **"the church"** This is the term *ekklesia* with no article which refers to the entire body of believers. Paul's desire is that all believers, not just a select few, be blessed in gathered worship. See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:2.

**14:5 "I wish that you all spoke in tongues"** Compare 12:30 and remember this phrase is a dependent clause on what follows. Paul is not disparaging tongues, but (1) asserting their proper relationship to other spiritual gifts and (2) setting some practical guidelines. The Corinthians were apparently seeking this gift for egotistical, personal glory and prestige.

■ **"greater is the one who prophesies"** This is an evaluation based on Paul's criteria that tongues are of less value in edifying the gathered church. But remember that speaking in tongues is a valid gift of the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 14:18,39)!

■ **"unless he interprets"** This is a third class conditional sentence, introduced by *ei* instead of *ean*. Is it possible for one person to have both the gift of tongues and interpretation? It is obvious from other texts that Christian leaders had more than one spiritual gift (cf. Acts 13:1; 2 Tim. 1:11). However, if it were possible for the same person to speak in tongues and then interpret why would one need an interpreter? How would this combination differ from prophecy? Maybe it is possible that one believer have both gifts which are used at different times, but it is not common (cf. 1 Cor. 14:13). More probable is that Paul is using a literary technique to underscore the need for understandable communication in gathered worship.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 14:6-12**

**<sup>6</sup>But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what will I profit you unless I speak to you either by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching? <sup>7</sup>Yet even lifeless things, either flute or harp, in producing a sound, if they do not produce a**

distinction in the tones, how will it be known what is played on the flute or on the harp? <sup>8</sup> For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle? <sup>9</sup> So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. <sup>10</sup> There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no *kind* is without meaning. <sup>11</sup> If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me. <sup>12</sup> So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual *gifts*, seek to abound for the edification of the church.

**14:6 "if"** There are four third class conditional sentences in the paragraph, 1 Cor. 14:6-12, which implies potential action (cf. 1 Cor. 14:6,7,8,11). Both 1 Cor. 14:6 and 7 are questions that expect a "no" answer (as does 1 Cor. 14:9).

▣ **"by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy"** These terms seem to reflect different gifts, but the distinctions are uncertain. Possibly since several gifted leaders are mentioned in Eph. 4:11 each proclaiming the gospel, but with different emphases, so too, here. God reveals His truths in differing ways, but the same content. Many gifts, one gospel; many gifted believers, one purpose (i.e., edification of the church and the growth of the church, cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8).

**14:7-8** Paul uses musical instruments to make his point, flutes and harps in 1 Cor. 14:7 and a military bugle in 1 Cor. 14:8. Musical instruments are used for differing purposes (i.e., to make music or to signal). If the instrument makes the wrong sound it causes confusion. The human voice is meant to communicate information to other humans. If it makes sounds that have no significance to other humans it fails in its purpose (cf. 1 Cor. 14:9).

**14:10** This is a rare Fourth class conditional sentence. This verse cannot be used to prove that tongues are a known language. Paul uses a different term (i.e., *phōnē* not *glōssa*) in both 1 Cor. 14:10 and 11. It is an illustration of the difficulty in understanding an improperly spoken language or foreign language. Human language is meant to be understood.

**14:11**

NASB, NJB "barbarian"

NKJV, NRSV,

TEV "foreigner"

This was an onomatopoeic word (i.e., *barbaros*) for the strange sounds of other languages to the Greeks and Romans, especially the tribal groups to the north of the Roman Empire. The Greeks and Romans said that these tribal languages sounded like "bar, bar" to them. Hence, the term "barbarian."

**14:12 "since you are zealous of spiritual gifts"** Paul does not criticize their zeal (cf. 1 Cor. 14:1), but tries to channel it for the edification of the entire church (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7).

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV, NIV "spiritual *gifts*"

RSV "manifestations of the Spirit"

TEV "the gifts of the Spirit"

NJB "spiritual powers"

This is not the same Greek word as in 1 Cor. 12:1 (i.e., *pneumatikōn*), but the genitive plural of *pneuma* (see Special Topic: Spirit in the Bible at 1 Cor. 12:1), which means "breath," "wind," "spirit." This form is also found in 1 Cor. 12:10, where it refers to a particular gift (i.e., discerning of spirits, cf. 1 John 4:1). In

context it seems that it refers to different spiritual gifts given by the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 12:11) for the common good of the body (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7).

▣ **"seek to abound for the edification of the church"** This is a present active imperative plural. The goal of spiritual gifts is not the elevation and glory of an individual, but the health and growth of the body of Christ, the church.

For "abound" see Special Topic at 2 Cor. 2:7.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 14:13-19**

**13**Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. **14**For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. **15**What is *the outcome* then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also. **16**Otherwise if you bless in the spirit *only*, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying? **17**For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not edified. **18**I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all; **19**however, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind so that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.

**14:13** In context this implies that communicating the gospel to all is preferable to personal ecstasy (cf. 1 Cor. 14:15). Does this verse imply that believers receive one gift at salvation (cf. 1 Cor. 12:11), but can later ask for another? This question must remain unanswered. It is certain that some had several gifts (cf. Acts 13:1; 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11).

**14:14 "if"** This is another third class conditional, like 1 Cor. 14:6,7,8,11,23,24,28, and 29.

▣ **"my spirit prays"** This refers to the human spirit. It was a literary metaphor for personhood.

▣ **"my mind is unfruitful"** Paul was playing on the Corinthian's love for wisdom. He was also reaffirming that tongues alone do not communicate, even to the speaker.

**14:15**

NASB	"What is <i>the outcome</i> then"
NKJV	"What is <i>the result</i> then"
NRSV, TEV	"What should I do then"
NJB	"What then"

This is an idiom (cf. 1 Cor. 14:26; Acts 21:22). Paul wants to draw a conclusion to his discussion.

▣ **"I will sing with the spirit"** Does this imply another spiritual gift (cf. 1 Cor. 14:26; Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19)?

**14:16 "if"** This is another third class conditional sentence, like 1 Cor. 14:6,7,8,11 and 14.

NASB	"the one who fills the place of the ungifted"
NKJV	"he who occupies the place of the uninformed"
NRSV	"how can anyone in the position of an outsider"
TEV	"how can ordinary people taking part in the meeting"
NJB	"the uninitiated person"

This term was used of someone who was uninformed or untrained in a certain area, therefore, an unprofessional or lay person (cf. Acts 4:13; 2 Cor. 11:6). The usage here and in 1 Cor. 14:23-24 can have one of two possible meanings.

1. a regular visitor to a Christian meeting while in 1 Cor. 14:23 possibly a first time visitor
2. possibly a new Christian, but one without the gifts of tongues or interpretation

The phrase "the place of" is referring either to (1) visitors or possibly new Christians who had designated seats where they could hear clearly or (2) an idiom for one who is uninformed.

▣ **"say the 'Amen'"** See Special Topic below.

It is surely possible that the above term could relate to an ungifted believer (see F. F. Bruce, *Answers to Questions*, p. 98). If it is true then Paul wanted the believers to "check" or "pass judgment on" the prophetic words spoken in gathered worship (cf. 1 Cor. 2:12,15; 14:29,37; 1 Thess. 5:20-21; also note 1 John 4:1). No one could say "amen" unless

1. they understood what was being said
2. they had a way (i.e., the Spirit) to evaluate what was said

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: AMEN**

**14:16,17 "at your giving thanks"** This phrase may refer to the Lord's Supper, which was called the *Eucharist* from the Greek term "give thanks." Verse 17, however, implies that it refers to prayer.

▣ **"the other person"** See note at 1 Cor. 6:1.

**14:18 "I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all"** Paul knew what he was talking about. This verse, combined with 1 Cor. 14:39, should make modern Christians think twice before criticizing the concept of tongues in our day. It should also make those who emphasize it to think twice. Paul admits to it so as to depreciate it.

It is interesting how this chapter switches between the singular, 1 Cor. 14:2,4,9,13,14,19,26,17, and the plural, 1 Cor. 14:5,6,18, 22,23,39.

The tension in this church was (1) between social classes and (2) between individual giftedness and corporate edification. In the church the individual always serves the corporate (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7)!

This is another example of Paul trying to identify, at least in some measure, with the over-zealous believers at Corinth. As he affirmed knowledge, but emphasized love, he now affirms tongues, but emphasizes edification.

**14:19 "however, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind. . .rather than ten thousand words in a tongue"** The literary unit of chapters 11-14 is dealing with public, gathered worship (cf. 1 Cor. 14:23,28,34). In this setting personal worship in tongues is less desirable because no one else is taught and thereby converted (cf. 1 Cor. 14:24-25) or edified ("so that I may instruct others also," cf. 1 Cor. 14:3,4,5,12,1,19,26).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 14:20-25**

**<sup>20</sup>Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature. <sup>21</sup>In the Law it is written, "By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers I will speak to this people, and even so they will not listen to Me," says the Lord. <sup>22</sup>So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers but to those who believe. <sup>23</sup>Therefore if the whole church assembles together and all speak in tongues, and ungifted men or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad? <sup>24</sup>But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; <sup>25</sup>the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you.**

**14:20 "do not be children"** This is a present imperative with a negative article, which usually means to stop an act in process. They were being children in this area (cf. Eph. 4:14), though they thought they were

so spiritual and wise!

■ **"in your thinking"** This is from the Greek word for diaphragm or midriff. This, not the brain, was thought to be the physiological site of the intellect for the ancients.

■ **"yet in evil be infants"** In some areas believers should be uninformed (cf. Matt. 10:16; Rom. 16:19). One of the greatest protections against evil is ignorance or naivete.

■ **"be mature"** Paul uses this term (i.e., *teleios*) to describe the believer who fully understands the gospel and lives it (cf. 1 Cor. 2:6; 13:10; 14:20; Eph. 4:13; Phil. 3:15; Col. 1:28). All believers start as baby Christians and must grow. There are levels of understanding and godly living. However, this term does not imply a sinlessness, but a spiritual fullness and equipment for service.

**14:21-22** This is a partial quote from Isa. 28:11-12. It relates to the Assyrian invasion of Israel. Verse 22 is related to this quote and not to the entire context. This sentence is exactly opposite to all else Paul says in this context. It must only relate to the OT quote. Paul is using "sign" in two ways: judgment and grace.

**14:21 "In the Law"** Usually in a Jewish context this would refer to the writings of Moses (i.e., Genesis - Deuteronomy), but not always. In John 10:34; 12:34; and 15:25, this phrase refers to a quote from the Psalms, as it does in Rom. 3:9. This same phrase is used in 1 Cor. 14:34, but it is uncertain to which texts it refers unless possibly Genesis 3.

Walter Kaiser, in *Toward An Exegetical Theology*, p. 110, makes the interesting comment that verses 34 and 35 are a quote from the letter which Paul received from the Corinthian church. Usually Paul's answers to their written questions are introduced by the phrase, "now concerning" (cf. 1 Cor. 7:1,25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1), but not always (i.e., the apparent quote from the letter found in 1 Cor. 6:12 and 10:23). If this is true then "the Law also says" may refer to Ps. 68:11, which is alluded to without quoting in 1 Cor. 14:36! Psalm 68:11 affirms the proclamation of the good news in gathered worship by women. Gordon Fee, in his commentary on 1 Corinthians (New International Commentary) also asserts that Paul did not write 1 Cor. 14:34-35 (pp. 699-708).

**14:23 "if"** This is another third class conditional sentence (cf. 1 Cor. 14:6,7,8,11, and 14).

■ **"the whole church assembles together"** The literary context of chapters 11-14 deals with guidelines for gathered worship.

Usually these early churches (see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:2) met in private homes (i.e., house churches). Often in a city the size of Corinth there would be several homes involved. This may be one of the reasons for the development of factions within the church. Paul's words imply a larger group meeting possible to celebrate the love feast (cf. 1 Cor. 11:17-34) and Lord's Supper. How often or where they met is uncertain. From this verse obviously guests were allowed, which shows it was not a secret or closed meeting.

**NASB** "you are mad"

**NKJV, NRSV** "you are out of your mind"

**TEV** "you are all crazy"

**NJB** "you are all raving"

This term (i.e., *mainomai*) is used in Acts 12:15 and 26:24-25. In John 10:20 it is used to describe demon possession. This term does not imply insanity, but possession by a spirit. In Greek culture this would have been seen as a privileged spiritual state, but no so in Christianity.

**14:24 "if"** This is another third class conditional sentence (cf. 1 Cor. 14:6,7,8,11,14,23,24,28,29).

**NASB** "convicted. . .called to account"

**NKJV** "convinced. . .judged"

NRSV	"reproved. . .called to account"
TEV	"convinced of their sin. . .judged"
NJB	"find himself put to the test. . .judged"

Prophecy brings understanding and conviction; tongues bring confusion to visiting unbelievers or new believers.

▣ **"all. . .all. . .all"** This does not imply that every believer spoke at every worship service, but that all that was done at the worship service added to the spiritual conviction which the visitors and possible new believers experienced. The "all" surely includes women believers present.

**14:25 "the secrets of his heart are disclosed"** This may refer to the truth that

1. God knows the thoughts of mankind and brings conviction by His Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 24)
2. public confession of sin was a part of first century worship (cf. Matt. 3:6; Mark 1:5; Acts 19:18; and James 5:16)

## SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HEART

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 14:26-33**

<sup>26</sup>What is *the outcome* then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. <sup>27</sup>If anyone speaks in a tongue, *it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and one must interpret;* <sup>28</sup>but if there is no interpreter, he must keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God. <sup>29</sup>Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. <sup>30</sup>But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent. <sup>31</sup>For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; <sup>32</sup>and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets; <sup>33</sup>for God is not a *God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.*

**14:26-33** This gives us a real insight into the dynamic, unstructured worship service of the early church. Apparently there was, as of yet, no professional clergy. Anyone could and did speak freely. Problems arose in two areas.

1. there was confusion because too many wanted to speak
2. they were interrupting each other

Paul is attempting to structure the gathered worship service in such a way as not to limit the freedom of the Spirit, but to accentuate the purpose of the meeting, which is the salvation of the unsaved and the maturity of the saved (cf. Matt. 28:19-20). This is not structure for structure's sake (cf. 1 Cor. 14:32)! Paul is not seeking a controlled worship setting!

**14:26 "What is *the outcome*"** See note at verse 15.

▣ **"Let all things be done for edification"** This is the recurrent mandate (i.e., present passive [deponent] imperative). The purpose of spiritual gifts is not the elevation of an individual, but the growth (both in numbers and maturity) of the church. To put it another way "Does this act or structure accomplish the purpose of the Great Commission of Jesus" (cf. Matt. 28:19-20)?

**14:27 "If"** This is a first class conditional sentence. Paul is not affirming their actions, but noting their actions.

**14:28 "if"** This is a third class conditional sentence. Paul desires that gathered worship provides spiritual information to all present. Tongues is acceptable if interpreted. Gathered worship is not the time and place

for private experience and devotion to dominate the purpose of the corporate.

▣ **"if there is no interpreter, he must keep silent in the church"** This is a present active imperative. Tongues and prophecy are controllable by the person who is gifted (cf. 1 Cor. 14:30). Edification of the body of Christ and evangelism, not personal freedom, are the keys to public worship.

**14:29** Prophets do not have uncontested freedom (i.e., subject, time, or content) to speak. They are to be evaluated by other gifted believers (cf. 1 Cor. 14:30 and 12:10; 1 John 4:1-3). Remember that the demonic were present when Jesus spoke in both the Synagogue and in outdoor preaching.

▣ **"pass judgment"** See note at 1 Cor. 4:7 and Special Topic at 1 Cor. 10:29.

**14:30 "if"** This is another third class conditional sentence (cf. cf. 1 Cor. 6,7,8,11,23,24,28,29).

▣ **"the first must keep silent"** This is parallel to 1 Cor. 14:28 (i.e., present active imperative). This implies that a speaker may be interrupted by another believer and that the current speaker must hear the new speaker before responding or adding to the revelation. These early services were very dynamic and extemporaneous. This appeals to some personalities as strongly as a strict order appeals to other personalities!

Now the question is "was this a standard structure in all of Paul's churches or a unique aspect of the Corinthian church? Do we take this discussion as NT evidence of how all services should be structured or just an example of how to handle problems in this area?"

**14:31 "For you can all prophesy one by one"** How literally should this phrase be taken? Is Paul asserting a structure or an unlimited opportunity for any and all believers to speak in the same worship service? Were there no time restraints on the early gathered services? This is an example of a literary statement, not a literal statement. In context Paul is limiting their freedom, not extending their freedom!

However, the term "all" surely implies that both women and men can prophesy (cf. 1 Cor. 11:5). All believers, male and female, are gifted for the common good (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7; 14:26). This adds a further need to clarify 1 Cor. 14:34!

▣ **"so that all may learn and all may be exhorted"** This purpose clause (i.e., *hina*) states Paul's main concern, not that all are able to speak, but that all are built up, edified, and matured! This is the recurrent theme of this chapter.

**14:32**

**NASB, NKJV,**

**NRSV**

**"the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets"**

**TEV**

**"the gift of proclaiming God's message should be under the speaker's control"**

**NJB**

**"the prophetic spirit is to be under the prophet's control"**

These translation options show the two different ways this phrase can be understood.

1. Those who proclaim God's message are subject (i.e., Present passive indicative) to others who proclaim God's message (i.e., prophets check prophets, 1 Cor. 14:29).
2. The one who proclaims God's message has personal control (i.e., present middle indicative) over when and what to say (cf. 1 Cor. 14:30).

The term "spirit" is used in the same way as 1 Cor. 14:2,14,15 (twice), 16. It is an idiomatic way of referring to the personhood of an individual (cf. 1 Cor. 2:11; 5:3-4; 7:34; 16:18). See notes on "subjection" at 1 Cor. 16:16 and Special Topic at 2 Cor. 9:13.

**14:33**

**NASB**

**"for God is not a God of confusion but of peace"**

**NKJV**

**"for God is not the author of confusion but of peace"**

**NRSV, NJB**

**"for God is a God not of disorder but of peace"**



TEV

**"because God does not want us to be in disorder but in harmony and peace"**

This does not refer to creation. This is not order versus chaos, but factional infighting or egotism versus peace. This is not belittling the dynamic character of first century worship (cf. 1 Cor. 14:39-40), but the jealous, egotistical attitude of some of the gifted speakers (cf. 2 Cor. 6:5; 12:20; James 3:16). Both our worship style and attitude reflect on the God we claim to be worshipping (cf. 1 Cor. 11:17-34).

■ **"as in all the churches of the saints"** It is uncertain if this phrase goes with 1 Cor. 14:33a (NASB, NKJV) or with 1 Cor. 14:34 (NRSV, TEV, NJB). Because the phrase "in the churches" repeats the 1 Cor. 14:33b it is probable that 33b forms a concluding remark as it does in 1 Cor. 4:17 and 7:17. This phrase states clearly to all the Corinthian house churches that they are not special, superior, or uniquely gifted (cf. 1 Cor. 4:17; 7:17; 11:16; 14:33,36; 16:1). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: SAINTS](#) at 1 Cor. 1:2.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 14:34-36**

**<sup>34</sup>The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says. <sup>35</sup>If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church. <sup>36</sup>Was it from you that the word of God *first* went forth? Or has it come to you only?**

**14:34 "The women are to keep silent in the churches"** This verse has become a major theological issue in certain segments of the modern church. The modern western social, cultural trend toward individual rights and equality has made the NT, and especially Paul, seem judgmental and negative on this issue. In Paul's day his theology relating to women was radically positive (cf. Eph. 5:22-23). Paul obviously worked with many women, as his list of co-workers in Romans 16 shows. Also see the Special Topic: Women in the Bible at 1 Cor. 7:5.

Even in this context, Paul states the balance, 1 Cor. 11:5 versus 14:34. Somehow 1 Cor. 14:34-35 relate uniquely to Corinth and the first century. The theories are legion (see Special Topic below)! How it relates to our day is problematic. Dogmatism and proof-texting are inappropriate. The biblical witness is not uniform or monolithic on this issue.

Paul limits several groups in the Corinthian worship setting, "keep silent," 1 Cor. 14:28,30,34. There was a problem in gathered worship at Corinth. Christian women were a part of that problem. Their new freedom in Christ (or their being part of a Roman societal woman's freedom movement) was causing cultural, theological, and evangelistic problems. In our day the opposite may be true. Gifted women leaders will help the twenty-first century church reach the world with the gospel. This does not affect the God-given order of creation, but it does show the priority of evangelism (cf. 1 Cor. 9:22). This issue is not a gospel or doctrinal issue.

**[SPECIAL TOPIC: WOMEN IN MINISTRY](#)**

**[SPECIAL TOPIC: THEORIES RELATED TO "WOMEN KEEP SILENT"](#)**

NASB	"are to subject themselves"
NKJV	"they are to be submissive"
NRSV	"should be subordinate"
TEV	"they must not be in charge"
NJB	"theirs is a subordinate part"

This is a present passive imperative. "Subject" was a military term describing the chain of command. It is used of Jesus (cf. Luke 2:51 to His earthly parents and 1 Cor. 15:28 to His Heavenly Father) and is a universal truth for the church (cf. Eph. 5:21).

**[SPECIAL TOPIC: SUBMISSION \(HUPOTASSŌ\)](#)**

■ **"just as the Law also says"** Is Paul referring to a specific text or a general principle? There is no OT text that says this. It is possible that in light of 1 Cor. 11:8-9 that Gen. 2:20-24 is the referent (cf. 1 Tim. 2:13). Some think that the result of the fall and that Gen. 3:16 is the referent. It is also contextually possible that the "subjection" is related to the use of the word in 1 Cor. 14:32, where it would refer to submission to other prophets (cf. *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, p. 616).

There is a fluidity in Paul's writings in using this term "law." Most often it refers to Mosaic Law, the old covenant, but sometimes it refers to the concept of law in general. If that is true here then it refers to the general tenets of this patriarchal, "men first," culture.

If women were allowed to be in charge, even in appearance, it would have hurt the cause of Christ in the first century Greco-Roman world. In this way it is similar to how the NT treats the issue of slavery. See note at 1 Cor. 14:21 for a different understanding of this phrase.

**14:35** This verse shows that the term "woman" in 1 Cor. 14:34 refers to "wives." Does this imply a single woman can speak? This same ambiguity is in chapter 11:5.

This verse is related to 1 Tim. 2:11-12 and Titus 2:5. Is it theological or cultural in 1 Tim. 2:13-14? Is it locked into a unique historical setting or is it a universal truth for all cultures, all ages? The biblical witness is speaking with two voices (cf. *Howto Read the Bible For All Its Worth* by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, pp. 15,63,72,74).

■ **"If"** This is a first class conditional sentence. Christian wives were asking questions in gathered worship at Corinth. The church meetings were already being interrupted by singers, tongue speakers, tongue interpreters, and prophets. Now curious wives or wives flaunting their freedom were also becoming actively involved in the chaos!

■ **"let them ask"** This is a present active imperative. These women are told who to ask and when to ask and why! Their actions were affecting the effectiveness of gathered worship.

Please read the note on Walter C. Kaiser's understanding of 1 Cor. 14:34-36 at 1 Cor. 14:21, paragraph two.

**14:36** This was a sarcastic question to shock the prideful Corinthian church into spiritual reality and their place among the other congregations. The grammatical form of the two questions in 1 Cor. 14:36 expects a "no" answer.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 14:37-38**

**<sup>37</sup>If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment. <sup>38</sup>But if anyone does not recognize *this*, he is not recognized.**

**14:37-38** Paul is asserting that those with true spiritual gifts should recognize others who speak and are gifted from God (cf. 1 Cor. 14:32; Matt. 11:15; 13:9,15,16,43). Paul's description of his sense of leadership is expressed in 1 Cor. 7:40 and 14:38. Paul recognized his Apostolic gift and its authority to speak for Christ. His apostleship was being questioned and challenged by some at Corinth.

Verse 38 implies a divine curse (present passive indicative) on those who reject Apostolic authority (cf. Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians*, p. 52 footnote #104).

■ **"if . . . if"** These are both first class conditional sentences, which are assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. Some at Corinth "think" they are "spiritual" (i.e., *pneumatikos*, cf. 1 Cor. 12:1), but their actions and their relationship to Apostolic authority (i.e., Paul's authority) show they are not. If they do not recognize and submit to Paul's authority then they should not be recognized as spiritual leaders.

**14:38**

**NASB "he is not recognized"**

<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"let him be ignorant"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"is not to be recognized"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"pay no attention to him"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"that person is not recognized himself"</b>

There is a variation in the verb tense in the Greek manuscripts, between present passive indicative (MSS  $\kappa^*$ , A<sup>\*</sup>) and present active imperative (MSS P<sup>46</sup>,  $\kappa^2$ , A<sup>c</sup>, B, D<sup>2</sup>). The passive indicative implies "ignored or unrecognized by God." The imperative commands the believers at Corinth to reject the person who rejects Paul's authority or possibly Paul's authority represented in his advocate and representative, Timothy. The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives the indicative a "B" rating (almost certain).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 14:39**

**<sup>39</sup>Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues. <sup>40</sup>But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner.**

**14:39 "desire earnestly"** This is Paul's term for strong desire (cf. 1 Cor. 12:31; 14:1). The TEV has "set your heart on." For Paul in this cultural setting the desire is directed toward proclaiming/sharing the gospel for the good of the believer and unbeliever. Compare this with Num. 29:11.

It seems that Paul's opening statement in 1 Cor. 14:1 is also his concluding statement in 1 Cor. 14:39. The Greek term *ōste*, followed by an imperative, may be a way of introducing apostolic summaries (cf. 1 Cor. 10:12; 11:33; 14:39; 15:58; Phil. 2:12; 1 Thess. 4:18).

■ **"do not forbid to speak in tongues"** This is a needed balance to the problems at Corinth and today. We tend to overreact in our attitudes about spiritual matters. The road of truth has a ditch of error on each side (i.e., everyone speaks in tongues versus no one speaks in tongues)!

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"properly and in an orderly manner"</b>
<b>NKJV, NRSV</b>	<b>"decently and in order"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"proper and orderly way"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"proper and orderly fashion"</b>

The first term is from a combination of the adverb "good" (*eu*) and the noun "fashion" or "form" (cf. Rom. 13:13; 1 Thess. 4:12).

The second term means "to arrange in a proper way, to give orderliness" (cf. Col. 2:5). This phrase parallels 1 Cor. 14:33. It has to do, not with a preset order (i.e., controlling agenda), but with the purpose of the gathered worship service, which is evangelism and discipleship (cf. Matt. 28:19-20).

This is Paul's concluding statement on the subject of gathered worship, which began in chapter 11.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What are the three criteria for judging spiritual gifts?
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
2. Why are tongues depreciated in this chapter to prophesy? Are tongues an inferior spiritual gift?

3. How is the mind related to tongues?
4. What is the problem with verse 22?
5. Is the church at Corinth to be used as a guideline for all churches?
6. Are women to be quiet in church? Explain your answer comparing 11:5 and 14:34.

# 1 CORINTHIANS 15

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Resurrection of Christ	The Risen Christ, Faith's Reality	The Gospel of Christ's Death and Resurrection	The Resurrection of Christ	The Fact of the Resurrection
15:1-11	15:1-11	15:1-11	15:1-2 15:3-7 15:8-11	15:1-8  15:9-11
The Resurrection of the Dead	The Risen Christ, Our Hope	The Significance for Us of the Resurrection	Our Resurrection	
15:12-19	15:12-19	15:12-19	15:12-19	15:12-19
	The Last Enemy Destroyed			
15:20-28	15:20-28	15:20-28	15:20-28	15:20-28
	Effects of Denying the Resurrection			
15:29-34	15:29-34	15:29-34	15:29-32 15:33-34	15:29-34
The Resurrection Body	A Glorious Body	The Nature of the Resurrection	The Resurrection Body	The Manner of the Resurrection
15:35-41	15:35-49	15:35-41	15:35-38 15:39 15:40-41	15:35-38 15:39-44a
15:42-49		15:42-49	15:42-49	15:44b-49
	Our Final Victory			
15:50-58	15:50-58	15:50-57	15:50 15:51-57	15:50-53 A Hymn of Triumph Conclusion 15:54-57
		15:58	15:58	15:58

## FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. It is obvious from the context that Paul is reacting to a local potential heresy that denied the resurrection of the dead (which most Jews would have agreed with). Several theories have been postulated as to the possible origin:
1. incipient Gnostic (see Glossary) ideas which emphasized the dualism between spirit (i.e., God, which is good) and matter (i.e., material things, which are evil)
  2. those asserting that the resurrection has already occurred (cf. 2 Tim. 2:17-18).
- B. This is the definitive passage in the NT on the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of believers. It must be remembered that this passage was probably written before any of the Gospels were written down.
- C. Notice Paul's pastoral emphasis in the way this doctrinal chapter ends, 1 Cor. 15:58. This is similar to 1 Thess. 4:18. Paul always brings doctrine down to daily living and serving. Truth informs lifestyle!
- D. It helps to see the overall structure of this long chapter. Dr. David King, a colleague at East Texas Baptist University, has a good outline from his class notes:

"IV. Growing mature Christians requires an understanding of faith in the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1-58).

1. Introduction: (1 Cor. 15:1-11)
  - a. The Gospel itself is based firmly on the resurrection of Jesus (1 Cor. 15:1-8).
    - (1) The basic facts of the gospel (the *Kerygma*) concern the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (1 Cor. 15:3-4).
    - (2) The post-resurrection appearances of Jesus prove beyond any doubt that Jesus rose from the dead (1 Cor. 15:5-7).
    - (3) Paul magnifies the grace of God which allowed him to be among the witnesses of Jesus' resurrection (1 Cor. 15:8-11).
2. The basis of the doctrine of our resurrection is the resurrection of Jesus (1 Cor. 15:12-34).
  - a. Some say that He did not rise from the dead. What are the implications of that (1 Cor. 15:12-19)?
    - (1) Our preaching is without value (1 Cor. 15:12-14).
    - (2) Your faith is futile (1 Cor. 15:14 & 17).
    - (3) We are false witness of the truth of God (1 Cor. 15:15).
    - (4) You are still in your sins (1 Cor. 15:17).
    - (5) Those believers who have died are lost forever (1 Cor. 15:18).
    - (6) All believers are to be pitied (1 Cor. 15:19).

- b. But Christ has been (and still is!) Risen! What are the implications of that (1 Cor. 15:20-34)?
- (1) He is the first-fruit of a coming harvest (1 Cor. 15:20).
  - (2) Christ, the man, overcame death which was introduced into the world by the first man, Adam (1 Cor. 15:21-22, cf. Rom. 5:12-21).
  - (3) The resurrection is divided into two parts: the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of others (1 Cor. 15:23).
  - (4) Death will be overcome by resurrection and all will be subject to God, the creator of all (1 Cor. 15:24-28).
  - (5) Believers are baptized in faith believing in both a spiritual and a physical resurrection (1 Cor. 15:29).
  - (6) We can face all kinds of danger without fear, for if we die, we shall live again and be judged, according to our deeds (implied) so we must be careful how we live (1 Cor. 15:30-34).
3. The doctrine of the resurrection of believers is reasonable. Paul answers some of their questions (1 Cor. 15:35-57).
- a. How are the dead raised? Answer: By the power of God, just as God raises plants from seeds (1 Cor. 15:35-38).
  - b. What kind of body do they have? Answer: A different kind of body suitable to the different kind of life we will live in eternity (1 Cor. 15:39-41).
    - (1) God has created different kinds of bodies for life in this world (1 Cor. 15:39-41).
    - (2) The resurrection body is a new kind of body (1 Cor. 15:42-44).
      - Imperishable instead of perishable,
      - Glorious instead of humiliated
      - Powerful instead of weak
      - Spiritual instead of animal (or physical)
    - (3) The nature of the resurrection body is clarified by contrast with the natural body which leads Paul to a contrast between Adam and Christ (1 Cor. 15:45-49, cf. Rom. 5:12-21).
  - c. When will all this take place? Answer: When Jesus comes again (1 Cor. 15:50-57).
    - (1) A change is necessary for all (1 Cor. 15:50).
    - (2) We shall all be changed instantaneously (1 Cor. 15:51-52, cf. 1 Thess. 4:14-17).
    - (3) It will happen when God's trumpet sounds (1 Cor. 15:52-cf. 1 Thess. 4:16).
    - (4) When the change has taken place complete victory over death will be ours in Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:53-57).
4. Conclusion: The result of belief in this doctrine is steadfastness in service because we know that our service is not in vain (1 Cor. 15:58)"

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-2

<sup>1</sup>Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, <sup>2</sup>by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

15:1

NASB

"Now I make known to you"

NKJV

"Moreover. . .I declare to you"

NRSV

"Now I would remind you"

TEV

"And now I want to remind you"

NJB

"I want to make clear to you"

Paul has structured his letter around several questions that the church at Corinth had sent him (cf. 1 Cor. 7:1,25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1) with the phrase "now concerning" (i.e., *peri de*). Chapter 15 begins with *de*. Is it possible that this discussion concerning the resurrection was not a question which the church asked, but a situation that Paul was made aware of and also wanted to address?

This is a present active indicative form of *gnōrizō*, which means to make known, reveal, or declare. However, Paul was not giving new information (cf. 1 Cor. 12:3), but a doctrinal summary organizing the gospel he had earlier preached to them.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE KERYGMA OF THE EARLY CHURCH**

■ **"brethren"** Paul often uses this word to denote a new aspect of his topic or a change of subject, as he does here (cf. 1 Cor. 1:10; 2:1; 3:1; 4:6; 8:12; 10:1; 11:33; 12:1; 14:6,20,26; 15:1,58; 16:12,15).

■ **"the gospel"** Paul parallels the concept of "gospel" with "the word I preached to you" (1 Cor. 15:2). In Hebrew thought there was a power to the divine word (e.g., Gen. 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24; Ps. 33:6,9; Isa. 55:11; John 1:1). This then is a metaphor for the content of Paul's preaching, not simply a way of referring to vocalization.

This verse has a cognate accusative, literally "the gospel which I gossiped to you."

These are my comments on "gospel" from my commentary, *Gospel According to Peter*, Vol. 2 (see online at [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org))

"With Mark probably being the first written Gospel, this is the first use of the term *euangelion* (cf. Mark 1:14,15; 8:35; 10:29; 13:10; 14:9) by a Gospel writer (Paul's use in Gal. 2:2 and 1 Thess. 2:9 would be chronologically earlier). It is literally "the good news" or "the good message." This obviously reflects Isa. 61:1 and possibly Isa. 40:9 and 52:7. Its grammatical form can be understood as (1) the message given by Jesus or (2) the message about Jesus. Number 2 is probably the intended meaning. However, the *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, published by IVP, says "The genitive ('of) is probably both subjective and objective: Jesus proclaims the gospel and it proclaims his story" (p. 285). The *Jerome Biblical Commentary* says "Mark's use of the word 'gospel' is akin to that in Paul where it can mean either the act of proclaiming or the content of what is proclaimed."

■ **"which also you received"** This term is used by the Jews of "passed on traditions" (cf. 1 Cor. 15:3; 11:23; 15:3; Mark 7:4; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thess. 4:10; 2 Thess. 3:6). Paul was passing on what he received (i.e., the gospel, cf. 1 Cor. 15:3) from Christ (cf. Gal. 1:12,16; Acts 9:1-22; 22:3-16; 26:7-18). Before Paul was the Apostle to the Gentiles, he was a receiver of the gospel himself. This is an aorist active indicative. Although Jesus died for all human sin, it is obvious from this passage and others (cf. John 1:12; 3:16; Rom. 10:9-13) that each person must personally receive God's free offer (cf. 1 Cor. 15:11) of salvation. The gospel involves (1) the welcoming of a person; (2) believing truths about that person; and (3) living a life in emulation of that person.

■ **"in which also you stand"** This is a perfect active indicative, which denotes completed action in past time that has become a permanent state. It speaks of the necessity of perseverance (see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:21).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: STAND (HISTĒMI)**

**15:2 "you are saved"** This is the present passive indicative, "being saved" (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18; 2 Cor. 2:15; 1 Pet. 3:21; 4:18). Salvation is a process toward Christlikeness.

See [SPECIAL TOPIC: SALVATION \(GREEK VERB TENSES\)](#) at 1 Cor. 3:15.

■ **"if"** This is a First class conditional sentence, which implies that they would "hold fast" to the truth of the gospel, which he preached to them, but it adds a note of contingency by a second "ei" (i.e., unless). This seems to parallel Jesus' Parable of the Soils (cf. Matt. 13) and John's discussion in 1 John 2:19 of those



who were in the fellowship, but left.

There were those factions in Corinth who by their actions, attitudes, and theology showed they were never believers! They rejected (1) Paul's gospel; (2) Paul's apostolic authority; and (3) merged the gospel into Roman culture, whereby the culture became dominant! Cultural Christianity is always weak and sometimes not Christian!

However, please note that contextually Paul is asserting his confidence that he has that the Corinthian believers are true believers.

1. Aorist tense, 1 Cor. 15:1, "received"
2. Perfect tense, 1 Cor. 15:1, "in which also you stand"
3. First class conditional sentence, 1 Cor. 15:2, "since you hold fast"

■ **"unless you believed in vain"** "If you hold fast. . .in vain." The word "vain" (*eikē*) means "to no purpose" (cf. Gal. 3:4; 4:11). It is obvious from Matt. 13:1-9, 18-23, and John 8:31-59 that false professions are a reality of religious life (see [SPECIAL TOPIC: APOSTASY \(APHISTĒMI\)](#) at 1 Cor. 6:9). This phrase forms the fourth in a series which describes necessary elements of the Christian life: acceptance, position, progress, and continuance. Salvation is a process which involves repentance, faith, obedience (both initially and ongoing), as well as perseverance. See Special Topic: The Need to Persevere at 1 Cor. 1:21.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 15:3-11**

**<sup>3</sup>For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup>and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup>and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. <sup>6</sup>After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; <sup>7</sup>then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; <sup>8</sup>and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. <sup>9</sup>For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. <sup>10</sup>But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. <sup>11</sup>Whether then *it was* I or they, so we preach and so you believed.**

**15:3 "I delivered to you"** This refers to (1) Christian witness that Paul received (i.e., from Stephen, Acts 7; from Ananias, Acts 9:10-18; and from persecuted Christians, Acts 9:1-2; 1 Cor. 15:9) or (2) direct revelation from the Lord (cf. 1 Cor. 11:23; Acts 9:1-22; 22:3-16; 26:9-18; Gal. 1:12). Paul passed on the gospel truths he had received. Paul was not an innovator, but a faithful witness who applied the gospel truths to the new Gentile situations.

■ **"first importance"** This is the only Apostolic gospel summary. Our modern gospel summaries, like the Roman Road (i.e., 3:23; 5:8; 6:23; 10:9-13), are modern selections taken from larger inspired writings. Paul wants to remind them of the essentials of the gospel (see Special Topic: The *Kerygma* at 1 Cor. 15:1).

Paul's gospel summary:

1. Christ died for our sins
2. Christ was truly dead and buried
3. Christ was raised from the dead
4. We know these are true because He appeared to many people over many days

■ **"Christ died for our sins"** The term "Christ" is the Greek translation of the Hebrew term Messiah, which meant an anointed one. This term, without the usual "Jesus Christ" or "Lord Jesus Christ" or "Christ Jesus" shows the primitive origin of Paul's tradition, where Jesus is affirmed as the Jewish Messiah, the Promised One see [SPECIAL TOPIC: MESSIAH](#) at 1 Cor. 1:23). In all probability, Paul received this from

Ananias and the other believers in Damascus after his conversion.

This is an aorist active indicative. "Jesus paid a debt He did not owe and we owed a debt we could not pay" (cf. Gal. 3:13; 1 John 4:10).

The preposition "for" (*hyper*) meant "on behalf of"; it was often used synonymously with another Greek preposition, *anti*, which meant "in the place of." This was a reference to the vicarious, substitutionary atonement (cf. Isa. 53; Mark 10:45).

The death of Christ was a recurrent theme in Paul's writings. He used several different terms and phrases to refer to Jesus' substitutionary death:

1. blood (cf. 1 Cor. 11:25,27; Rom. 3:25; 5:9; Eph. 1:7; 2:13; Col. 1:20)
2. gave Himself up (cf. Eph. 5:2,25)
3. delivered up (cf. Rom. 4:25; 8:32)
4. sacrifice: (cf. 1 Cor. 5:7)
5. died (cf. Rom. 5:6; 8:34; 14:9,15; 1 Cor. 8:11; 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:15; Gal. 5:21; 1 Thess. 4:14; 5:10)
6. cross (cf. 1 Cor. 1:17-18; Gal. 5:11; 6:12-14; Eph. 2:16; Phil. 2:8; Col. 1:20; 2:14)
7. crucifixion (cf. 1 Cor. 1:23; 2:2; 2 Cor. 13:4; Gal. 3:1)

■ **"according to the Scriptures"** This refers to the OT because none of the NT was written by this time except possibly Galatians and Thessalonians. The use of this phrase in 1 Cor. 15:3-4 asserts the prophetic (cf. Luke 24:27) and the predetermined redemptive plan of God (cf. Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29, see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:21).

However, it is possible that Scripture here refers to one of the Gospels (or the words of Jesus circulating separately from the later Synoptics). It is uncertain when they were written, and when they were circulated among the early churches. If the phrase does refer to a Gospel account, then "on the third day" could refer to Jesus being raised on Sunday, the first day of the week and, by Jewish reckoning, three days.

**15:4 "He was buried"** He was truly dead!

■ **"on the third day"** There is no clear OT attestation to "the third day." However, it was part of the *kerigma* (cf. Mark 10:34; Luke 24:46; Acts 10:40, see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 15:1). Some see it referring to Jonah 1:17 or Ps. 16:10, however, Jesus' comments (cf. Matt. 12:40) seem to relate it to Jonah's experience in the great fish.

■ **"He was raised"** This is a perfect passive indicative, used so often in this chapter (cf. 1 Cor. 15:4,12,13,14,16,17,20). This Greek verb tense speaks of Christ's continuing status as "the risen One" and the passive voice speaks of God the Father's actions in raising Him from the dead. This asserts the Father's approval of the life, teachings, and sacrificial death of Jesus. The NT often attributes the works of redemption to all three persons of the Godhead:

1. God the Father raised Jesus (cf. Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30,33,34,37; 17:31; Rom. 6:4,9; 10:9; 1 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 4:14; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12; 1 Thess. 1:10)
2. God the Son raised Himself (cf. John 2:19-22; 10:17-18)
3. God the Spirit raised Jesus (cf. Rom. 8:11).

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE RESURRECTION**

**15:5 "He appeared"** See Special Topic below.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: JESUS' POST-RESURRECTION APPEARANCES**

■ **"Cephas"** Paul usually calls him by this name in his Corinthian letters (cf. 1 Cor. 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:50, but in Galatians he calls him both Cephas (cf. 1 Cor. 2:9) and Peter (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18; 2:7,8,11,14). Paul never calls him Simon.

It is amazing that the first person (after the women at the tomb) the resurrected Christ appears to is the very one who had denied Him three times, the very one who preached the first sermon of the Church at

Pentecost. Jesus marks him out for special emphasis in Mark 16:7, where the Apostles are told to meet Jesus in Galilee. This surely shows the love, understanding, forgiveness, and restoring powers of Christ. Much of John 21 is describing Peter's restoration to leadership.

■ **"the twelve"** The western family of Greek manuscripts (i.e., MS D [Codex Bezae]), as well as the Vulgate, have "eleven." The term "Twelve" became a technical term for the Apostolic group. Paul never used this word in any of his other writings. Some think this implies that 1 Cor. 15:3-7 may have been a catechismal summary of the early church.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NUMBER TWELVE**

**15:6 "He appeared to more than five hundred brethren"** This may refer to Matt. 28:16-20, especially 1 Cor. 15:17, which shows that the Great Commission was given to the whole church, not just a few leaders. Paul's emphasis in 1 Cor. 15:6 is the historical reality of the resurrection. If one did not believe, there were numerous eye witnesses to testify.

■ **"until now"** Jesus was crucified in the mid 30's and 1 Corinthians was written in the mid 50's, so in this twenty-year span many of the ones personally impacted by the words and deeds of Jesus were still alive and witnessing!

■ **"fallen asleep"** Paul follows Jesus' usage (cf. Matt. 27:52; John 11:11,13) and OT usage (cf. Dan. 12:2) of sleep as a euphemism for death.

**15:7 "James"** This refers to the Lord's brother who did not believe in Him until after the resurrection (cf. Mark 3:21; John 7:5). All of his family were present in the Upper Room (cf. Acts 1:14). This James was identified as the Lord's half-brother (cf. Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3), in order to differentiate him from James the Apostle, part of the inner circle, who was killed very early (cf. Acts 12). For several generations the Church in Jerusalem had a physical relative of Jesus as its leader. Several biblical passages (cf. Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; 1 Cor. 15:7; and James 1:1) indicate that James was a very important leader in the Church in Jerusalem. Paul is the only one to mention the appearance. This shows how much detail is omitted in the NT about Jesus' teaching and actions. We have all we need to trust Him and follow Him, but not enough for a complete history of His life.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: JAMES, THE HALF-BROTHER OF JESUS**

■ **"to all the apostles"** Since the Twelve are mentioned in 1 Cor. 15:5, this seems to refer to a wider use of the term. James seems to be an "apostle" in the same sense as Barnabas (cf. Acts 14:4, 14); Andronicus and Junias (or Junia, cf. Rom. 16:7); Apollos (cf. 2 Cor. 4:9); Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25); or Silvanus and Timothy (cf. 1 Thess. 2:6; Acts; 18:5).

It is possible to argue that Cephas is mentioned separately from the Twelve so "all the Apostles" could refer to the Twelve also.

#### **15:8**

**NASB, NRSV "as to one untimely born"**

**NKJV "as one born out of due time"**

**TEV "even though I am like someone whose birth was abnormal"**

**NJB "as though I was a child born abnormally"**

These English translations show the general sense of this rare term. It is only used three times in the Septuagint (cf. Num. 12:12; Job 3:16; and Eccl. 6:3) for a miscarriage. The term implies an untimely, early birth. However, in this context, Paul seems to be describing his late addition to the Apostolic group (i.e., road to Damascus conversion, cf. Acts 9).

It is surely possible that this was one of the disparaging remarks of one or more of the factions at Corinth

who rejected Paul's authority (i.e., he was not a regular Apostle). Paul acknowledges the grace of Christ in appearing to him amidst his persecution of the Church (cf. 1 Cor. 15:10; Gal. 1:23). However, he is still in the select list of those to whom Christ appeared after His resurrection. Paul even may be asserting that he is the only one to whom the glorified (i.e., ascended) Christ appeared (cf. Gal. 1:15-16).

It is also possible that the term had a secondary meaning of "monster," which would have referred to Paul's vicious and repeated attacks on innocent believers (i.e., Acts 9:1-2, see Jerome Biblical Commentary, p. 273). Paul may have coined this word himself since it describes his pre-conversion Jewish exuberance.

**15:9 "the least of the apostles"** Paul was so humbled by God's grace even amidst his persecution of Jesus' church. He often uses phrases like this to describe himself (cf. 2 Cor. 12:11; Eph. 3:8; 1 Tim. 1:15).

■ **"because I persecuted the church of God"** (cf. Acts 9:1,13,21; Acts 22:4,19; Acts 26:10-11; Gal. 1:13,23; Phil. 3:6; 1 Tim. 1:13).

**15:10 "by the grace of God I am what I am"** "Grace" is fronted for emphasis (cf. Rom. 12:3; Eph. 2:8-9). All believers are what they are by the grace of God, but notice the needed balance on purposeful human action (cf. Phil. 2:12-13).

■ **"did not prove vain"** This is a different word from 1 Cor. 15:2. As a matter of fact, Paul uses three different terms translated "vain" or "empty" in this chapter.

1. *eikē*, 1 Cor. 15:2
2. *kenos*, 1 Cor. 15:10,14,48; 2 Cor. 6:1
3. *mataios*, 1 Cor. 15:17; 1 Cor. 3:20

**His point is that God's grace proved effective in Paul's ministry, of which the Corinthian church itself was an evidence and result.**

■ **"I labored even more than all of them"** The context dictates that this refers to the other Apostles. Paul compares himself to other Apostles in Galatians because his apostolic authority was being challenged. It is probable that one or more of the factions was doing the same thing in Corinth. Paul had no quarrel with the Twelve. He just clearly asserts his own calling and authority!

**See Special Topic on "even more" at 2 Cor. 2:7.**

■ **"yet not I, but the grace of God with me"** There is a balance in Paul's theology between call, giftedness, and service relating to God's sovereignty. There is always a covenantal balance between these two ways of viewing one's effectiveness. Paul asserts that he worked harder than the other Apostles, but he also knew that God was the source, not himself. This same balance is seen between John 15:5 and Phil. 4:13, or Phil. 2:12-13.

**15:11** Paul strongly asserts that the gospel he received and preached was the very same as the original Apostles preached. The very fact that he makes the claim shows what opposition he was facing at Corinth. Some were denying his apostolic authority and, even possibly, his gospel content.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 15:12-19**

**<sup>12</sup>Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? <sup>13</sup>But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; <sup>14</sup>and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. <sup>15</sup>Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. <sup>16</sup>For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; <sup>17</sup>and if**

**Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. <sup>18</sup>Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. <sup>19</sup>If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.**

**15:12 "if"** This is a first class conditional sentence, which implies Christ was being preached (cf. 1 Cor. 15:11).

■ **"how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead"** The source of this denial of the resurrection probably had its origin in Greek philosophy (i.e., Gnosticism, see glossary), which thought the physical body was the source of evil. It is textually uncertain whether they were denying the resurrection of Christ or the resurrection of all believers. This was not a unique problem in the early church (cf. 2 Tim. 2:18).

**15:13 "if"** This is another first class conditional. It is often called by grammarians a "simple" or "logical" condition (cf. 1 Cor. 15:13,14,15,16,17,19). Obviously in this verse Paul is using it to heighten his literary argument and not asserting that Christ has not been raised! But the logic in these next few verses is powerful. If Christ has not been raised then:

1. there is no resurrection at all, 1 Cor. 15:13,16
2. our preaching is vain, 1 Cor. 15:14
3. your faith is vain, 1 Cor. 15:14
4. they are false witnesses, 1 Cor. 15:15
5. your faith is worthless, v 17
6. you are still in your sins, 1 Cor. 15:17
7. those who have died have gone, 1 Cor. 15:18
8. we are of all men most to be pitied, 1 Cor. 15:19

This theological issue of the resurrection of Christ is no minor issue! He is alive or Christianity is a lie! This is a watershed doctrine!

**15:14,17 "vain. . .worthless"** These two different terms imply empty and fruitless. Without the resurrection the claims of the gospel message have no effect!

**15:19 "if we have hoped in Christ in this life only"** This is a first class conditional sentence. Paul is making the point that if Christ was not raised we only have hope (periphrastic perfect active) in this life because there is no afterlife-if Christ has not been raised!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 15:20-28**

<sup>20</sup>But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. <sup>21</sup>For since by a man *came* death, by a man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. <sup>22</sup>For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. <sup>23</sup>But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, <sup>24</sup>then *comes* the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. <sup>25</sup>For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. <sup>26</sup>The last enemy that will be abolished is death. <sup>27</sup>For He has put all things in subjection under His feet. But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. <sup>28</sup>When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.

**15:20 "But"** What an important contrast!

■ **"Christ has been raised"** This chapter has often been called "the Resurrection Chapter." Both the

resurrection of Christ and of His followers is the recurrent theme. The certainty and lasting results of this can be seen in the verb *egeirō*, which means to awaken, to raise up:

- v. 12, perfect passive indicative
- v. 13, perfect passive indicative
- v. 14, perfect passive indicative
- v. 15, aorist active indicative (twice)
- v. 16, perfect passive indicative
- v. 16, perfect passive indicative
- v. 17, perfect passive indicative
- v. 20, perfect passive indicative
- v. 32, perfect passive indicative
- v. 35, perfect passive indicative
- v. 42, perfect passive indicative
- v. 43, perfect passive indicative
- v. 44, perfect passive indicative
- v. 52, future passive indicative

Notice the consistent passive voice. The Triune God raises the dead. The perfect tense speaks of Jesus' past resurrection, which becomes a state of being. Believers share the reality of His resurrection and by faith, the assurance of theirs!

■ **"those who are asleep"** This is a perfect middle participle (cf. Matt. 27:52), which was a Hebrew idiom for death.

■ **"first fruits"** This OT annual sacrificial ritual is discussed in Lev. 23:10ff. The first fruits in the OT were ripened sheaves of the barley harvest waved before the Lord in the Temple the day after the High Holy Sabbath of Passover Week, which would be Resurrection Sunday. They were given to show God's ownership of the entire crop. This is an OT type for the promise of the resurrection of all of Christ's followers! Paul uses this term again in 1 Cor. 16:15 to describe the first believers in Achaia. He also uses it in Rom. 8:23 describing believers as receiving the Spirit, but anxiously waiting for the resurrection. Jesus is the first to be resurrected (cf. Col. 1:18), but in due time all of His followers will experience the same. In a spiritual sense we already have resurrection life (cf. Eph. 2:5-6).

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: FIRSTBORN**

**15:21-22** This is the Adam-Christ typology that will be followed up in 1 Cor. 15:45-48 (cf. Rom. 5:12-21; Phil. 2:6-11). In Adam all humanity has been affected by sin (i.e., death). In Christ, potentially all humanity can be affected by grace.

These ambiguous verses, along with Rom. 5:18-19, have caused some theologians to assert an eventual salvation for all humans. Others have seen it as referring to the resurrection of both the saved and the lost (cf. Dan. 12:2). In Adam all die; in Jesus all will be raised (i.e., some to reward, some to judgment). It seems obvious to me that Paul's writings, taken in context, demand a repentant faith response to be saved!

**15:23-25** Some theologians assert that these verses confirm a pre-millennial concept of eschatology. However, this text is not a discussion of the millennium, but the resurrection. Death was defeated at the empty tomb, not a future temporal reign. We must be careful of our theological agendas driving the interpretation of a context. Paul never discusses a millennium, even in his discussion of the rapture (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13-18) nor of the Antichrist (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2). Neither did Jesus ever discuss a millennium, even in His eschatological discourses (cf. Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21). There are several good books that give a summary of each current millennial position and that let the other positions point out the strengths and weaknesses of each.

1. Robert G. Clouse (ed.), *The Meaning of the Millennium, Four Views*
2. C. Marvin Pate (ed.), *Four Views on the Book of Revelation*

3. Darrell L. Boch (ed.), *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*  
See my comments at Revelation, chapter 20, online at [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org)

**15:23 "His coming"** See Special Topic below.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: NT TERMS FOR CHRIST'S RETURN**

**15:24 "the kingdom"** It is surprising how often this concept is used by Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels. It is the subject of His first sermon and last sermon as well as the thrust of most parables. It is surprisingly used only twice in John's Gospel. It is the reign of God in believing human's hearts now that will one day be consummated over all the earth (see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 4:20).

It is used by Jesus as the current presence of the kingdom of God in and through His own personal presence and teaching (cf. Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; 11:12; 12:28; Mark 1:15; Luke 9:9,11; 11:20; 21:31-32). However, it is also linked to a future glorious consummation at His return (cf. Matt. 6:10; 16:28; 26:64). It is "the already/not yet" eschatological tension of the Gospels!

The specific reference to "the kingdom" is relatively rare in Paul's writings.

Romans - 14:17

1 Corinthians - 4:20; 6:9; 15:24,50

Galatians - 5:21

Ephesians - 5:5

Colossians - 1:13; 4:11

1 Thessalonians - 2:12

2 Thessalonians - 4:1,18

■ **"when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power"** This refers to the angelic powers (*eons* in Gnostic thought) of this current evil age (cf. Rom. 8:38; Eph. 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:10,15). This abolishment apparently occurs

1. theologically at the cross and resurrection
2. temporally at Christ's return

If this is true, then 1 Thess. 4:13-18 is the closest parallel in Paul's writings. Notice that after the rapture, believers are with the Lord forever (cf. 1 Thess. 4:17), which is the eternal kingdom of the Father (cf. Dan. 7:13-14).

For "rule" see Special Topic below.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: ARCHĒ**

For "authority" see Special Topic following.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: AUTHORITY (EXOUSIA)**

This context may refer to the Gnostic *eons*. See Special Topic following.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: ANGELS IN PAUL'S WRITINGS**

**15:25 "He has put all His enemies under His feet"** This is an OT idiom of complete victory (cf. Ps. 8:6; 110:1). In the OT the enemies were the surrounding pagan nations, but in the NT they are the angelic, spiritual powers hostile to God and His Christ. These evil powers influence humans to disbelief and rebellion. Jesus has fully defeated these powers by the cross and His resurrection. The final resurrection of all believers will mark the consummation of this victory!

There are two interesting books that try to define exactly what these "power(s)" refer to.

1. Hendricus Berkhof, *Christ and the Powers*
2. Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time*

**15:26 "The last enemy that will be abolished is death"** This means "made null and void." Death is defeated (cf. 2 Tim. 1:10; Rev. 21:4). Death was not the will of God for mankind, but a result of the Fall (i.e., Genesis 3). The curse will be removed (cf. Rev. 21:3) as it is now defeated.

For the term "abolished" in 1 Cor. 15:24 and 26 see Special Topic: *Katargeō* at 1 Cor. 1:28.

**15:27-28** The pronoun antecedents are ambiguous. Obviously this refers to an inner relationship within the Godhead (cf. 1 Cor. 3:23; 11:3). Christ, the Son, is subordinate (but not unequal, cf. Col. 3:11) to the Father in His redemptive function within time (cf. Rom. 11:33-36).

**15:27** This is a quote from Ps. 8:6 with an added allusion to Ps. 110:1. For "subjection" see note at 1 Cor. 16:16 and Special Topic at 2 Cor. 9:13.

**15:28 "when all things are subject to Him"** When does this occur? This is the question! There are obvious time indicators throughout this paragraph.

1. after that (*epeita*), 1 Cor. 15:23
2. then (*eita*), 1 Cor. 15:24
3. when (*hotav*, twice), 1 Cor. 15:24
4. until (*achri*), 1 Cor. 15:25
5. when (*hostan*), 1 Cor. 15:27
6. when (*hostan*), 1 Cor. 15:28

Does this refer to

1. Jesus' death and resurrection
2. Jesus' ascension
3. Jesus' return/rapture
4. some aspect of the millennium

There is an obvious time sequence, but Paul is too ambiguous for any interpreter to declare with certainty. Often our presuppositions and systematic theologies shape this passage into any desired shape!

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 15:29-34**

**<sup>29</sup>Otherwise, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them? <sup>30</sup>Why are we also in danger every hour? <sup>31</sup>I affirm, brethren, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. <sup>32</sup>If from human motives I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, what does it profit me? If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. <sup>33</sup>Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals." <sup>34</sup>Become sober-minded as you ought, and stop sinning; for some have no knowledge of God. I speak *this* to your shame.**

**15:29** This verse has caused major problems in interpretation. We have no parallel passages in Scripture. We have no other reference for this practice in the early church, although there is some historical evidence about something similar being practiced among the heretics of the second and third century. We must admit we just do not know biblically exactly to what this refers. Some theories are:

1. new Christians baptized to take the place of dead Christians
2. new converts baptized because of their respect for a dead loved one
3. persons in catechism having died before being baptized were proxy baptized by living Christians
4. new converts were baptized over the graves of great Christians.

Hermeneutically several assumptions need to be applied to the interpretation of this verse.

1. It basically is in a series of examples/illustrations of the reality of the resurrection.
2. One does not build theology/doctrine on illustrations.
3. Since there is no clue to the exact historical reference, this text should not be emphasized or applied and surely not turned into a doctrine (i.e. Mormonism)
4. It is even contextually uncertain if Paul is affirming this practice or simply making an allusion to it (cf.



TEV, NJB)

▣ **"If"** This is a first class conditional sentence used to make a strong counterpoint. The Greek text has the word *holōs* (actually) in this clause. See notes at 1 Cor. 5:1.

**15:31**

**NASB, NKJV** "I affirm"

**NRSV** "that is as certain"

**TEV** "I declare this"

**NJB** "I swear"

This is not in the Greek, but in context the following phrase might be an oath formula. Paul uses oath formulas quite often to assert the truthfulness of his statements (cf. Rom. 9:1; 2 Cor. 1:18,23; 11:10-11,31).

▣ **"by the boasting in you which I have in Christ"** Paul is asserting that his work in Corinth is an evidence of his labor for Christ. His labor has been worth it (cf. 2 Cor. 3:1-2; 7:4; 9:2-3). Paul's churches were an evidence of his apostleship and effectiveness.

▣ **"I die daily"** This phrase is placed first in the sentence for emphasis (cf. 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Gal. 2:20; 1 John 3:16). Verses 30-32 refer to the difficulties Paul faced in service to Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 1:8-10, 4:8-12; 6:3-10; 11:23-27). He knew it was worth it because he had personally seen the glorified Christ on the road to Damascus (cf. Acts 9:1-22; 22:3-16; 26:9-18). Paul's theology was informed by personal experience and personal revelation (cf. Acts 9:1-22; Gal. 1:11-12) and the Old Testament (his rabbinical training).

**15:32 "If"** Paul uses two First class conditional sentences to make the point. If there is no resurrection and no Christian reward, why was Paul willing to suffer daily for the gospel?

▣ **"I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus"** Paul does not mention this experience in his litany of sufferings in 2 Cor. 11:23-27, and because Paul was a Roman citizen, he should not have been forced to fight wild beasts. This must be a metaphor of the difficult spiritual situation that Paul encountered at Ephesus (cf. 1 Cor. 1:8-10). Some take this text literally and assert an imprisonment at Ephesus.

▣ **"what does it profit me"** Paul's labors for Christ are of no spiritual effect if there is no resurrection, either of Christ and thereby no resurrection for Paul. He labors for the gospel, but if the gospel is not true, there is no reward (i.e., no salvation, no resurrection, no eternal life, no fellowship with God, no reuniting with loved ones in heaven, cf. 1 Cor. 15:12-19).

▣ **"let us eat, and drink, for tomorrow we die"** This was the motto of the Epicureans. It is also a quote from Isa. 22:13 (cf. Isa. 56:12; Luke 12:19). This is similar to the current saying, "You only go around once in life, so get all the gusto you can!" But, what if there is a resurrection? What if we do stand before a Holy God to give an account of the gift of life (cf. Dan. 12:2)?!

**15:33 "do not be deceived"** This is a negated present passive imperative. The church at Corinth was being led astray by false theology (cf. 1 Cor. 6:9).

▣ **"Bad company corrupts good morals"** This seems to be a quote from the Greek prophet, Menander's *Thais*, relating to a prostitute. Some factions at Corinth were proud of their (1) Greco-Roman heritage or (2) sexual freedom. Paul intensifies their attitudes by quoting from their own philosophers (cf. 1 Cor. 15:32 and 33). Paul was raised in Tarsus, which was well known for its schools of Greek philosophy (cf Acts 17:28 and Titus 1:12). He was uniquely learned in rabbinical Judaism and secular Greek thought.

▣ **"corrupts"** See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 15:42.

15:34	
NASB	"become sober-minded"
NKJV	"awake to righteousness"
NRSV	"come to a sober and right mind"
TEV	"come back to your right senses"
NJB	"wake up from your stupor as you should"

This is an aorist active imperative. This seems to mean, "come to your moral senses once and for all."

- ▣ **"stop sinning"** This is a present active imperative with a negative particle which usually means to stop an act in process. It is obvious that those who denied the resurrection were also living godless lives. Paul uses their immorality as a way to show the faulty validity of their theological assertion (i.e., no resurrection).
- ▣ **"no knowledge of God"** In English this is the term "agnostic." This was a subtle sarcastic remark to those who revered knowledge so highly. Their theology and actions clearly showed they had no true knowledge!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 15:35-41**

<sup>35</sup>But someone will say, "How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?" <sup>36</sup>You fool! That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies; <sup>37</sup>and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else. <sup>38</sup>But God gives it a body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own. <sup>39</sup>All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one *flesh* of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish. <sup>40</sup>There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the *glory* of the earthly is another. <sup>41</sup>There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.

**15:35 "someone will say"** This is Paul's use of a literary technique called diatribe. This question/answer format is also seen in the OT in Malachi and in the NT in Romans and 1 John. The subject of the literary work is carried forward by a dialog between the writer and a supposed objector. Here the argument is moved on to a slightly different theme. First, some of the factious groups denied the resurrection of Christ and thereby the resurrection of all believers. Now Paul addresses those who question the form of the resurrection body.

- ▣ **"with what kind of body do they come"** One source of the conflict concerning a resurrected body comes from the negative view of the physical body in some schools of Greek philosophy. The Greeks often viewed the material as evil (i.e., Gnosticism) and even worse, the physical body as the prison-house of the eternal divine spark or soul within all humans. This cultural/philosophical background came into direct conflict with Paul's Hebraic (i.e., Pharisaic) background of the affirmation of a physical, bodily after-life.

**15:35-41** Paul uses a series of illustrations that show the continuity, and yet difference, between the physical body and the spiritual body.

1. seed vs. mature plant, 1 Cor. 15:37
2. human vs. animal flesh, 1 Cor. 15:39
3. heavenly body vs. earthly bodies, v 40
4. night lights vs. Sun light, 1 Cor. 15:41

**15:36 "You fool"** People who claim to know God, but think and act in inappropriate ways are often characterized as poor thinkers! Paul's sarcastic comments, so frequent in I and 2 Corinthians, reveal this type of person. They were so confident that they possessed knowledge that they could not see nor

recognize true knowledge!

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: TERMS FOR FOOLISH PEOPLE**

**15:37 "That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies"** Paul again is following Jesus' words (cf. John 12:24). This is the use of phenomenological language (i.e., the way things appear to the five senses). This is not meant to be a scientific statement, but an agricultural metaphor of new life from hard, seemingly dead, seeds.

The term "unless" denotes a third class conditional sentence, which means potential action.

■ **"perhaps"** This is an incomplete fourth class conditional (cf. 1 Cor. 14:10). Paul is asserting the possibility of different kinds of grain seeds.

**15:39-40 "another. . .another"** The first, used four times in 1 Cor. 15:39 and three in 1 Cor. 15:41, is *allos* and the next "another" is used three times in 1 Cor. 15:40 and is *heteros*. The distinction between these two was explicit in classical Greek, but almost gone in Koine Greek. In this context the distinction seems to remain:

1. *allos*, another of the same kind (cf. 1 Cor. 15:39,41)
2. *heteros*, another of a different kind (cf. 1 Cor. 15:40)

**15:40,41,43 "glory"** See [SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY \(DOXA\)](#) at 1 Cor. 2:7.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 15:42-49**

**<sup>42</sup>So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable *body*, it is raised an imperishable *body*; <sup>43</sup>it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; <sup>44</sup>it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. <sup>45</sup>So also it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living soul." The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit. <sup>46</sup>However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. <sup>47</sup>The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. <sup>48</sup>As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. <sup>49</sup>Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.**

**15:42-49** The Bible does not specifically or fully reveal the things related to the afterlife. Probably because we are not able in our fallen, temporal, earthly state to comprehend them. This paragraph discusses the resurrection body by comparing it to the earthly body. Yet, still it is not precise. All that can be said is that our new bodies will be perfectly prepared for life, fellowship, worship, and service of our God in the new age. In light of this, the exact form is irrelevant (cf. Phil. 3:21; 1 John 3:2).

**15:42**

**NASB, NRSV,**

**NJB** "perishable. . .imperishable"

**NKJV** "corruptible. . .incorruptible"

**TEV** "mortal. . .immortal"

Often this term is used in the same context as its negated opposite (cf. Rom. 1:23; 1 Cor. 9:25; 15:50,53). Notice the parallel contrasts between our earthly physical bodies and our heavenly eternal bodies.

1. corruptible vs. incorruptible, 1 Cor. 15:42,50
2. dishonor vs. glory, 1 Cor. 15:43
3. weakness vs. power, 1 Cor. 15:43

4. natural body vs. spiritual body, 1 Cor. 15:44
5. first Adam vs. last Adam, 1 Cor. 15:45
6. image of the earthly vs. image of the heavenly, 1 Cor. 15:49

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: DESTROY, RUIN, CORRUPT (PHTHEIRŌ)**

**15:43 "weakness"** See [SPECIAL TOPIC: WEAKNESS](#) at 2 Cor. 12:9.

**15:44 "if"** The United Bible Societies' *Handbook on Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians* says this is not a first class conditional sentence, but a statement of fact (cf. p. 361). However, A. T. Robertson in *Word Pictures in the New Testament* asserts that it is a first class conditional (cf. p. 197). Grammar is not a science.

**15:45 "The first man, Adam"** This is a quote from Gen. 2:7. Jesus' mentioning of Adam (cf. Matt. 19:4; Mark 10:6; Luke 3:38) denotes his historicity. Jesus assumed the corruption of an initial pair named Adam and Eve. Paul's use of Adam-Christ typology, both here and in Rom. 5:17-21, demands a special creation of Adam and Eve. This may be a later creation (see my commentary on Genesis 1-11 (online at [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org)), where I assert an old earth, but a relatively recent creation of Eden), but it seems to me it must be a special creation.

▣ **"the last Adam became a life-giving spirit"** This must refer to the resurrection of Jesus. It is not meant to deny a physical aspect to Jesus' post-resurrection appearances, but to contrast the first Adam, whose actions caused death, with the last Adam, whose actions caused life, eternal life, resurrection life! This is an example of the Adam-Christ typology (cf. Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Cor. 15:21-22,45-49; Phil. 2:6-8).

▣ **"a life-giving spirit"** This is a good example of the difficulty in some contexts of knowing if "spirit" should be a small "s" (cf. Rom. 8:9; 2 Cor. 3:3; Gal. 4:6; 1 Pet. 1:11). The Bible uses the term *pneuma* in several different verses. See Special Topic: *Pneuma* at 1 Cor. 12:1.

**15:46** This is not an ontological statement, but a temporal statement relating to the first Adam and the second Adam (cf. 1 Cor. 15:47). Physical human life precedes spiritual life!

**15:47 "the second man is from heaven"** There are several additions to this phrase in the Greek manuscripts. Most of them are an attempt to accentuate that Jesus is human like Adam, but more than human. Bart D. Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, pp. 94-95, thinks these changes were a result of the doctrinal controversies within the church during the period when these manuscripts were being copied. He suggests the additions were purposeful, theological clarifications on the part of orthodox scribes.

**15:49 "Just as we have borne the image of the earthly"** This text occurs in early Greek manuscripts P<sup>46</sup>,  $\kappa$ , A, C, D (i.e., arist active subjunctive). The context seems to demand the text of the early Alexandrian manuscript B, which was, "We shall bear..." (i.e., Future active indicative). Both of these Greek words were pronounced similarly. The early manuscripts were often copied at one time by one man reading the text aloud and several men making written copies. Theologically the future indicative is preferable. The other verbs in context are future. It is a descriptive context, not hortatory (i.e., exhortation to action).

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 15:50-57**

**<sup>50</sup>Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. <sup>51</sup>Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, <sup>52</sup>in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the**

trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. <sup>53</sup>For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. <sup>54</sup>But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory" <sup>55</sup>"O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" <sup>56</sup>The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; <sup>57</sup>but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

**15:50 "flesh and blood"** This is a metaphor for humanity (cf. Matt. 16:17; Gal. 1:16; Eph. 6:12; Heb. 2:14).

▣ **"inherit"** This is a family metaphor describing our permanent fellowship with God. In the OT the Levites received no large land inheritance (only 48 Levitical cities), thus they were said to have YHWH as their inheritance. The NT transfers this (as it does many priestly activities) to all believers. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: BELIEVERS' INHERITANCE](#) at 1 Cor. 6:9.

▣ **"the kingdom of God"** See note at 1 Cor. 15:24.

**15:51 "mystery"** See Special Topic following.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: GOD'S PLAN FOR REDEMPTION, "MYSTERY"](#)

God has a unified purpose for mankind's redemption that even preceded the Fall (Genesis 3). Hints of this plan are revealed in the OT (Genesis 3:15; 12:3; Exodus 19:5-6; and the universal passages in the prophets). However, this inclusive agenda was not clear (1 Cor. 2:6-8). With the coming of Jesus and the Spirit it begins to become more obvious. Paul used the term "mystery" to describe this total redemptive plan, which was once hidden, but now fully revealed (1 Cor. 4:1; Eph. 6:19; Col. 4:3; 1 Tim. 1:9). However, he used it in several different senses.

1. A partial hardening of Israel to allow Gentiles to be included. This influx of Gentiles will work as a mechanism (jealousy) for Jews to accept Jesus as the Messiah of prophecy (Rom. 11:25-32).
2. The gospel was made known to the nations, all of whom are potentially included in Christ and through Christ (Rom. 16:25-27; Col. 2:2).
3. Believers will have new bodies at the Second Coming (1 Cor. 15:5-57; 1 Thess. 4:13-18).
4. The summing up of all things in Christ (Eph. 1:8-11).
5. The Gentiles and Jews are fellow-heirs (Eph. 2:11-3:13).
6. Intimacy of the relationship between Christ and the Church described in marriage terms (Eph. 5:22-33).
7. Gentiles included in the covenant people and indwelt by the Spirit of Christ so as to produce Christlike maturity, that is, the restored image of God in fallen humanity (Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; Col. 1:26-28).
8. The end-time AntiChrist (2 Thess. 2:1-11).
9. An early church summary of the mystery is found in 1 Tim. 3:16.

▣ **"we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed"** This seems to assert that there will be Christians alive at the Second Coming (cf. 1 Thess. 4:13-18). Sleep is a biblical euphemism for death.

Does Paul expect to be alive at the Second Coming or is this an editorial "we" (alive at Jesus' return, 1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:15,17 or raised at Jesus' return, 1 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 4:14; 5:1-10)? Like all NT authors and Jesus, he seems to have expected an imminent return of the glorified Christ. But only the Father knew the time (cf. Matt. 24:36; Mark 13:32; Acts 1:7). Believers are to live every day in light of the hope of the Second Coming, but plan and train for kingdom activities as if it will be delayed.

## [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE ANY-MOMENT RETURN OF JESUS VERSUS THE NOT YET \(NT PARADOX\)](#)

**15:52 "in a moment"** We get the English "atom" from the Greek term, which meant "undividable."

■ **"in the twinkling of an eye"** This is used of the blinking of a star or the rapid movement of gnats' wings. The implication of these two terms is that Jesus' return will occur very rapidly once it begins. No time for last minute prayers.

■ **"at the last trumpet"** This was an OT way of announcing the end-time events by means of the *shophar* (i.e., left ram's horn, cf. Isa. 27:13; Zech. 9:13; Matt. 24:31; 1 Thess. 4:16). It is surely possible that the trumpet was a metaphor for the voice of God (cf. Exod. 19:16,19; 20:18; Rev. 1:10), also used of prophets' voices (cf. Isa. 58:1; Heb. 12:19).

## [SPECIAL TOPIC: HORNS USED BY ISRAEL](#)

**15:54** This is a reference to Isa. 25:8, which is also alluded to in Matt. 5:11; 1 Pet. 4:14; Rev. 7:17; 21:4. Verses 54 and 55 are obviously Paul's way of taunting mankind's last great enemy-death, which has been completely vanquished in Christ's resurrection from the dead and His followers having been freed from sin's penalty and awaiting a certain resurrection themselves.

**15:55** This is a reference to Hosea 13:14, which reverses the order by quoting the Septuagint. Most OT quotes in the NT are from the Greek translation of the OT. It was the Bible of the first century church.

**15:56** In this verse Paul is asserting humanity's broken relationship with God caused by sin (cf. Genesis 3; Romans 2-3). This rebellion has caused us to feel estranged from the very One who made us for Himself.

Sin entered the world through a willful act of disobedience. The term "law" does not refer to the Mosaic Law, but to God's prohibitions in general. We are corrupt, but God has chosen to restore fellowship through Christ. What sin destroyed, Christ restores (i.e., permanent fellowship with God; the marred image is repaired).

**15:57 "thanks be to God"** This reminds me of Paul's cry in Rom. 6:17 and 7:25. It foreshadows Paul's great metaphor of a Roman triumphal march in 2 Cor. 2:14, as well as his outburst of gratitude in 2 Cor. 9:15. See Special Topic: Paul's Praise, Prayer, and Thanksgiving at 2 Cor. 2:14.

■ **"victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"** All spiritual victory comes through Christ and Christ alone! It has already come! Believers live in light of Christ's full and complete victory!

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 15:58**

**<sup>58</sup>Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not *in vain* in the Lord.**

**15:58** Paul concludes this tremendous theological discussion of the resurrection with a practical pastoral encouragement for the need for consistency and perseverance in our daily Christian lives. Eternal life has observable characteristics! There is one present imperative followed by two participles used as imperatives. It will be worth it all when we see Him and are welcomed into the eternal Kingdom!

■ **"abounding"** See Special Topic at 2 Cor. 2:7.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in

interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. List the four aspects of the Christian life found in 1 Cor. 15:1 and 2.
2. List the main tenets of the gospel found in 1 Cor. 15:3 and 4.
3. Why did Paul consider himself to be the least of the Apostles?
4. What was the basis of the members of the church at Corinth denying the resurrection.
5. What is the Adam-Christ typology?
6. What does it mean to baptize for the dead?
7. Will our resurrection bodies be humanoid?

# 1 CORINTHIANS 16

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Contribution for the Saints	Collection for the Saints	Final Messages	The Offering for Needy Believers	Commendations, Greetings
16:1-4	16:1-4	16:1-4	16:1-4	16:1-4
Plans for Travel	Personal Plans		Paul's Plans	
16:5-9	16:5-12	16:5-9	16:5-7 16:8-9	16:5-9
16:10-11		16:10-11	16:10-11	16:10-12
16:12		16:12	16:12	
Final Request and Greetings	Final Exhortations		Final Words	
16:13-14	16:13-18	16:13-14	16:13-14	16:13-14
16:15-18		16:15-18	16:15-16 16:17-18	16:15-18
	Greetings and a Solemn Farewell			
16:19-20	16:19-24	16:19-20	16:19-20a 16:20b	16:19-20
16:21-24		16:21-24	16:21 16:22a 16:22b 16:23 16:24	16:21 16:22 16:23 16:24

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph



4. Etc.

## INTRODUCTION

A. Chapter 15 is a highly developed theological argument dealing with the reality of resurrection, while chapter 16 is related to daily practical Christianity. Paul has no problem moving between truth and life. They must be held together. This type of sudden shift from one subject to another characterizes Paul's writings.

B. Brief Outline:

1. 1 Cor. 16:1-4, collection for Judean poor
2. 1 Cor. 16:5-9, tentative travel plans to Corinth
3. 1 Cor. 16:10-12, other Christian workers
4. 1 Cor. 16:13-18, final admonitions
5. 1 Cor. 16:19-24, closing greetings

C. Paul's relationship with Aquila and Prisca:

1. They were Jewish tent makers (or leather workers) in Rome. Claudius' edict of a.d. 49-50, which banned all Jewish worship practices (which at this period included church activities), forced them to move.
2. They met Paul in Corinth, Acts 18:2.
3. They later moved to Ephesus and began a house church, 1 Cor. 16:19.
4. They moved back to Rome after Claudius died in a.d. 54 and the edict was rescinded, Rom. 16:6.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 16:1-4

**<sup>1</sup>Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. <sup>2</sup>On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come. <sup>3</sup>When I arrive, whomever you may approve, I will send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem; <sup>4</sup>and if it is fitting for me to go also, they will go with me.**

**16:1 "Now concerning"** "*Peri de*" is a Greek phrase which introduces Paul's answers to questions which the Corinthian church had sent Paul (cf. 1 Cor. 7:1,25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1,12).

■ **"the collection"** *Logia* is a term which has been found in the Greek papyri in Egypt as a gift of money for a religious purpose, but not related to a regular tax (cf. Moulton, Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, p. 377). Paul first mentioned this concern for the poor in Judea in a conversation with James, Peter, John, and Barnabas in Gal. 2:10; 6:10. This specific offering was begun by the church at Antioch where Paul and Barnabas served, Acts 11:27-30. This offering is mentioned in several NT books (cf. Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 8-9; 1 Cor. 16:1). It was an attempt to seal the relationship between the Hebrew mother church and the Gentile churches.

Paul calls this one-time contribution by several names.

1. almsgiving (gifts of charity), Acts 24:17
2. fellowship, Rom. 15:26,27; 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:13
3. an indebtedness, Rom. 15:27
4. service, Rom. 15:27; 2 Cor. 9:12

■ **"for the saints"** "Saints" (*hagioi*) is from the OT term "holy," (*kadosh*) which meant "set apart for God's

service" (cf. 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Rom. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:2). It is always plural in the NT except for one time in Philippians (4:21), but even there, it is used corporately. To be saved is to be part of the covenant community of faith, the family of believers.

God's people are holy because of the imputed righteousness of Jesus (cf. Romans 4; 2 Cor. 5:21). It is God's will that they live holy lives (cf. 1 Cor. 1:4; 4:1; 5:27; Col. 1:22; 3:12). Believers are both declared holy (positional sanctification) and called to lifestyle holiness (progressive sanctification). Justification and sanctification must be firmly held together! See Special Topics: Saints at 1 Cor. 1:2 and Sanctification at 1 Cor. 1:2.

▣ **"as I directed the churches of Galatia"** Paul was not treating the church at Corinth differently. There was a standard procedure (cf. 1 Cor. 4:17; 7:17; 11:34; 14:33; Titus 1:5) in this offering. We do not know how Paul communicated this to the Galatian churches. As a matter of fact we are not sure to which churches this term refers. Some think this refers to the Roman province while others think it is to a language or ethnic group.

▣ **"churches"** See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:2

**16:2 "On the first day of every week"** This pattern of worship was set by Jesus' early post-resurrection appearances on Sunday night (cf. John 20:19,20). It developed into the regular worship day for the assembled church (cf. Acts 20:7; Rev. 1:10). Sunday was the first work day of the week up until the time of Constantine (Emperor of the Roman Empire from a.d. 306-337). The Christians met before work on Sundays for worship, preaching, and the Lord's Supper.

The Jewish leaders reorganized after the fall of Jerusalem in a.d. 70 and inaugurated several reforms. One of them was an oath which cursed and rejected Jesus as the Messiah. The early believers met with the synagogue on the Sabbath and with the church on Sunday. However, this oath forced a split and believers made Sunday their designated worship day.

▣ **"each one of you is to put aside and save"** This is a present active imperative followed by a Present active participle used as an imperative. This text seems to imply that as the first of the week came, each individual put an offering in a safe place at home, later to be taken to the church. However, the fact that it was on Sunday implies that they deposited the funds collected daily at the weekly worship service (cf. Justin Martyr, *Apology* 1.67-68). Notice that this brief verse combined with 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 gives us the basic guidelines for NT giving: (1) regularly; (2) as a priority; (3) voluntarily; (4) joyfully; and (5) proportionally.

It is surprising that NT authors do not discuss regular Christian giving. Paul's words of encouragement and procedure for the one-time gift of the Gentile churches to the mother church in Jerusalem are the only guidelines related to this subject. Christians realized that they were owners of nothing and stewards of all their resources. This understanding supercedes the OT concept of "tithing." It is surely true that you can tell a person's priorities by his checkbook and his calendar! Christian giving is an issue of an overflowing heart, not a calculator!

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: TITHING**

<b>NASB, NKJV</b>	<b>"as he may prosper"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"whatever extra you can"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"in proportion to what you have earned"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"as much as each can spare"</b>

This is literally "whatever if he may be prospered" (A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures In the New Testament*, says, "it is uncertain what grammatical form *eudō tai* is, present passive subjunctive, perfect passive indicative, or even perfect passive subjunctive" p. 200). This was a Greek idiom wishing one a happy, successful journey (for commercial purposes). Paul is using it as a principle of Christian giving (i.e., according to your ability, cf. 2 Cor. 8:3,11).

■ **"so that no collection be made when I come"** Paul was always cautious about the proper handling of money. Probably he had (1) seen problems develop in this area or (2) been personally accused in this area. He will take no money from the churches he was currently working with and also when this gift is taken to Jerusalem he wants representatives of the various churches to accompany him. He is not even sure he will go himself (cf. 1 Cor. 16:4).

**16:3 "whomever you approve, I will send them with letters to carry your gift"** This verse is an interesting mixture of apostolic authority and congregational authority. It has been debated as to who wrote the letters of recommendation, Paul or the church (cf. Acts 18:27). Both are grammatically possible. The King James Version and RSV assume it was the church while the Williams NT, TEV, NIV, NJB, and REB assume Paul. Paul wants the church to pick out representatives to accompany the offering lest he be accused of wrong motives, as he so often was by this church (cf. 1 Cor. 9:3-18).

Paul often wrote letters of recommendation for his co-workers (cf. Rom. 16:1; 2 Cor. 3:1; ;8:18-24; and other examples, Acts 9:2; 22:5; 3 John). Paul uses this concept metaphorically in 2 Cor. 3:1 in the sense that his functioning churches were his letter of recommendation. Apparently the Apostle John also employed this same type of letter (cf. 3 John 9). In a sense this was the method by which early churches affirmed their itinerant gospel ministers.

**16:4 "if"** This is a third class conditional sentence, which meant potential action.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"it is fitting for me to go"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"it is fitting that I go"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"it seems advisable"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"it seems worthwhile"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"it is worth my going"</b>

This seems to relate to (1) the size of the offering; (2) the one who started this offering accompanying it; or (3) Paul's wanting this church, which had such problems with his authority, to recognize his proper role and trustworthiness.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 16:5-9**

<sup>5</sup>But I will come to you after I go through Macedonia, for I am going through Macedonia; <sup>6</sup>and perhaps I will stay with you, or even spend the winter, so that you may send me on my way wherever I may go. <sup>7</sup>For I do not wish to see you now *just* in passing; for I hope to remain with you for some time, if the Lord permits. <sup>8</sup>But I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; <sup>9</sup>for a wide door for effective *service* has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

**16:5-9** Paul was writing from Ephesus on his third missionary journey. He was later attacked by a group within the church at Corinth because of his supposed "fickle" travel plans (cf. 2 Cor. 1:15ff). He first was going to take the sea route to Corinth and then pass through Macedonia, but since he wanted to stay longer, he decided to go by land route through Macedonia first and then to Corinth. He stayed the winter there (cf. Acts 20:2,3). Some in the church used Paul's indecision in his travel plans to attack his theology (i.e., gospel).

**16:6 "so that you may send me on my way wherever I may go"** The verb *propempō* is used as a technical term for supplying the travel needs of God's itinerant ministers (cf. 1 Cor. 16:11, "send him on," cf. Acts 15:3; Rom. 15:24; 2 Cor. 1:16; Titus 3:13; 3 John 6).

**16:7 "if the Lord permits"** This is a third class conditional sentence, which means potential action. This was not a trite phrase with the NT Christians. They believed their steps were providentially guided by the Lord (cf. Acts 18:21; 1 Cor. 4:19; James. 4:14; Heb. 6:3).

**16:8 "Pentecost"** This term usually means "fiftieth." It refers to the wheat harvest festival (i.e., Feast of Weeks, cf. Num. 28:26) of the Jews that occurred 50 days after the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (i.e., *Nisan* 16). In this context it seems it is used as a method of dating Paul's travel plans and not asserting that Paul still kept these Jewish feast days.

**16:9**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"for a wide door for effective <i>service</i> has opened to me"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"For a great and effective door has opened to me"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"For a wide door for effective work has opened to me"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"There is a real opportunity here for great and worthwhile work"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"a very promising door is standing wide open to me"</b>

This is a perfect active indicative. The use of the term "door" as a metaphor for opportunity is common in the NT (cf. Acts 14:27; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3; Rev. 3:8).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: USE OF "DOOR" IN THE NT**

▣ **"there are many adversaries"** God's opportunities are often accompanied by opposition. For the specific historical setting read Acts 19:19-20; 20:19,23.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 16:10-11**

**<sup>10</sup>Now if Timothy comes, see that he is with you without cause to be afraid, for he is doing the Lord's work, as I also am. <sup>11</sup>So let no one despise him. But send him on his way in peace, so that he may come to me; for I expect him with the brethren.**

**16:10 "if"** This is a third class conditional sentence, meaning potential action. It seems that Paul had already sent Timothy and Erastus (cf. Acts 19:22), and possibly Titus (cf. 2 Cor. 2:13; 7:6,7) on to Corinth by the land route. He was sending his letter by sea and it would arrive quicker.

▣ **"see that he is with you without cause to be afraid"** Paul puts this in the form of a command (i.e., present active imperative). He knew personally how unloving the church could be. He did not want his young assistant to be slighted because of (1) his age; (2) his personality; or (3) their anger toward Paul (cf. 1 Cor. 16:11).

**16:11**

<b>NASB, NKJV,</b>	
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"So let no one despise him"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"No one should look down on him"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"nobody is to underrate him"</b>

This is an aorist active subjunctive, which literally means "to make absolute nothing of" (cf. 1 Cor. 1:28; 1 Tim. 4:12; Titus 2:15).

▣ **"with the brethren"** We are not sure who this involved. It may possibly be Erastus (cf. Acts 19:22, and Titus, 2 Cor. 2:13; 7:6-7), but who else, if anyone, is uncertain.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 16:12**

**<sup>12</sup>But concerning Apollos our brother, I encouraged him greatly to come to you with the brethren; and it was not at all *his* desire to come now, but he will come when he has opportunity.**

**16:12 "But concerning"** This is another answer to a question asked by the Corinthian church (cf. 1 Cor.

7:1,25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1,12).

■ **"Apollos"** This was a highly educated and eloquent preacher from Alexandria, Egypt. He was in Corinth earlier (cf. Acts 18:24-19:1), but he refused to go back (cf. 1 Cor. 16:12).

■ **"and it was not at all his desire to come now"** The text can be interpreted in two ways: (1) it was not Apollos' will to come or (2) it was not God's will for him to come. From this verse it seems that Apollos had left Ephesus between the time Paul talked to him and the writing of this letter.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 16:13-14**

**<sup>13</sup>Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. <sup>14</sup>Let all that you do be done in love.**

**16:13-14** This is a series of five present imperatives. They are very similar to the practical admonitions of 1 Cor. 15:58. The first four are third person plural and have a military background. The last is second person singular and seems to address the corporate church.

**16:13**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"Be on the alert"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"watch"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"keep alert"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"be alert"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"be vigilant"</b>

This is a Present active imperative. Its basic meaning is to awake, used in the sense of "watch out" (cf. Matt. 24:42; 25:13; 26:38,40,48; Mark 13:35,37; 14:34,37,38). Paul is admonishing them to be alert and watchful against a factious spirit, heresy, debauchery, and pride!

<b>NASB, TEV</b>	<b>"stand firm in the faith"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"stand fast in the faith"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"stand firm in your faith"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"stay firm in the faith"</b>

This is another present active imperative. This is a military term for holding one's position. "In the faith" refers to Christian truth or Christian doctrine (cf. Jude 1:3, 20).

See Special Topic: Stand (*Histēmi*) at 1 Cor. 15:1.

■ **"act like men"** This is a present middle (deponent) imperative. This is the only NT use of the term. It is the verb form of the term *anēr*, which meant a mature man or a husband. It appears in the LXX in Jos. 1:6. It is not generic (i.e., referring only to males), but encourages the whole church to act appropriately as mature and brave believers.

■ **"be strong"** This is a present passive imperative.

**SPECIAL TOPIC: BE MADE STRONG**

**16:14 "Let all that you do be done in love"** Notice "all" is fronted in the Greek text for emphasis. In a religious and cultural situation as dynamic, diverse, and problematic as Corinth, love is crucial. This is another present middle (deponent) imperative. Orthodoxy and orthopraxy without love is not God's will or way (cf. 1 Cor. 14:1)! It is hard to realize that the means (for Christians) is as crucial as the ends.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 16:15-18**

**15**Now I urge you, brethren (you know the household of Stephanas, that they were the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves for ministry to the saints), **16**that you also be in subjection to such men and to everyone who helps in the work and labors. **17**I rejoice over the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have supplied what was lacking on your part. **18**For they have refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men.

**16:15 "I urge you"** This goes with 1 Cor. 16:16. Paul has inserted a parenthetical thought about the household of Stephanas.

■ **"brethren"** The NRSV has "brothers and sisters," which is Paul's intent to address the entire church. Paul uses this word in his letters to introduce a new subject or a development of his presentation.

■ **"the household of Stephanas"** These early converts (i.e., first fruits) were apparently leaders in the local church. Paul mentions other early believers in Acts 17:34.

The concept of "households" converting all at once when the head of the family converts (cf. Cornelius, Acts 11:14-17; Lydia, Acts 16:14-15; Philippian jailer, Acts 16:31-33) is often difficult for evangelicals who emphasize individual conversions. Yet the culture is crucial in understanding not only how family faith works, but also tribal faith. God is not limited to or unduly impressed by modern western individualism! This is so painful for our parochial thinking and dogmatism.

The concept of "household" conversions is used by denominations to affirm infant baptism. Usually Israel's circumcision rites are also noted as incorporating eight-day old children into the family of Israel. Probably biblically the beginning must be viewed from the end. True faith grows, repents, believes, obeys, and perseveres. True faith is seen by its fruits, not only its initiating rites (cf. 1 Cor. 16:16b and James and 1 John).

■ **"they devoted themselves for ministry"** This is a very interesting phrase. The term "devoted" is *tassō*, which usually means "to appoint." Faith, true faith, sees its purpose in service! To understand the gospel demands a willingness to give ourselves away in service for others as Jesus gave Himself away for us (cf. 1 John 3:16). This is the normal development of faith, not the exceptional. As the factions (i.e., Corinthian elite) pursued self-interest, self-promotion, self-direction, true faith pursues love (cf. 1 Cor. 14:4; 16:14). Believers are saved and gifted for the Great Commission (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8) and the common good of the body of Christ, the church (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7).

Stephanas and his household decided to use their resources for the kingdom. If Stephanas was a wealthy member of the elite social class then his actions modeled Paul's teachings. He became the model for other wealthy elite members of the church (cf. Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, pp. 184-205). See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 4:1.

■ **"ministry"** See [SPECIAL TOPIC: SERVANT LEADERSHIP](#) at 1 Cor. 4:1.

■ **"saints"** See [SPECIAL TOPIC: SAINTS](#) at 1 Cor. 1:2.

**16:16 "that you also be in subjection to such men"** This is a present passive subjunctive.

"Subjection" (*hupotassō*) is a military term for aligning oneself within a chain of command. In Paul's letters to the Corinthians it is used of

1. the spirits of prophets in subject to prophets, 1 Cor. 14:32
2. all things subject to Jesus, 1 Cor. 15:27
3. Jesus subject to the Father, 1 Cor. 15:28
4. believers subject to godly leaders, 1 Cor. 16:16

There may be a word play between leaders "devoted themselves to service" (from *tassō*) and "believers submitting themselves (*hupo* plus *tassō*) to the godly leaders" (cf. 2 Cor. 9:12-13). See Special Topic: Submission at 2 Cor. 9:13.

This church had problems in the area of the proper treatment and respect of its true leaders (cf. 1 Cor. 16:18; 1 Thess. 5:12; Heb. 13:17). Clement of Rome's letter, written to this same church 40 years later, shows that they still had the same problem.

**16:17 "Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus"** Some have asserted that the last two names, of whom we hear nothing else in the NT, were members of Stephanas' family. Some assert that they were all three slaves, but this cannot be substantiated. They seem to have brought the letter from the Corinthian church to Paul. Paul had received some information about the church from Chloe's people. Clement of Rome wrote to Corinth about 40 years later and he mentions a presbyter named Fortunatus.

■ **"they have supplied what was lacking on your part"** This phrase sounds negative in English, but it is not meant that way. Their report brought Paul news from this church which he loved, even with all of its problems (cf. 1 Cor. 16:24). They functioned as the churches' representatives to Paul. Exactly what they did for Paul, besides bring him joy (cf. 1 Cor. 16:18) with their presence, is uncertain.

**16:18 "my spirit and yours"** It is obvious from the context Paul is using "spirit" as a way of referring to himself (cf. 1 Cor. 2:11; 5:4; 2 Cor. 2:13; 7:13; Rom. 1:9; 8:16; Phil. 4:23).

**NASB, NKJV "acknowledge such men"**  
**NRSV "So give recognition to such persons"**  
**TEV "Such men as these deserve notice"**  
**NJB "you should appreciate people like them"**

This is a present active imperative of "*ginōskō*" in the sense of acknowledge (cf. 2 Cor. 3:2) or to know so as to accept (cf. 1 Cor. 8:3).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 16:19-20**

**<sup>19</sup>The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. <sup>20</sup>All the brethren greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss.**

**16:19 "The churches of Asia"** This refers to the first century Roman province of the western one-third of the modern country of Turkey.

■ **"Aquila and Prisca"** Aquila was a Jewish tentmaker (or leather worker), like Paul. All Jews, even rabbis, were taught a trade so that they would not take money for their teaching. Aquila's wife, Priscilla or Prisca, is listed first four times out of the six that they are mentioned (cf. Acts 18:2,18,26; Rom. 16:3; 1 Cor. 16:19; 2 Tim. 4:19). Many have noticed that her name was a Roman noble name (*gens Prisca*). Since she is mentioned first, which is highly unusual for Jewish people, many have seen in them a great love story of a Roman wealthy lady and an itinerant Jewish tentmaker!

The Textus Receptus has Priscilla, which is her name in Acts 18:2,18,26. It also appears in Rom. 16:3 and here. This follows the Greek manuscripts A, C, D, F, G, K, L, the Syriac translations, and most later minuscule manuscripts. However, Paul calls her Prisca, which is found in manuscripts P<sup>46</sup>, x, B, M, and the Vulgate and Coptic translations. See Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, p. 570.

■ **"the church that is in their house"** The early church had no buildings. They met in homes. This was because of

1. lack of money
2. need for secrecy, since Christianity became an illegal religion in the Roman Empire at a very early time
3. the need for an appearance of legality since the early churches organized like Roman social societies

The house church concept begins in Acts 2:46; 5:4. It is continued and developed in Romans 16:5,23, Col. 4:15; Philemon 2.

▣ **"All the brethren greet you"** This obviously refers to the whole church, not just the males.

**16:20 "Greet one another with a holy kiss"** This form of public greeting (kissing on one or both cheeks) and sign of fellowship can be seen in the OT in Exod. 4:27. It can be seen in the Gospels in Mark 14:45. It became standardized in the early church (cf. Rom. 16:16; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26; 1 Pet. 5:14), which followed the pattern of the Synagogue. Men kissed men and women kissed women. It came to be abused by some Christians and misunderstood by unbelievers and was dropped by the early church. However, it still continues on special occasions in the eastern churches. Its modern equivalent western would be a warm handshake or hug.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1 CORINTHIANS 16:21-24**

**<sup>21</sup>The greeting is in my own hand- Paul. <sup>22</sup>If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed. Maranatha. <sup>23</sup>The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. <sup>24</sup>My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.**

**16:21 "The greeting is in my own hand- Paul"** This was the common practice of Paul after dictating his correspondence. It was a way of assuring its genuineness (cf. Gal. 6:11; 2 Thess. 2:2; 3:17; Col. 4:18; Philemon 19).

**16:22 "If"** This is a first class conditional sentence. Apparently some in the Corinthian church did not love the Lord!

▣ **"does not love"** This is the Greek word "*phileō*." Paul does not use this term for love very often (cf. Titus 3:15). Because of this, many have assumed that he is quoting a hymn or liturgical formula. It is the same root as "kiss" (*philēma*). "*Phileō*" in Koine Greek became synonymous with "*agapaō*" (cf. John 5:20; 16:27), but at times there can still be a contextual distinction (cf. John 21:15-17).

▣ **"accursed"** "*Anathema*" is a Greek word which reflects the Hebrew term "*herem*" or something dedicated to God, which then becomes holy and must be destroyed (ex. Jericho in Jos. 6:17-19). It came to be used in the sense of a divine curse (cf. Acts 22:12,14; Rom. 9:31; 1 Cor. 12:3; 16:22; Gal. 1:8-9). This strong statement may reflect the presence of the false teachers at Corinth (cf. 1 Cor. 12:3). It is possible that it reflects a current practice in Corinth. See note on the term at 1 Cor. 12:3.

▣ **"Maranatha"** Jesus and the early apostles spoke Aramaic (not Hebrew). It had become the common language since the Persian Empire. There are several Aramaic words/phrases recorded in the NT.

1. *talitha kum* - Mark 5:41
2. *ephphatha* - Mark 7:34
3. *abba* - Mark 14:36; Rom. 8:15
4. *maranatha* - 1 Cor. 16:22.

See Special Topic below.

**SPECIAL TOPIC: MARANATHA**

**16:23 "the grace of the Lord Jesus"** The first step in interpreting the Bible is to establish the original wording. A helpful resource for this is the United Bible Societies' *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, by Bruce M. Metzger. To show how helpful it can be let me quote the paragraph on this verse.

"The Textus Receptus, following  $\kappa^c$  A C D F G K L M most minuscules, including 6 424<sup>c</sup> 920 1739, it<sup>d,g,r</sup>



syr<sup>p,h</sup> cop<sup>8a,bo</sup> arm eth, reads Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. The shorter reading Ἰησοῦ, which is supported by κ\* B 2 33 35 226 356 442 823 1611 1908 2002 vg goth *al*, is to be preferred. In view of the presence of the longer reading in other Pauline benedictions (Ro 16.24; 2 Cor 13.13; Ga 6.18; Php 4.23; 1 Th 5.28; 2 Th 3.18; Phm 25), as well as the natural proclivity of scribes to expand the sacred name, it is perhaps remarkable that any witnesses should have resisted such pressures" (p. 570).

**16:24 "My love be with you all"** This is one of the rare expressions of Paul's personal love. Notice his expressed love to all in a church which had been so factious and hateful.

▣ **"Amen"** See note at 1 Cor. 14:16.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. list the questions which the Church at Corinth had written to Paul.
2. What were the different sources of Paul's information about current conditions in the Corinthian Church?
3. List the guidelines for New Testament giving.
4. Why was Paul so interested in the contribution to the Church at Jerusalem?
5. Why did Paul still keep the Jewish feast days after he was saved?
6. How is 16:15 reconciled with Acts 17:34?
7. Who were Aquila and Prisca?
8. Why did Paul use an Aramaic phrase in a letter to a Greek church?

# INTRODUCTION TO 2 CORINTHIANS

## OPENING STATEMENTS

- A. This book, more than any other letter of Paul, shows us the heart and mind of the Apostle to the Gentiles. It is the closest we have to his spiritual/pastoral autobiography.
- B. This book may be Paul's most accomplished rhetorical work. Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, says, "it may well be the most oratorically persuasive of all Paul's writings" p. 541. However, this was done to refute the Sophists who had come to Corinth and attacked Paul's public speaking methods as well as his gospel (i.e. his attack on wisdom in 1 Corinthians 1-4).

## SPECIAL TOPIC: SOPHISTS

- C. This book is a strange combination, like Paul himself, of spiritual highs and lows, of free-flowing emotions ranging from anger to great joy.
- D. This book is truly a letter and as a letter it is only one half of a conversation. Many of the logical antecedents and circumstances behind Paul's responses have been lost. This is a good example of the truth that the epistles of the New Testament were originally written as correspondence to specific needs, not independent theological dissertations.
- E. This book has been neglected by scholarship and in preaching. There are fewer commentaries on 2 Corinthians than any other NT book. This is unfortunate because it is the source of Paul's most definitive discussion on suffering in the Christian life.
- F. For pastors, this book offers insightful guidelines on how to deal with problems within local churches. Paul gives us all an example to follow amidst personal attacks and misunderstandings.

## AUTHOR

- A. Even amidst all of the modern scholarly denials of the traditional authorship of biblical books, this book has never been denied to Paul.
- B. It is so autobiographical and so difficult to understand some of its phrases that the possibility of someone trying to mimic Paul by writing a book like this is highly improbable. The difficulty and specificity of the letter speak of its genuineness. It is true that many NT scholars think that 2 Corinthians is a composite letter combining several separate letters of Paul into one. I hold to its unity because
  1. There is no hint of disunity in any of the ancient Greek manuscripts.
    - a. No variations of the literary units
    - b. No manuscript which does not contain all thirteen chapters.
  2. Although 2 Corinthians 13 was apparently unknown to Clement of Rome in a.d. 96, it is quoted by Polycarp in a.d. 105.
  3. The book is understandable as a unit. There seem to be certain themes which show its unity, such as "suffering."
  4. The internal evidence is too limited to defend a radical dissection of 2 Corinthians.
- C. Paul is stated to be the author in 2 Cor. 1:1 and 10:1.

## DATE

- A. The date of 2 Corinthians is inseparably linked to 1 Corinthians and the book of Acts.
- B. Acts 18:1-18 and 20:2-3 relate Paul's being in Corinth, but there also seems to have been at least one unrecorded trip (2 Corinthians 2:1; with a third visit mentioned in 2 Cor. 12:14; 13:1-2).
- C. The major question is the time relationship between Paul's visits and his letters to Corinth.
- D. The real problem with dating the events related to Corinth is that we have no external evidence or information between Acts 18:1-18 and Acts 20:2-3, except the ambiguous internal evidence of the Corinthian letters themselves.
- E. Paul's contacts with the Corinthian Church-A proposed reconstruction

DATE	VISIT	LETTER
a.d. 50-52 Paul's Second Missionary Journey	a. On Paul's Second Missionary Journey he stayed in Corinth eighteen months (cf. Acts 18:1-11)	
a.d. 52 Gallio was proconsul from a.d. 51 (cf. Acts 18:12-17)		a. 1 Cor. 5:9-11 seems to refer to a letter about an immoral situation in the church. This letter is unknown unless: (1) as some suppose, that 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1 is part of it or (2) that 2 Cor. 2:3,4,9 are epistolary aorists and refer to 2 Corinthians.
a.d. 56 (Spring)	b. Paul hears about problems in the church while he is in Ephesus from two sources: (1) Chloe's people, 1 Cor. 1:11 and (2) Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, 1 Cor. 16:17. They apparently brought a letter from the Corinthian house churches containing questions	

a.d. 56 (Winter) or  
a.d. 57 (Winter)

b. Paul answers these questions (cf. 1 Cor. 7:1,25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1,2) by writing 1 Corinthians. Timothy (cf. 1 Cor. 4:17) takes the response from Ephesus (cf. 1 Cor. 16:8) to Corinth. Timothy was not able to solve the problems in the church.

c. Paul made an emergency, painful visit to Corinth (not recorded in Acts, cf. 2 Cor. 2:1). It was not successful, but he vowed to return.

c. Paul wrote a severe letter (cf. 2 Cor. 2:3-4:9; 7:8-12) to the Corinthian house churches which was delivered by Titus (cf. 2 Cor. 2:13; 7:13-15). This letter is unknown, unless, as some suppose, part of it is in 2 Cor. 10-13.

d. Paul planned to meet Titus in Troas, but Titus did not come, so Paul went to Macedonia (cf. 2 Cor. 2:13; 7:5,13), possibly Philippi (cf. MSS B<sup>c</sup>, K, L, P).

d. He found Titus and heard that the church had responded to his leadership and he then wrote 2 Corinthians in great thanksgiving (cf. 7:11-16). It was delivered by Titus

a.d. 57-58 (Winter)

e. Paul's last recorded visit to Corinth seems to be referred to in Acts

e. The marked mood change between chapters 1-9 and 10-13 is explained

20:2-3. Although it does not mention Corinth by name, it is assumed. He stayed there during the winter months.

by some scholars as more bad news (possibly the revitalization of old opponents and the addition of new opponents) from the Corinthian house churches after chapters 1-9 had been written (F. F. Bruce).

## HOW MANY LETTERS DID PAUL WRITE TO CORINTH

- A. Just two, 1 and 2 Corinthians
- B. Three, with one letter being lost
- C. Four, with two lost letters
- D. Some modern scholars find the lost letters in 2 Corinthians
  - 1. previous letter (1 Cor. 5:9) in 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1
  - 2. severe letter (2 Cor. 2:3-4,9; 7:8-12) in 2 Corinthians 10-13
- E. Five, with 2 Corinthians 10-13 being the fifth letter, sent after Titus' report relating the further bad news
- F. I hold to C (see also H. C. Thiessen, *Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 209)
  - 1. previous letter-lost (1 Cor. 5:9)
  - 2. 1 Corinthians
  - 3. severe letter-lost (2 Cor. 2:1-11, 7:8-12)
  - 4. 2 Corinthians

## PAUL'S ENEMIES AT CORINTH

- A. In 2 Corinthians the problem seems to be with several factions dominating the different house churches (not necessarily the same factions as in 1 Corinthians, but probably).
  - 1. a group of believers supporting traditional Roman culture and customs
  - 2. a group of believers supporting traditional Greek rhetorical training
  - 3. a group of believers supporting traditional Jewish culture and customs
  - 4. a group of believers from the powerless and the disenfranchised of society
- B. The arrival of Jewish troublemakers from Palestine caused additional controversy (cf. 2 Corinthians 10-13). They are different from the Judaziers of Galatians and the Jewish/Greek legalists of Colossians. They were probably rhetorically trained, charismatic teachers, similar to Apollos.
- C. Here are some of the charges leveled against Paul to which he responds.
  - 1. Paul was fickle (i.e. his travel plans changed, cf. 2 Cor. 1:15ff).
  - 2. Paul was a powerful writer, but weak in personal speech (cf. 2 Cor. 10:10).
  - 3. Paul was not a polished orator (cf. 2 Cor. 10:10; 11:6).
  - 4. Paul did not accept money (cf. 2 Cor. 11:7ff; 12:13ff).
  - 5. Paul was not a true Apostle (cf. 2 Cor. 11:5,13; 12:4).
  - 6. Paul was not an orthodox Jew (cf. 2 Cor. 11:21ff).

7. Paul did not have direct revelation and spiritual visions as they had (cf. 2 Cor. 12:1ff).

## OCCASION AND PURPOSE OF II CORINTHIANS

- A. Thankfulness for the church's positive response to Paul's leadership (cf. 2 Cor. 2:12,13; 7:11-16)
- B. Preparation for Paul's third visit (cf. 10:1-11). His second was apparently painful and unsuccessful. The changed emotional tone of chapters 10-13 is obvious. Some have asserted that it is the result of several of Paul's letters to the church at Corinth being combined into 2 Corinthians. It is also possible that Paul wrote these after he heard about a new outbreak of opposition within the Corinthian fellowship. It is an emotional addendum.
- C. Refuting the itinerant Jewish false teachers (cf. 2 Cor. 10-12) who had rejected Paul's:
  - 1. person
  - 2. motives
  - 3. authority
  - 4. delivery style
  - 5. gospel message

## POSSIBLE LITERARY UNITS

- A. Outlining this book is extremely difficult because of:
  - 1. mood swings
  - 2. variety of subjects
  - 3. extended parentheses (2 Cor. 2:14-7:1 or 7:4)
  - 4. our limited knowledge of the local situation
- B. However, there are obviously three major subject divisions:
  - 1. Paul responds to Titus' message and relates his travel plans, chapters 1-7 (there is a major parenthesis dealing with Paul's apostolic ministry, 2 Cor. 2:14-7:1 or 7:4)
  - 2. Paul's encouragement for the completion of the contribution for the Jerusalem church, chapters 8-9
  - 3. Paul's defense of his leadership, chapters 10-13

## READING CYCLE ONE

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the entire biblical book at one sitting. State the central theme of the entire book in your own words.

- 1. Theme of entire book
- 2. Type of literature (genre)

## READING CYCLE TWO (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the entire biblical book a second time at one sitting. Outline the main subjects and express the subject in a single sentence.

- 1. Subject of first literary unit

2. Subject of second literary unit
3. Subject of third literary unit
4. Subject of fourth literary unit
5. Etc.

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# 2 CORINTHIANS 1

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS\*

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Salutation	Greetings	Salutation and Thanksgiving	Salutation	Address and Greetings
1:1-2	1:1-2	1:1a 1:1b 1:2	1:1a 1:1b 1:2	1:1-2
Paul's Thanksgiving after Affliction	Comfort in Suffering		Paul Gives Thanks to God	Thanksgiving
1:3-7	1:3-7 Delivered from Suffering	1:3-7	1:3-7	1:3-7
1:8-11	1:8-11	1:8-11	1:8-11	1:8-11
The Postponement of Paul's Visit	Paul's Sincerity	Recent Relations with the Church (1:12-2:13)	The Change in Paul's Plans (1:12-2:4)	Why Paul Changed His Plans (1:12-2:11)
1:12-14	1:12-14 Sparing the Church	1:12-14	1:12-14	1:12-14
1:15-22	1:15-24	1:15-22	1:15-22	1:15-22
1:23-2:4		1:23-2:4	1:23-2:4	1:23-2:4

\* Although they are not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraphs. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth, or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own distinct way. As you read the text, ask yourself which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions.

In every chapter we must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs), then compare our understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation can we truly understand the Bible. Only the original author is inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility of applying the inspired truth to their day and their lives.

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in the following documents: [Brief Definitions of Greek Grammatical Structure](#), [Textual Criticism](#), and [Glossary](#).

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five



modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. 2 Corinthians was written about six to eighteen months after 1 Corinthians, following Paul's visit in Macedonia with Titus, who reported the response of the church to Paul's overtures (cf. 2 Cor. 2:12-13; 7:11-16).
- B. This is a very intense personal letter. Paul's emotional state can even be observed in the grammar (i.e., lack of conjunctions and incomplete sentences).
- C. Paul was being viciously attacked by a minority within the church. The minority seems to be both from the local Corinthian congregation and an itinerant Jewish group. Their charges were:
1. Paul had impure motives, 2 Cor. 1:12
  2. Paul was fickle, 2 Cor. 1:15ff
  3. Paul was weak, 2 Cor. 10:10
  4. Paul was physically ugly, 2 Cor. 10:10
  5. Paul was not a good orator, 2 Cor. 10:10; 11:16
  6. Paul preached for money 2 Cor. 11:7ff; 12:13ff
  7. Paul was not a true apostle, 2 Cor. 11:5,13; 12:4
  8. Paul was not an orthodox Jew, 2 Cor. 11:21ff
  9. they had direct revelation, but Paul did not, 2 Cor. 12:1ff.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 1:1a

<sup>1a</sup>Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy *our* brother,

**1:1a "Paul"** Saul of Tarsus is first called Paul in Acts 13:9. It is probable that most Jews of the "diaspora" had a Hebrew name and a Greek name. If so, then Saul's parents gave him this name but why, then, does "Paul" suddenly appear in Acts 13? Possibly (1) others began to call him by this name or (2) he began to refer to himself by the term "little" or "least." The Greek name *Paulos* meant "little." Several theories have been advanced about the origin of his Greek name.

1. his physical stature, the second century tradition that Paul was short, fat, bald, bow-legged, bushy eye-browed, and had protruding eyes is a possible source of the name, deriving from a non-canonical book from Thessalonika called *Paul and Thekla*
2. passages where Paul calls himself the "the least of the saints" because he persecuted the Church as in Acts 9:1-2 (cf. 1 Cor. 15:9; Eph. 3:8; 1 Tim. 1:15). Some have seen this "leastness" as the origin of the self-chosen title. However, in a book like Galatians, where he emphasized his independence and equality with the Jerusalem Twelve, this rationale is somewhat unlikely (cf. 2 Cor. 11:5; 12:11; 15:10).

■ **"an apostle"** This is a common Greek word for "send" (i.e., *apostellō*). See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 4:9. This term has several theological usages.

1. The rabbis used it as one called and sent as an official representative of another, something like our English "ambassador" (cf. 2 Cor. 5:20).

2. The Gospels often use this term of Jesus being sent by the Father (cf. Matt. 10:40; 15:24; Mark 9:37; Luke 9:48). In John the term takes on Messianic overtones (cf. John 4:34; 5:24,30,36,37,38; 6:29,38,39,40,57; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3,8,18,21,23,25; 20:21). It is used of Jesus sending believers (cf. John 17:18; 20:21).
3. The NT used it for disciples.
  - a. the original Twelve who were an inner circle of disciples (cf. Luke 6:13; Acts 1:21-22)
  - b. a special group of Apostolic helpers and co-workers
    - (1) Barnabas (cf. Acts 14:4,14)
    - (2) Andronicus and Junias (KJV, Junia, cf. Rom. 16:7)
    - (3) Apollos (cf. 1 Cor. 4:6-9)
    - (4) James, the Lord's brother (cf. Gal. 1:19)
    - (5) Silvanus and Timothy (cf. 1 Thess. 2:6)
    - (6) possibly Titus (cf. 2 Cor. 8:23)
    - (7) possibly Epaphroditus (cf. Phil. 2:25)
  - c. an ongoing gift in the church (cf. 1 Cor. 12:28-29; Eph. 4:11)
4. Paul uses the noun as a title for himself in most of his letters as a way of asserting his God-given call and authority as Christ's representative (cf. Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:1; 2 Tim. 1:1; Titus 1:1).

■ **"Christ"** This is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew term *messiah* (see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:23), which meant "an anointed one." It implies "one called and equipped by God for a specific task." In the OT three groups of leaders were anointed: priests, kings, and prophets. Jesus fulfills all three of these anointed offices (cf. Heb. 1:2-3).

■ **"Jesus"** The Hebrew name meant "YHWH saves" or "YHWH brings salvation." This name was revealed to his parents by an angel (cf. Matt. 1:21). "Jesus" is derived from the Hebrew word for salvation, *hosea*, suffixed to the covenant name for God, YHWH. It is the same as the Hebrew name Joshua.

The Greek manuscripts are divided as to the order of these terms.

1. Jesus Christ, A, D, G, K, L (Peshitta, KJV, NKJV)
2. Christ Jesus, P<sup>46</sup>, κ, B, M, P (NASB, NRSV, TEV, NJB, NIV)

**There seems to be no theological significance to the order. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: NAMES FOR DEITY](#) at 1 Cor. 2:8.**

■ **"by the will of God"** This same introductory phrase is used in 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1 and 2 Tim. 1:1. Paul was convinced that God had chosen him to be an Apostle. This special sense of calling started at his Damascus road conversion (cf. Acts 9:1-22; 23:3-16; 26:9-18). Paul often asserted his God-given authority and calling to affirm his writings as being uniquely from God (i.e., inspired, cf. 2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Cor. 2:9-13; 1 Thess. 2:13).

■ **"Timothy our brother"** In 1 Cor. 1:1 "Sosthenes" is mentioned; here Timothy is named, possibly as co-worker, co-author, or scribe. Also it is possible that Paul mentioned Timothy because this church was so unresponsive to him when he delivered Paul's letter of 1 Corinthians to them.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: TIMOTHY](#)

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 1:1b**

**<sup>1b</sup>To the church of God which is at Corinth with all the saints who are throughout Achaia:**

**1:1b "church"** This is the Greek term *ekklesia* (see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:2). It is from two words, "out of" and "called," therefore, the term implies the divinely called-out ones. The early church took this

word from secular use (cf. Acts 19:32,39,41) and because of the Septuagint's use of this term for "congregation" of Israel (cf. Num. 16:3; 20:4). They used it for themselves as a continuation of the OT people of God. They were the new Israel (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 6:16; 1 Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6), the fulfillment of God's worldwide mission (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5:6).

- **"of God which is at Corinth"** This phrase expresses two distinct senses about "the church."
  1. It is a local body of born again, baptized believers. Most of the places in the NT that the word *ekklesia* is used reflect this local sense.
  2. It is also the universal expression of the body of Christ. This is seen in Matt. 16:18 (i.e., the first of the rare usage of this term by Jesus, cf. Matt. 18:17 [twice]); Acts 9:31 uses the singular "church" for all the local congregations in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria; and finally the use of the term in Ephesians, which is a cyclical letter to the churches of Asia Minor (cf. 2 Cor. 1:22; 3:10,21; 5:23-32).

There is one large body of Christ made up of all believers (some now dead, some alive) and there are local expressions of that universal body.

- **"with all the saints who are throughout Achaia"** This greeting shows that the letter was for a wider audience than one church (as all of Paul's letters came to be). It may have functioned as a cyclical letter to a whole region as did Galatians and Ephesians. However, it uniquely focuses on problems at Corinth.
- **"saints"** This means they have been declared holy by the work of Jesus through the agency of the Spirit (cf. 2 Cor. 6:11). The verb (*hagiazō*) is related to the word "holy" (*hagios*) and "saints" (i.e., "holy ones" *hagioi*). It speaks of our separation to God for service. Here it refers to our position in Him as 2 Cor. 1:3 does, but in other places in the NT believers are to strive toward "holiness." It is a position to be possessed. Paul encourages this factious, prideful church by calling them "saints," in spite of their failures and sins! See [SPECIAL TOPIC: SAINTS](#) at 1 Cor. 1:2.

## **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 1:2**

**<sup>2</sup>Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

**1:2 "Grace to you and peace from God"** The traditional opening of Hellenistic letters was "greetings" (cf. Acts 23:26; James 1:1), not "grace." Paul made a word play from "*chairein*" to "*charis*," which made it uniquely Christian (cf. 1 Thess. 1:1; Gal. 1:3). Some assert that "peace" reflects a Hebrew term "*shalom*" (see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:3). It is possible that Paul knew this combination of terms from the Aaronic blessing of Num. 6:24-26. Most Hellenistic letters and NT epistles begin with a prayer of thanksgiving, but because of the problems between Paul and this congregation, the opening prayer of thanksgiving is directed toward God (cf. 2 Cor. 1:3-7).

- **"from God our Father"** This puts the emphasis on intimate family interpersonal relationships (cf. Matt. 6:9). In the OT God is the father of Israel (cf. Isa. 64:8; Hos. 1-3;11). Because God is personal the best metaphors to describe His relationship with other members of the Trinity and His people are Jewish family terms. As the Father relates to Jesus in an analogous way, He relates to believers. See Special Topic: The Fatherhood of God at 1 Cor. 1:3.

Both "grace" and "peace" come from the Father and the Son. The Father and Jesus are linked grammatically as one unit (i.e., one preposition, but two objects). This is a common way for NT authors to assert Jesus' deity (cf. 1 Thess. 1:1; 3:11; 2 Thess. 1:2,12; 2:16).

- **"and the Lord Jesus Christ"** These terms are part of the fuller title "the Lord Jesus Christ" (cf. 2 Cor. 1:2,3,7,8,9,10). These three (cf. 2 Cor. 1:2,3,7,8,9,10) titles all have individual significance.
  1. "Christ" is the Greek translation of the Hebrew *Messiah* (i.e., an Anointed One). It asserts Jesus' OT title as YHWH's promised One sent to set up the new age of righteousness.
  2. "Jesus" is the name given to the baby in Bethlehem by the angel (cf. Matt. 1:21). It is made up of

two Hebrew nouns: "YHWH," the covenant name for deity, and "salvation" (i.e., *hosea*). It is the same Hebrew name as Joshua. When used alone it often identifies the man, Jesus of Nazareth, son of Mary (ex. Matt. 1:16, 25; 2:1; 3:13,15,16).

3. "Lord" (used in 2 Cor. 1:1 in KJV) is the translation of the Hebrew term *adon*, which meant "owner, husband, master, or lord." The Jews became afraid of pronouncing the sacred name YHWH lest they take it in vain and break one of the Ten Commandments. Whenever they read the Scriptures, they substituted *Adon* for YHWH. This is why our English translations use all capitals Lord for YHWH in the OT. By transferring this title (*kurios* in Greek) to Jesus, the NT authors assert His deity and equality with the Father.

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-7

**<sup>3</sup>Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup>who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. <sup>5</sup>For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. <sup>6</sup>But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer; <sup>7</sup>and our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are *sharers* of our comfort.**

**1:3 "Blessed"** We get the English word "eulogy" from this Greek word. This term (following the Septuagint) is always used of humans blessing God (cf. Luke 1:68). In Mark 14:61 is a periphrasis for the name of God (i.e., "the Blessed *One*"). Paul uses the term for the Father in Rom. 1:25; 9:5; 2 Cor. 1:3; 11:31; and Eph. 1:3.

■ **"the God"** This prayer of praise, 2 Cor. 1:3-11, describes God in three ways.

1. He is the Father of Jesus
2. He is the Father of all mercy
3. He is the God of all comfort

The usual Greek letter form was a prayer of thanksgiving for the recipients of the letter, but in this letter the prayer of thanksgiving was directed to God.

YHWH as the Father of *Yeshua* (i.e., Hebrew for Jesus), is known only by revelation. No argument from philosophical necessity or design could ever give this relational theology. Be careful of "proofs" for God that are logic-based instead of Scripture based, but they do help many people who refuse to accept Scripture as truth. See Elton Trueblood, *The Logic of Belief*.

■ **"the Father of mercies"** There are three Greek terms which are related to "mercy" or "compassion."

1. *eleos*, usually referring to feelings of mercy or piety (cf. 2 Cor. 4:1; Rom. 9:15, which is a quote from Exod. 33:19)
2. *splanchna*, which refers to the supposed physical location of compassion or mercy in the lower viscera (cf. Phil. 2:1; Col. 3:12)
3. *oiktirmos*, to feel or express a sense of mercy or compassion at another's condition (cf. 2 Cor. 1:3,4-6; Rom. 12:1)

This term characterizes God's actions and feelings toward fallen humanity. This is our great hope—the unchanging mercy and grace of God.

The NT often uses "Father" plus a genitive to describe deity.

1. Father of mercies (cf. 2 Cor. 1:3)
2. Father of glory Eph. 1:17 (cf. Acts 7:2; 1 Cor. 2:8)
3. Father of all (cf. Eph. 4:6)
4. Father of spirits (cf. Heb. 12:9; Rev. 22:6)

5. Father of light (cf. James 1:17)

6. again and again in Paul's writings, "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"

**1:4-11 "comfort"** This term, *paraklēsis*, in its different forms, is used ten times in 2 Cor. 1:3-11. It is the key term throughout the entire passage and also in chapters 1-9, where it is used twenty-five times. The word means "to call alongside." It was often used in a judicial sense of an advocate who rendered legal aid, comfort, and guidance.

In this context it is used in the sense of encouragement and consolation. A related term, *paraklētos*, is used of the Holy Spirit in John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7; and of Jesus in 1 John 2:1. In this context it is used of the Father.

The verb form of *parakaleō* is used in several senses.

1. the Septuagint

a. exhort, Deut. 3:28

b. comfort, Gen. 24:67; 37:35; Ps. 119:50 (in a Messianic sense; Isa. 40:1; 49:13; 51:3; 61:2)

c. have compassion, Deut. 32:36; Jdgs. 2:18; Ps. 135:14

d. console, Isa. 35:4

e. call, Exod. 15:13

2. Paul's writings to Corinth

a. exhort, 1 Cor. 1:10; 4:16; 14:30-31; 16:15-16; 2 Cor. 2:8; 5:20; 6:1; 8:4,6; 10:1

b. comfort, cheer up, 2 Cor. 1:4,6; 2:7; 7:6,7,13; 13:11

c. have compassion, console, 1 Cor. 4:13

d. implore, entreat, request, 1 Cor. 16:12; 2 Cor. 9:5; 12:18

**1:4 "so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction"** There are two reasons stated in this context why Christians suffer: (1) so they can comfort others, 2 Cor. 1:4 and (2) to keep us from depending on ourselves, 2 Cor. 1:9. Believers live in a fallen world. Bad things happen; some are statistical, some are personal evil, but all can be used (not sent, but allowed) by God for our maturity and ministry (cf. Rom. 8:28-29). See John W. Wenham, *The Goodness of God*

The term, affliction, (i.e., *thlipsis*), etymologically meant "to squeeze or crush" (i.e., like processing grapes or crushing wheat to make flour), but came to be used figuratively for physical (cf. 2 Cor. 1:6) or emotional (cf. 2 Cor. 2:4; 11:28) trauma (cf. 2 Cor. 4:8; 7:5).

Just a brief personal comment. It is so difficult in this book to know who Paul refers to by the plural pronouns, "we," "us," and "our." It can refer to (1) himself alone; (2) him and his mission team; (3) him and the other Apostles; or (4) all believers. Only context can determine and sometimes it is ambiguous.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: TRIBULATION**

**1:5 "the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance"** The Greek term *pathēma* is used here of Christ's sufferings (cf. Luke 22:15) and in 2 Cor. 1:6 and 7 of believers' suffering. Paul uses a different word for the mission team's sufferings/afflictions (*thlipsis*) in 2 Cor. 1:4.

Paul mentions believers as co-sufferers with Christ several times (cf. 2 Cor. 4:10-11; Rom. 8:17; Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24). As we share His death and resurrection, so too, we share His suffering and persecution. The concept of the suffering Christian is often spoken of (cf. Acts 14:22; Rom. 5:3-4; 8:17; Gal. 6:17; Phil. 1:29; 3:10; Col. 1:24; 1 Thess. 3:3-4; 2 Tim. 3:12; Heb. 13:13; James 1:1-4; 1 Pet. 2:19-23; 3:14; 4:12-19). This is the norm for all Christians. This subject seems to be a unifying theme of 2 Corinthians. Christ's sufficiency is also abundant and running over! Yes, believers will suffer in a fallen world for being Christian, but our God will supply our every need, physically, emotionally, and spiritually through Christ. Christ's death and resurrection are not only for heaven, but for now also!

■ **"abundance"** Paul's literary style in 2 Corinthians can be illustrated by his use of "abundance."

1. *perissos*, over and above (cf. 2 Cor. 2:7; 9:1)

2. *perissotērōs*, more abundantly (cf. 2 Cor. 2:4; 7:13)

3. *perisseuō*, over and above (cf. 2 Cor. 1:5; 3:9; 4:15; 8:2; 9:8)

4. *perisseauma*, more than enough (cf. 2 Cor. 8:13,14)

5. *perisseia*, superabundance (cf. 2 Cor. 8:2; 10:15)

When it comes to what God in Christ has done for believers, it is always "superabundant," "extravagant," "above and beyond"! See full note at 2 Cor. 2:7.

**1:6 "if. . .if"** These are two first class conditional sentences. In this fallen world Christian leaders will be afflicted, but this provides a wealth of help and salvation to those who hear. Suffering has a divine purpose (cf. 2 Cor. 1:7).

▣ **"it is for your comfort and salvation"** Because comfort is linked to salvation, it seems that this is following the OT sense of the term, *sosō*, which means physical deliverance (cf. Matt. 9:22; Mark 6:56; James 5:20).

There are several Greek manuscript variants connected to 2 Cor. 1:6-7. The most obvious reason is that the word "comfort" (*paraklēseōs*) in 2 Cor. 1:6a is confused with the very same form in 6b, which the intervening text left out. With the omission, other words are added by scribes to make the text understandable.

▣ **"patient enduring"** In the Septuagint this term was used of hope or expectation (cf. Jer. 14:8; 17:13; 50:7). In Paul's writings it implies an "active, steadfast, voluntary endurance," which is only produced by the sufferings caused by the gospel: being believed, being lived, and being proclaimed. There is an association in Paul's writings between "hope" (cf. 2 Cor. 1:7) and "patient endurance" (cf. Rom. 5:3-5; 8:25; 15:4-5; and 1 Thess. 1:3; 1 Tim. 6:11).

**1:7** As believers share persecutions, as Jesus did, they also share God's comfort, as Jesus did.

Paul's hope for them was:

NASB	"firmly grounded"
NKJV	"steadfast"
NRSV	"unshaken"
TEV	"never shaken"
NJB	"secure"

This is the same term (*bebaios*) used in 1 Cor. 1:8 and 2 Cor. 1:21.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: GUARANTEE](#)

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 1:8-11**

**<sup>8</sup>For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; <sup>9</sup>indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; <sup>10</sup>who delivered us from so great a *peril of death*, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us, <sup>11</sup>you also joining in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through *the prayers of many*.**

**1:8 "we do not want you to be unaware, brethren"** Paul uses this phrase often to introduce either new information or a conclusion (cf. Rom. 1:13; 11:25; 1 Cor. 10:1; 12:1; 2 Cor. 1:8; 1 Thess. 4:13).

▣ **"our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively"** It is uncertain exactly what Paul refers to by this intense phrase.

1. the riot caused by Demetrius in Acts 19:23-41

2. "fighting wild beasts at Ephesus" of 1 Cor. 15:32
3. an imprisonment, possibly with a death sentence (cf. 2 Cor. 1:9-10)
4. some type of physical illness

Whatever it was, it was a life-or-death experience for Paul (cf. 2 Cor. 1:8-10) and apparently the church in Corinth had heard about it because Paul does not feel the need to identify it.

For "excessively" (*hyperbolē*) see Special Topic: Paul's Use of *Huper* Compounds at 1 Cor. 2:1.

**1:9 "we had the sentence of death within ourselves"** This is a strange statement. First, the word "sentence" is used only here in all ancient Greek writing, only later does it mean "death sentence" (cf. Josephus, *Antiquities* 14:10:6). Paul does not seem to be referring to a judicial decree, but to a personal sense of his impending death. This forced him and his companions to throw themselves totally on God's help, compassion, and power.

The verb is perfect active indicative. Some have seen this as a way of referring to a disease which Paul and his mission companion encountered, which had continuing results. However, it can be interpreted as an aorist, the same form as in 2 Cor. 2:13.

All of this adds up to make this phrase quite ambiguous with many different interpretations. Although the exact physical circumstances are uncertain, Paul's spiritual meaning is clear-suffering helps believers trust more fully and completely in God, in Christ!

- ▣ **"we would not trust in ourselves"** As 2 Cor. 1:4 expresses the first purpose of Christian suffering, this verse expresses the second purpose. This same truth can be seen in Paul's "thorn in the flesh" (cf. 2 Cor. 12:7-9). In the spiritual realm human weakness accompanied with faith releases the power of God.
- ▣ **"God who raises the dead"** Is Paul thinking of
  1. OT examples of people God brought back to physical life ( cf. 1 Kgs. 17:17-22; 2 Kgs. 4:32-37)
  2. OT theological statements (cf. Deut. 32:39; 1 Sam. 2:6; 2 Kgs. 5:7)
  3. his discussion of resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15

**1:10 "He on whom we have set our hope"** The pronoun refers to God the Father (cf. 2 Cor. 1:9; 1 Tim. 4:10). What a wonderful descriptive title for God. Paul coins powerful, wonderful, descriptive titles for God often (See full list at 2 Cor. 1:3), such as

1. "the Father of mercies" (cf. 2 Cor. 1:3)
2. "God of all comfort" (cf. 2 Cor. 1:3)
3. "unto Him who is able" (cf. Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:20)

The verb is a perfect active indicative, which implies a past completed act with abiding results (cf. 1 Cor. 15:19; 1 Tim. 5:5; 6:17).

▣ **"deliver"** This term is used three times in 2 Cor. 1:10. This follows the OT sense of physical, social, emotional, spiritual deliverance. Paul used this term several times (cf. Rom. 7:24; 11:26; 15:31; 2 Cor. 1:10; Col. 1:13; 1 Thess. 1:10; 2 Thess. 3:2; 2 Tim. 3:11; 4:17-18). He really thought that he was going to die at Ephesus (cf. 2 Cor. 1:8-10).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"from so great a <i>peril</i> of death"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"from so great a death"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"from so deadly a peril"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"from such terrible dangers of death"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"from such a death"</b>

There is a Greek manuscript variant between the singular "so great a death" (i.e., MSS  $\kappa$ , A, B, C, D, F, G) and the plural (i.e., MS P<sup>46</sup> and the Syriac translation, as well as the Greek text used by Origen, Basil, Chrysostom, Theodoret, Jerome, and Augustine). The plural (cf. TEV) is the most unusual and the most ancient. This plural may be seen in Paul's list of problems he faced internally and externally in 2 Cor. 4:8-12; 6:3-10; 11:23-29. The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives the plural a "B" rating (almost certain).

1:11	
NASB	"joining in helping us through your prayers"
NKJV	"helping together in prayer for us"
NRSV	"join in helping us by your prayers"
TEV	"help us by means of your prayers for us"
NJB	"your prayers for us will contribute to this"

Several scholars believe this grammatical construction (Murry J. Harris in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 10, p. 322) is used in a conditional sense (The Anchor Bible, vol. 32A, p. 115). If believers do not pray, somehow the Sovereign God has chosen not to act (cf. James 4:2). This shows the benefits of intercessory prayer (cf. Eph 6:18-20). Paul felt that the prayers of Christians linked with God's graciousness saved him from death and it continued to protect and deliver him. Paul's deliverance by God would be acknowledged and praised by many who would be blessed by Paul's ongoing ministry.

▣ **"persons"** This is literally "face" (i.e., *prosōpon*) Paul uses this term often in 2 Corinthians (cf. 2 Cor. 2:10; 3:7 [twice], 13,18; 4:6; 5:12; 8:24; 10:1,7; 11:20). It may be an OT allusion to the standard physical position of Jewish prayer with head lifted, which exactly fits this context.

Paul uses this term in several senses in 2 Corinthians:

1. for persons, 2 Cor. 1:11; 2:10; 4:6
2. for the face of a person, 2 Cor. 3:7 (twice), 2 Cor. 13,18; 10:1,7; 11:20
3. metaphor for before in the sense of "in front of" (i.e., position, not time), 2 Cor. 8:24
4. metaphor for outward appearance (cf. NRSV), 2 Cor. 5:12

#### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 1:12-14

**<sup>12</sup>For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you. <sup>13</sup>For we write nothing else to you than what you read and understand, and I hope you will understand until the end; <sup>14</sup>just as you also partially did understand us, that we are your reason to be proud as you also are ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus.**

**1:12 "our proud confidence"** These Greek terms *kauchaomai*, *kauchēma*, and *kauchēsis* are used about thirty-five times by Paul and only twice in the rest of the NT (both in James). Its predominate use is in 1 and 2 Corinthians.

There are two main truths connected to boasting:

1. no flesh shall glory/boast before God (cf. 1 Cor. 1:29; Eph. 2:9)
2. believers should glory in the Lord (cf. 1 Cor. 1:31; 2 Cor. 10:17, which is an allusion to Jer. 9:23-24) Therefore, there is appropriate and inappropriate boasting/glorying (i.e., pride).
  1. appropriate
    - a. in the hope of glory (cf. Rom. 4:2)
    - b. in God through the Lord Jesus (cf. Rom. 5:11)
    - c. in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ (i.e., Paul's main theme, cf. 1 Cor. 1:17-18; Gal. 6:14)
    - d. Paul boasts in
      - (1) his ministry without compensation (cf. 1 Cor. 9:15,16; 2 Cor. 10:12)
      - (2) his authority from Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 10:8,12)
      - (3) his not boasting in other men's labor (as some at Corinth were, cf. 2 Cor. 10:15)
      - (4) his racial heritage (as others were doing at Corinth, cf. 2 Cor. 11:17; 12:1,5,6)
      - (5) his churches
        - (a) Corinth (cf. 2 Cor. 7:4,14; 8:24; 9:2; 11:10)
        - (b) Thessalonika (cf. 2 Thess. 1:4)
      - (6) his confidence in God's comfort and deliverance (cf. 2 Cor. 1:12)



## 2. inappropriate

- a. in relation to Jewish heritage (cf. Rom. 2:17,23; 3:27; Gal. 6:13)
- b. some in the Corinthian church were boasting
  - (1) in men (cf. 1 Cor. 3:21)
  - (2) in wisdom (cf. 1 Cor. 4:7)
  - (3) in freedom (cf. 1 Cor. 5:6)
- c. false teachers tried to boast in the church at Corinth (cf. 2 Cor. 11:12)

■ **"the testimony of our conscience"** Paul uses the term "conscience" often in the Corinthian letters (cf. 1 Cor. 4:4; 8:7,10,12; 10:25,27,28,29; 2 Cor. 1:12; 4:2; 5:11). It refers to that moral inner sense of what is appropriate or inappropriate (cf. Acts 23:1; Rom. 2:15). The conscience can be affected by our past lives, our poor choices, or by the Spirit of God. It is not a flawless guide (cf. 1 Cor. 4:4; 8:7; 1 Tim. 4:2), but it does determine the boundaries of individual faith (cf. 1 Tim. 1:5,19). Therefore, to violate our conscience, even if it is in error or weak, is a major faith problem.

The believer's conscience needs to be more and more formed by the Word of God and the Spirit of God (cf. 1 Tim. 3:9). God will judge believers by the light they have, but all believers need to be increasingly open to the Bible and the Spirit for more light and in order to continue to grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. In this context, the end-time judgment is in view (cf. 2 Cor. 1:13-14). God will judge humans in light of their understanding, their conscience (cf. Rom. 2:15-16; 9:1; 13:5).

Paul's motives and actions were severely criticized by a minority of false teachers at Corinth (cf. chapters 10-13). It seems that there were two groups: (1) a local group of opponents and (2) an itinerant Palestinian Jewish group of false teachers.

■ **"holiness"** Some Greek manuscripts have "holiness" (i.e. P<sup>46</sup>,  $\kappa^*$ , A, B, C, K, P, and Coptic NASB, NIV, and NJB translations). Others have "simplicity" (i.e.,  $\kappa^2$ , D, F, G, and the Vulgate, Peshitta, NKJV, NRSV, and TEV translations). Bruce Metzger in *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, comments that the translation committee for the UBS<sup>3</sup> preferred "simplicity" (*haplotēti*), but gave it a "D" rating, meaning a very high degree of doubt (p. 575). However, the UBS<sup>4</sup> edition gives it a "B" rating, meaning almost certain (p. 612). This increased certainty comes from the fact that Paul uses the term "simplicity" in 2 Cor. 11:3 (and the same term translated "liberality" in 2 Cor. 8:2; 9:11,13), but never in any of his writings does he use *hagiotēti*.

■ **"sincerity"** This term had two connotations, "generous" or "sincere." It was a metaphor related to vision. In the OT the eye was used as a metaphor for motive in two ways (1) evil eye (stingy, BDB 949, cf. Deut. 15:9-10) and (2) good eye (generous, BDB 373 III, cf. Pro. 22:9). Jesus followed this usage (cf. Matt. 6:22-23; 20:15). Paul used this term in two senses.

1. "simplicity, sincerity, purity" (i.e., no hidden agendas or false pretenses, cf. 2 Cor. 1:12; 11:3; Eph. 6:5; Col. 3:22)
2. "liberality" (cf. Rom. 12:8; 2 Cor. 8:2; 9:11,13)

■ **"not in fleshly wisdom"** Paul discusses worldly wisdom extensively in 1 Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18-31; 2:1-16; and 3:18-23 and sarcastically in 2 Cor. 4:10; 6:5 and possibly 10:15). Paul uses similar phrases referring to human wisdom in 1 Cor. 1:17; 2:4,13-14. In this paragraph he makes a play on worldly wisdom versus grace living in the world. Paul's evidence of his leadership is not in logic or rhetoric only, but godly living and a clear conscience before God. Paul claims to have written to them in plain, obvious, east-to-understand terms. If they are so wise, they should have quickly and effortlessly understood his words, motives, and lifestyle implications, but they did not.

Paul uses this term "flesh" in several ways. See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:26.

**1:13-14** These verses are in a parallel structure and seem to refer to Paul's previous letters to Corinth (which one is uncertain). He wrote to be understood. However, their attitudes and lifestyles show they only partially understood.

Does the term *telous* in this context mean "complete" (TEV, NJB, NIV) or "end" (NASB, NKJV, NRSV)? Both make sense. If "complete" (i.e., completely in contrast to partially) it would link up with the first part of 2 Cor. 1:14. If "end" it would parallel "the day of our Lord Jesus" at the last of 2 Cor. 1:14.

■ **"we are your reason to be proud as you also are ours"** The church at Corinth is confirmation of Paul's apostolic effectiveness. Paul desires that their words, motives, and actions will be a source of pride and appropriate boasting when the Lord returns to judge (i.e., "the day of our Lord Jesus," cf. 1 Cor. 1:8; 5:5; Phil. 1:6,10; 2:16; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2).

**1:14 "in the day of our Lord Jesus"** The phrase "in the day" is an OT idiom. See the note from my commentary on Amos 2:16.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: THAT DAY](#)

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 1:15-22**

**<sup>15</sup>In this confidence I intended at first to come to you, so that you might twice receive a blessing; <sup>16</sup>that is, to pass your way into Macedonia, and again from Macedonia to come to you, and by you to be helped on my journey to Judea. <sup>17</sup>Therefore, I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I? Or what I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, so that with me there will be yes, yes and no, no *at the same time*? <sup>18</sup>But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no. <sup>19</sup>For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us-by me and Silvanus and Timothy-was not yes and no, but is yes in Him. <sup>20</sup>For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us. <sup>21</sup>Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, <sup>22</sup>who also sealed us and gave *us* the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.**

**1:15 "In this confidence"** See full note at 2 Cor. 3:4.

■ **"I intended at first to come to you"** "I intended" is an imperfect tense which denotes repeated actions, here thoughts, in past time. In 1 Cor. 16:2-8 Paul told them of his proposed travel plans. Because of their actions, he later changed his mind because he did not want to come in judgment, but joy! The vocal minority accused him of fickleness, not only in his travel plans, but in his gospel (cf. 2 Cor. 1:18-20).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"so that you might twice receive a blessing"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"that you might have a second benefit"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"so that you might have a double favor"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"in order that you might be blessed twice"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"so that you would benefit doubly"</b>

There is a Greek manuscript variant here. Some manuscripts have *charin*, which comes from *charis*, which means benefit or favor (i.e.,  $\kappa^*$ , A, C, D, F, G, and the Syriac and Armenian translations).

Other manuscripts have *charan*, which comes from *chara*, which means joy, gladness, or rejoicing (i.e.,  $\kappa^2$ , B, L, P). The UBS<sup>4</sup> Greek text gives *charin* a "B" (almost certain) rating. In context (i.e., 2 Cor. 1:16) it refers to Paul coming twice to Corinth with them having the opportunity of supplying his needs as he travels on (cf. Gordon D. Fee, *To What End Exegesis?*, pp. 99-104).

**1:16 "and by you to be helped on my journey to Judea"** Paul would not take any money from the Corinthian church while he was ministering to them. He was afraid he would be attacked over this issue. As it turns out he was attacked for not taking money from them.

This phrase implies that he was going to let this church provide his missionary travel needs (cf. 1 Cor. 16:6; Rom. 15:24). This may have been a way to test their loyalty to him and the gospel and to silence his

critics.

**1:17 "do I purpose according to the flesh"** This phrase may reflect Paul's critics (cf. 2 Cor. 10:2-3; 11:18) or Paul seeking after the will of God in all that he does, including travel (cf. 1 Cor. 4:19; 16:7; Acts 18:21; Rom. 1:10; 15:32).

That the second option fits this context best can be seen from 2 Cor. 1:18a. God's faithfulness is a recurrent theme in Paul's writings (cf. 1 Cor. 1:9; 10:13; 1 Thess. 5:24; 2 Thess. 3:3).

For "flesh" see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:26.

**1:18 "God is faithful"** Faithful is placed first for emphasis. In Paul's writings this becomes a descriptive title for God (cf. 1 Cor. 1:9; 10:13; 1 Thess. 5:24; 2 Thess. 3:3). In the OT faith is usually understood as faithfulness. This is the crucial characteristic of God (cf. Deut. 7:9; Isa. 49:7). His gracious, faithful character is unchanging (cf. Mal. 3:6). Mankind's hope is not in human performance or devotion, but in the character and promises of God (cf. 2 Cor. 1:12,15,20)!

**1:19 "the Son of God, Christ Jesus"** Paul does not use the phrase "Son of God" often (cf. Rom. 1:4; here, and Gal. 2:20). However, the concept and related phrasing is very common. See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:9.

■ **"Silvanus"** Silas, or Silvanus, was the man Paul chose to go with him on the second missionary journey after Barnabas and John Mark went back to Cyprus.

1. He is first mentioned in the Bible in Acts 15:22 where he is called a chief man among the brethren of the Jerusalem Church.
2. He was also a prophet (cf. Acts 15:32).
3. He was a Roman citizen like Paul (cf. Acts 16:37).
4. He and Judas Barsabbas were sent to Antioch by the Jerusalem Church to inspect the situation (cf. Acts 15:22,30-35).
5. Paul mentions him in 2 Cor. 1:19 as a fellow gospel preacher.
6. Later he is identified with Peter in writing 1 Peter. (cf. 1 Pet. 5:12).
7. Both Paul and Peter call him Silvanus while Luke calls him Silas (the Aramaic form of Saul). It is possible that Silas was his Jewish name and Silvanus his Latin name (cf. F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, p. 213).

**1:19-20 "but is yes in Him"** Verses 19 and 20 are theologically packed! Paul is asserting that the mission team (himself, Silvanus, and Timothy) preached Jesus as God's fulfilling promise as God's Son and as mankind's only hope to them as the apex of OT revelation! Their preaching was not wishy-washy, but definite (cf. 2 Cor. 1:18). Jesus is the Father's "yes" for every promise, every need, every hope (i.e., perfect active indicative of *ginomai*). By affirming Jesus, they give glory to the Father's provision.

All of the church at Corinth's knowledge (1) of God, (2) of His Son, (3) of His promises (cf. Rom. 9:4) and (4) of His grace provisions come through Paul's mission team. If they start doubting the motives and message of Paul, they lose confidence in the gospel!

**1:20 "Amen"** See fuller note at 1 Cor. 14:16c.

■ **"glory"** See [SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY \(DOXA\)](#) at 1 Cor. 2:7.

**1:21-22** There is a definite structure to these two verses that describes what God (i.e., "The One who") has done to equip and affirm the missionary team.

1. God establishes us, 2 Cor. 1:21 (cf. 1 Cor. 1:8). This is a present active participle which points toward a continuing action. It means to confirm, establish, make constant, unwavering (cf. 2 Cor. 1:7; Rom. 4:16). This term is used in the papyri to denote a legal guarantee (cf. Moulton and Milligan, p. 107).
2. God anointed us, 2 Cor. 1:21 (cf. 1 John 2:20,27). This is an aorist active participle. The tense points to a completed, one-time act. The term itself reflects an OT concept of God's choosing and

equipping for ministry of certain leaders of Israel

a. prophets, cf. 1 Kgs. 19:16 and possibly parallelism of 1 Chr. 16:22; Ps 105:15

b. priests, cf. Exod. 40:15; Lev. 4:3; Ps. 105:15

c. kings, cf. 1 Sam. 9:16; Ps. 2:2; 18:50; 20:6; Hab. 3:13)

It is the term that in Greek is translated "Christ" when referring to the Messiah (i.e., the Anointed One). Believers are also chosen and equipped by God to serve His kingdom purposes.

3. God sealed us, 2 Cor. 1:22 (cf. John 3:33; 6:27; Rom. 4:11; 15:28; 1 Cor. 9:2; Eph. 1:13; 4:30; 2 Tim. 2:19; Rev. 7:3-8). This is an aorist middle participle which means to mark something or someone as one's property, or genuine, or as safely delivered. Believers belong to God!

4. God gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge, 2 Cor. 1:22 (cf. 2 Cor. 5:5; Rom. 8:9-16, 23, 26-27; Eph. 1:13-14).

The term "given" is another aorist active participle, implying a completed action. God has fully provided for His children.

1. establishes (present tense)

2. anointed (aorist tense)

3. sealed (aorist tense)

4. given the Spirit (aorist tense)

All of these provisions relate to Paul's confidence in 2 Cor. 1:15, 19-20. Paul's confidence was in the Father's and the Son's and the Spirit's actions and provisions.

▣ **"Christ. . . God. . . Spirit"** Notice that the Trinity is active in our assurance (see Special Topic following). Although the term "Trinity" does not appear in the Bible, the concept is recurrent (cf. 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 13:14). Christianity is a monotheistic faith (cf. Deut 6:4). However, if Jesus is divine and the Holy Spirit is a person we have three persons of one divine essence. A Triune Unity! See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 2:10.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: ASSURANCE**

**1:22 "sealed us"** See [SPECIAL TOPIC: SEAL](#) at 1 Cor. 9:2.

▣ **"hearts"** See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 14:25.

▣ **"as a pledge"** It speaks both of promise of full payment in the future and partial payment now. God's down payment was the life of His Son and the full presence of His Spirit (cf. Eph. 1:3-14). See full note at 2 Cor. 5:5.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 1:23-24**

<sup>23</sup>But I call God as witness to my soul, that to spare you I did not come again to Corinth.

<sup>24</sup>Not that we lord it over your faith, but are workers with you for your joy; for in your faith you are standing firm.

**1:23**

**NASB**

**"But I call God as witness to my soul"**

**NKJV**

**"Moreover I call God as witness against my soul"**

**NRSV**

**"But I call on God as witness against me"**

**TEV**

**"I call God as my witness-he knows my heart"**

**NJB**

**"By my life I call on God to be my witness"**

This is an oath of truthfulness. Paul often uses oaths to confirm his words (cf. 2 Cor. 11:11, 31; Rom. 1:9; Gal. 1:20; Phil. 1:8; 1 Thess. 2:5).

▣ **"to spare you"** Paul's change of travel plans was not an example of his fickleness, but of his love. He

chose not to return in an atmosphere where his only option was judgment and contention. The false teachers had impugned his motives and actions. Paul sets the record straight!

■ **"I did not come again to Corinth"** There is much debate about the number of visits Paul made from Ephesus to Corinth and the number of letters he wrote to the church in Corinth. For more information see the introduction to 2 Corinthians, D.

**1:24 "Not that we lord it over your faith"** Here we see the balance between Paul as an authoritative Apostle, 1:1, and the liberty of this local congregation. Biblical faith, covenant faith, starts and develops through volitional choices which are meant to produce joy, stability, and maturity.

■ **"for in your faith you are standing firm"** Paul mentions this concept in 1 Cor. 15:1 (cf. Rom. 5:2; 11:20). This may have an OT background (cf. Ps. 76:7; 130:3; Nah. 1:6; Mal. 3:2; see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:9). It speaks of confident faith in God's presence. In light of the problems at Corinth this is a shocking statement. The Corinthian church was at least not as affected by the arrival of false teachers as the Galatian churches had been. Some of the house churches were strong and pure (i.e., perfect tense, "you have been and continue to stand firm"). See Special Topic: Stand (*Histēmi*) at 1 Cor. 15:1.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. If Paul is writing to a local problem in Corinth, why was the letter to be read throughout Achaia? (2 Cor. 1:1)
2. What are the two benefits of suffering mentioned in 2 Cor. 1:4 and 9?
3. What did Paul suffer in Asia that almost killed him? (v.8-10)
4. Why was Paul attacked for his change in travel plans? (1 Cor. 16:1-8 versus 2 Cor. 1:12-20)
5. Why do we believe in a Trinity?

# 2 CORINTHIANS 2

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Postponement of Paul's Visit  (1:12-2:4)	Sparing the Church  1:15-2:2	Recent Relations with the Church  (1:12-2:13)	The Change in Paul's Plans  (1:12-2:4)	Why Paul Changed His Plans  (1:12-2:11)
1:23-2:4 Forgiveness for the Offender	Forgiving the Offender 2:3-11	1:23-2:4	1:23-2:4 Forgiveness for the Offender	
2:5-11 Paul's Anxiety and Relief	Triumph in Christ	2:5-11	2:5-11 Paul's Anxiety in Troas	2:5-11 From Troas to Macedonia-the Apostolate: Its Importance
2:12-13	2:12-13	2:12-13 Our Ministry (2:14-3:6)	2:12-13 Victory Through Christ	(2:12-4:6)
2:14-17	2:14-17	2:14-17	2:14-17	2:12-3:3

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

#### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

A. There is much discussion among the commentators as to how many visits and letters Paul made to

this church. This chapter is the crux of this discussion because it seems to refer to a previous letter and a painful visit. There is much ambiguity in both the text and our knowledge of Paul's life. Dogmatism is inappropriate.

- B. Another area of contention involving this chapter is whether the offender mentioned in 2 Cor. 2:5 and 6 is
1. synonymous with the incestuous man of 1 Corinthians 5
  2. a leader of one of the factions or house churches spoken of in 1 Corinthians 1-4
  3. a ringleader of the false teachers from Jerusalem who confronted Paul personally on this painful visit, 2 Corinthians 10-13.
- C. The chapter division is obviously inappropriate. Chapter 2 is integrally linked with the discussion of Paul's travel plans mentioned in 2 Cor. 1:15ff.
- D. There is a major digression or parenthesis beginning in 2 Cor. 2:14. Paul does not return to his discussions concerning the meeting with Titus in Macedonia until 2 Cor. 7:5. I thank God for this digression because it shows us the heart of Paul and his intense love for Jesus Christ!

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 2:1-4

**<sup>1</sup>But I determined this for my own sake, that I would not come to you in sorrow again. <sup>2</sup>For if I cause you sorrow, who then makes me glad but the one whom I made sorrowful? <sup>3</sup>This is the very thing I wrote you, so that when I came, I would not have sorrow from those who ought to make me rejoice; having confidence in you all that my joy would be *the joy* of you all. <sup>4</sup>For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not so that you would be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you.**

2:1

NASB, NKJV "But"

NRSV, TEV,

NIV, REB "So"

NJB "then"

RSV "For"

There is a Greek manuscript variant between "for" (i.e., *gar*, cf. P<sup>46</sup> and B) and "but" (i.e., *de*, cf.  $\kappa$ , A, C, D, F, G). The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives ""for" a "C" rating, meaning they can not decide. Often conjunctions are crucial in interpretation, but in this case the sense of the sentence defines the issue.

NASB "I determined this for my own sake"

NKJV "I determined this within myself"

NRSV, TEV,

NJB "I made up my mind"

This seems to imply that Paul did not have special insight from the Spirit about this matter. He mentions several times how the Spirit had led his travel plans (cf. Acts 16:9-10; 18:21; Rom. 1:10; 15:32; 1 Cor. 4:19), but this time he has no specific guidance and decides not to come.

■ **"that I would not come to you in sorrow again"** Paul mentions a third visit to Corinth in 2 Cor. 12:14; 13:1. The book of Acts does not record this second painful visit. His initial stay in Corinth is recorded in Acts 18:1-11. See chart in Introduction, Date, E. "visit" C. It probably occurred between the writing of I and

2 Corinthians.

**2:2 "if"** This is a first class conditional sentence, which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes. Paul's second visit had made the church sad. I like the NJB translation of this verse, "for if I cause you distress I am causing distress to my only possible source of joy." Paul did not enjoy the confrontational aspect of his apostolic responsibility.

**2:3 "This is the very thing I wrote you"** There are several theories that try to explain these verses.

1. some call this an epistolary aorist, which means it would refer to 2 Corinthians (cf. NJB)
2. some believe this refers to 1 Corinthians
3. others believe that this refers to the previous lost letter mentioned in 1 Cor. 5:9
4. others think this refers to a severe lost letter, possibly partially preserved in 2 Corinthians 10-13

**2:4** This verse so clearly reveals Paul's heart and the emotional pain he felt about what happened during his painful visit. Yet, he spoke the truth, as painful as it was. Like a good medical doctor, Paul knew sometimes pain is necessary for long term healing.

Paul uses two subjunctive verbs in this sentence because sometimes people do not respond well to correction. God had created all humans with free will, which is both a precious and a dangerous thing. It holds the potential of joy and restoration or embitterment and continuing rebellion.

**NASB** "especially"  
**NKJV, NRSV** "abundantly"  
**NJB** "how very much"

This verse also includes one of Paul's characteristic terms which he uses so often in his Corinthian letters (i.e., *perissoterōs*). See full note at 2 Cor. 1:5 or the Special Topic at 2 Cor. 2:7.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 2:5-11**

**<sup>5</sup>But if any has caused sorrow, he has caused sorrow not to me, but in some degree-in order not to say too much -to all of you. <sup>6</sup>Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority, <sup>7</sup>so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, otherwise such a one might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. <sup>8</sup>Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm your love for him. <sup>9</sup>For to this end also I wrote, so that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things. <sup>10</sup>But one whom you forgive anything, I forgive also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ, <sup>11</sup>so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes.**

**2:5** This verse is very difficult to translate! I believe the sense of the RSV and Phillips translation are probably best: "but if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure (not to put it too severely) to you all." There is no object mentioned in this sentence, therefore, some relate it to (1) the entire church (cf. NKJV, NJB, RSV, Phillips, NIV, NEB) or (2) the offending person (cf. KNOX translation).

Who is this "he" who caused trouble? There have been several suggestions.

1. it refers to 1 Cor. 5:9 and the man who married his father's wife
2. it refers to a ringleader of one of the factions or house churches
3. it refers to the spokesperson for the group of supposed "leaders" from Palestine who confronted Paul on his return to Corinth and apparently the church did not defend Paul as it should have.

■ **"if"** This is a first class conditional sentence. Someone had caused sorrow, both to Paul and to the entire church (perfect active indicative) and the consequences remained.

**2:6 "this punishment which was inflicted by the majority"** The decision was not unanimous. Paul,



when attacked, even cared for the attacker (cf. 2 Cor. 2:7) and the spiritual consequences which controversy and confrontation can cause (cf. 2 Cor. 2:11).

The mention of "the majority" shows how Paul viewed church polity. He felt himself called as an Apostle to the Gentiles, but this did not remove the congregational aspect of responsibility to lead. Paul has a great balance in his letters between authoritative commands (i.e., Galatians and 1 Corinthians 5), and the need for local leadership. The NT has all three forms of polity: apostolic (i.e., Episcopal); local leaders (i.e., Presbyterian); and congregational (i.e., every believer). Acts 15 has all three levels involved in the ecclesiastical process. It is not an issue of which one is biblical; they all are. It is an issue of godly believers leading within biblical guidelines, not personal agendas!

**2:7 "rather forgive and comfort *him*"** These are both aorist infinitives. Church discipline is never vindictive, but always redemptive (cf. Gal. 6:1). Sin must be exposed, but also to be covered (i.e., forgiven by God, forgiven by church) after it is exposed.

For "comfort" see full note at 2 Cor. 1:4-11.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"be swallowed up with too much sorrow"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"may not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"from becoming so sad as to give up completely"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"may be overwhelmed by the extent of his distress"</b>

The first phrase is literally "lest by more abundant grief such a one should be swallowed up." See Special Topic below.

The second term, *katapinō*, is also an intense metaphor. It is literally "to gulp down." It is used in a positive sense in 2 Cor. 5:4 (i.e., swallowed-up life). Negatively it could mean to destroy (cf. 1 Cor. 15:54; 2 Cor. 2:7; Heb. 11:29; 1 Pet. 5:8).

Paul's personal experience and theological training made him acutely aware of the depths of sin and the heights of the grace and mercy of God. His choice of words reveal the depth of his feelings.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: ABOUND (*perisseuō*)**

**2:8 "I urge you to reaffirm *your* love for him"** This refers to reinstatement or legal act by an official vote (cf. use of term in Gal. 3:15) of the church through the motive of love. It is possible it is metaphorical of the reality of something (cf. Louw and Nida, p. 668).

**2:9 "I wrote"** See note at 2 Cor. 2:3.

■ **"the test"** This refers to a test of metal coins to make sure of their genuineness. It seems to have the connotation in the NT of "to test with a view toward approval." See Special Topic on "Testing" at 1 Cor. 3:13.

■ **"whether you are obedient in all things"** This was a test of their loyalty to Paul's authority. This was THE issue (cf. 2 Cor. 7:15; 10:6).

There is a Greek manuscript variant related to "whether." Some MSS have

1. *ei - κ*, C, D, F, G
2. *η* - A, B
3. omit - P<sup>46</sup>

It seems that P<sup>46</sup>, though very old, was done in haste and often omits words or phrases. As for the other options, They were pronounced alike. Many of the early Greek manuscripts were copied by one person reading a text and several others writing it down. Thus, variants such as this related to sound, are common. The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives option #1 an "A" rating (certain).

**2:10 "forgive"** This term, *charizomai* (cf. 2 Cor. 2:7,10; 12:13) is from the root *chairō*, which means to

rejoice, be glad. In this context it means to graciously forgive or remit (cf. 2 Cor. 2:7,10 [thrice]).

Paul asks the majority to forgive in 2 Cor. 2:7 (aorist middle infinitive); in 2 Cor. 2:10 he repeated the ongoing request (present middle indicative); in 2 Cor. 2:10 he assures them of his (i.e., personal pronoun, *egō*) gracious and ongoing forgiveness of the offender (two perfect middle indicatives).

■ **"if"** This is a first class conditional sentence. Paul reiterates his own personal forgiveness of the offender.

■ **"for your sakes in the presence of Christ"** This is Paul's way of asserting that the restoration of the offender will strengthen the church. He himself is able to do it because of his love for Christ.

**2:11**

**NASB** "so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan"

**NKJV** "lest Satan should take advantage of us"

**NRSV** "so that we may not be outwitted by Satan"

**TEV** "in order to keep Satan from getting the upper hand"

**NJB** "to avoid being outwitted by Satan"

This verse affirms the personal force of evil in our world out to thwart God's plan. Paul calls him by several titles in 2 Corinthians .

1. Satan in 2 Cor. 2:11; 11:14; 12:7
2. "the god of this age (world)" in 2 Cor. 4:4
3. "Belial" in 2 Cor. 6:15
4. "the serpent" in 2 Cor. 11:3

The "us" could refer to Paul himself, or to Paul and the Corinthian church. It is interesting to know that Satan tempts both by inclination to evil and by the perversion of the good. An inappropriate, unforgiving, angry, or prideful attitude on the part of the church could open the door for Satan to disrupt the fellowship. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSONAL EVIL](#) at 1 Cor. 7:5.

■ **"for we are not ignorant of his schemes"** The evil one tries to affect our lives (cf. Eph. 4:14; 6:10-18). Often believers are ignorant (i.e., *agnoeō*) of his schemes.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: SCHEMES](#)

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 2:12-13**

<sup>12</sup>Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened for me in the Lord, <sup>13</sup>I had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went on to Macedonia.

**2:12 "when I came to Troas"** This follows the itinerary of 1 Cor. 16:5 (cf. Acts 16:8-11). Paul was apparently attacked by some at Corinth because his travel plans did not materialize. Paul tries to explain why.

■ **"and when a door was opened for me in the Lord"** This is a perfect passive participle implying that God opened this opportunity for the gospel and that it remains open! "Open door" is a very popular metaphor of Paul (cf. 1 Cor. 16:9; Col. 4:3; and also Acts 14:27 and Rev. 3:8). This phrase emphasizes the effective power of God through the redemptive accomplished ministry of the Messiah and the wooing of His Spirit for evangelism and Christian discipleship (cf. Matt. 28:19-20 and Acts 15:3-4,12; 21:19). See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 16:9.

**2:13 "I had no rest for my spirit"** This is the use of "spirit" as synonymous with a person or human self (cf. 2 Cor. 7:13; 1 Cor. 16:18). Paul was continually worried (perfect active indicative) about Corinth (cf. 2

Cor. 7:5). Paul's imagination ran wild; watch out for yours. He left an open door in Troas because of his concern and fearfulness about the church at Corinth. Paul loved this factional, prideful church!

■ **"not finding Titus"** Paul had earlier sent Timothy to Corinth, but he was apparently not received well by the church so Paul had sent Titus with a severe letter (cf. 2 Cor. 2:3-4). Paul had not heard from him at the expected time and became very concerned.

Titus is mentioned several times in 2 Corinthians (cf. 2 Cor. 2:13; 7:6,13,14; 8:6,16,23; 12:18).

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: TITUS](#)

■ **"I went on to Macedonia"** There is a parenthesis in Paul's thought until 2 Cor. 7:5. It is a digression of praise to God for Christ! The digression is so beautiful and so helpful that we thank God for it. Many of Paul's most memorable quotes come from this digression.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 2:14-17**

**<sup>14</sup>But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. <sup>15</sup>For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; <sup>16</sup>to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things? <sup>17</sup>For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.**

**2:14 "thanks be to God"** See Special Topic following.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL'S PRAYER, PRAISE, AND THANKSGIVING](#)

■ **"always"** God always leads us (1) through Christ; (2) in Christ's victory; and (3) for the purpose of witness (i.e., "manifests through us," present active participle, cf. 2 Cor. 2:15-16).

**NASB, NKJV** "who always leads us in triumph in Christ"

**NRSV** "who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession"

**TEV** "led by God as prisoners in Christ's victory procession"

**NJB** "who always gives us in Christ a part in his triumphal procession"

This phrase refers to the Roman military practice of the triumphal march for victorious legion commanders through the streets of Rome, which would emphasize Christ as victor (the participle is singular). He has destroyed all hostile powers (cf. Col. 2:15, the verb appears only in these two verses in the NT). Believers follow Him, not as prisoners (TEV, NEB, and REB translate this explicitly as "prisoners," but this goes against the obvious victory of the context, unless Paul is referring to his sufferings and humiliations as an evangelist compared to the prisoners in a Roman parade), but as fellow soldiers! We are overcomers because of and through Him! Our victory is won, but we must choose to claim it and walk in it daily.

■ **"us"** The plural pronouns in 2 Cor. 2:14-17 refer to (1) the Apostles; (2) Paul and his mission team; or (3) all believers who spread the gospel. To me option #2 is the focus, but option #3 is the implication.

Evangelists are victorious, but there is a price to be paid (cf. 2 Cor. 4:7-12; 6:3-10; 11:23-30).

■ **"manifests"** Paul uses this word so often in 2 Corinthians (cf. 2 Cor. 2:14; 3:3; 4:10,11; 5:10,11[twice]; 7:12; 11:6). The term means to clearly display or make known. Paul's great desire was to fully, publicly, and clearly reveal God by revealing Christ's person and work (i.e., the gospel).

■ **"of the knowledge of Him in every place"** The Corinthian church was proud of their intellectual heritage. Paul was proud of his knowledge of God through Christ. Knowledge is not for personal glory, but

for evangelism. As we are "always" (i.e., *pantote*) led in triumph in Christ, we also are expected to clearly reveal (i.e., manifest) the message of Christ "in every place" (i.e., *panti*). The universal gospel of Christ is to be shared by His victorious followers in every place (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8).

Paul uses this little phrase "in every place" often (cf. 1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:8; 1 Tim. 2:8). I wonder if it is not an allusion to Mal. 1:11, which prophesies a worldwide worship of God's Messiah?

**2:15 "For we are a fragrance of Christ to God"** This phrase has two possible backgrounds.

1. in the OT the smoke from a sacrifice and incense rose to God and was accepted as a sweet aroma (cf. Gen. 8:21; Exod. 29:18,25; in LXX in Lev. 1:9,13,17; 2:2; also used metaphorically by Paul in Phil. 4:18)

2. in the first century incense was burned along the route of Roman military parades into Rome  
The spreading of the gospel is YHWH's accepted sacrifice of praise. Believers are accepted in Christ for the purpose of becoming like Christ and sharing His gospel.

■ **"who are being saved and among those who are perishing"** The distinction seems to be that those who are perishing are perishing by a continuing act of their own will (present active participle), and those who are saved are being saved by the will of God through Christ (present passive participle). For the theological significance of "who are being saved." See [SPECIAL TOPIC: SALVATION \(GREEK VERB TENSES\)](#) at 1 Cor. 3:15.

For the concept of "perishing" see the full theological discussion at 1 Cor. 1:18, which is a parallel to this text.

**2:16 "And who is adequate for these things"** The preaching of the gospel divides humanity eternally. From 2 Cor. 3:5-6 we understand that God equips His children for this awesome witnessing responsibility. Each believer's life is an aroma to God that others react to, either in trust toward Christ or rejection of Christ. It is important how we live; others are watching (cf. 2 Cor. 2:16; 3:2,3).

As I read this verse I think of how many times and places I have had the privilege of sharing the gospel. One never knows who is present or what they are going through! Some of my sermons are done well and some are real flops! How can a proclaimer stand the pressure that one's hearers have an eternal choice to make based on what they hear from the human speaker? They cannot! The task is the Spirit's, not the proclaimer's! We must be faithful to speak the gospel but our spiritual responsibility has limits! It is God's gospel! It is His world! No one can be saved without the Spirit's touch (cf. John 6:44,65). Human logic or eloquence is not the crucial factor!

**2:17 "we are not like many"** Paul is referring to (1) itinerant teachers in the Greco-Roman world who traveled from place to place teaching and (2) philosophers where were compared with the false teachers who came from Palestine (like those in Gal. 1:6-9) and attacked Paul, his gospel, and his apostleship (cf. 2 Cor. 4:2).

There is a variant connected to "many" (MSS  $\kappa$ , A, B, C, K, P). Other early MSS (P<sup>46</sup>, D, F, G, L) have "the rest" (NKJV, NRSV footnote). Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary of the Greek New Testament*, p. 577, says the second option is an "offensive" term which Paul would not have used in this context. The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives option one a "B" rating (almost certain).

■ **"peddling the word of God"** This is a term from the wine industry. It was used in two ways:

1. to water down wine so as to make more money (i.e., adulterate)
2. to hawk one's product for profit (i.e., a huckster)

Paul did not change his message (the gospel) for different audiences (i.e., Greeks, Jews), but he did customize his approach (see Paul's sermons in Acts and his statement in 1 Cor. 9:19-23).

■ **"but as from sincerity"** This term is from a root "to be unmixed" (cf. 2 Cor. 1:12). This would be the opposite of "peddling." This rare word for sincerity is possibly a compound term from "sunshine" and "judge." It conveys the concept of unhidden, pure motives (cf. 1 Cor. 5:8; 2 Cor. 1:12; 2:17; Phil. 1:10; 2 Pet. 3:1). Notice the parallel between "but as from sincerity" and "but as from God."

▣ **"the word of God. . .from God. . .in the sight of God"** Paul affirms his gospel message is God's message and that the message is Christ! Paul thanks God (cf. 2 Cor. 2:14) for:

1. our triumph in Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 2:14)
2. our manifesting a knowledge of Him in every place (cf. 2 Cor. 2:14)
3. our message about Him produces life or death (cf. 2 Cor. 2:15-16)
4. our unmixed message is from God, before God, about Christ, and in Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 2:17)

▣ **"we speak in Christ in the sight of God"** This exact phrase is repeated in 2 Cor. 12:19. It seems to be an idiomatic way of asserting the trustworthiness and truthfulness of the gospel.

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why does Paul discuss his travel plans so extensively?
2. How many letters did Paul write to the Corinthian church?
3. Explain the background of triumph in 2 Cor. 2:14.
4. How does one stand the spiritual pressure involved in 2 Cor. 2:15-16 when we know that sharing the Gospel can mean the difference between heaven and hell?

# 2 CORINTHIANS 3

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

USB <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Ministers of the New Covenant	Christ's Epistle	Our Ministry	Servants of the New Covenant	From Troas to Macedonia- The Apostolate: It's Importance
		(2:14-3:6)		(2:12-4:6)
3:1-3	3:1-3	3:1-3	3:1-3	3:1-3
	The Spirit, Not the Letter			
3:4-6	3:4-6	3:4-6	3:4-6	3:4-11
	Glory of the New Covenant	The Ministry of the New Covenant		
3:7-11	3:7-18	3:7-11	3:7-11	
3:12-18		3:12-18	3:12-18	3:12-18

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

A. The emphasis of this chapter is very similar to the emphasis of the Book of Hebrews. It is a comparison between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. How are sinful humans made right with God.

1. performance of the Mosaic Law
2. faith in the atoning work of God in Christ?

This comparison is used by Paul to defend his gospel and himself against the Jewish-oriented false teachers who have arrived in Corinth.

B. This chapter's use of the term "spirit" is highly ambiguous. There has been much discussion over 2 Cor. 3:6,8,17, and 18. Are they relating to the "Holy Spirit" or the concept of "the spiritual"? There seems to be an intentional fluidity between the two. The new age is the age of the Spirit (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38), which inaugurates a spiritual relationship with God versus a legal, performance-based relationship.

C. Paul's use of the term "law" (see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 9:9)

1. law = wrath; Rom. 3:20; 4:15; Gal. 3:10-13; Col. 2:14
2. law = spiritually good; Rom. 7:14
3. contrast between Rom. 1:5; 2:13; Gal. 3:12; and Rom. 3:2 or 8:7; 2 Cor. 3:6; Gal. 3:21
4. Paul uses Abraham and Moses as two typological symbols of the relationship between "faith" and "law"

The Law is good. It is from God. It served, and continues to serve, a divine purpose (cf. Rom. 7:7,12,14,22,25). It can not bring peace or salvation. James Stewart in his book *A Man in Christ*, shows Paul's paradoxical thinking and writing:

"You would naturally expect a man who was setting himself to construct a system of thought and doctrine to fix as rigidly as possible the meanings of the terms he employed. You would expect him to aim at precision in the phraseology of his leading ideas. You would demand that a word, once used by your writer in a particular sense should bear that sense throughout. But to look for this from Paul is to be disappointed. Much of his phraseology is fluid, not rigid. . . 'The law is holy,' he writes, 'I delight in the law of God after the inward man' (cf. Rom. 7:12-13) but it is clearly another aspect of *nomos* that makes him say elsewhere, 'Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law' (cf. Gal. 3:13)" (p. 26).

D. Paul uses three major metaphors in this chapter:

1. letters, 2 Cor. 3:1-3
  - a. letters of recommendation, 2 Cor. 3:1
  - b. they are letters, 2 Cor. 3:2
  - c. OT tablets, 2 Cor. 3:3
2. Old and New Covenants, 2 Cor. 3:6-11
  - a. written versus spiritual, 2 Cor. 3:3,6
  - b. kills versus gives life, 2 Cor. 3:6
3. veil, 2 Cor. 3:7, 12-16
  - a. Moses, 2 Cor. 3:12
  - b. Jews of Paul's day, 2 Cor. 3:14
  - c. believers, 2 Cor. 3:14-16

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 3:1-3

<sup>1</sup>Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you? <sup>2</sup>You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; <sup>3</sup>being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

**3:1** The grammatical form of both questions in 2 Cor. 3:1 expects a "no" answer. It is hard to know if Paul is being sarcastic or heart broken.

■ **"to commend"** This word is a compound of "to place" and "together," which is used metaphorically to demonstrate, to frame together, or to recommend.

1. to demonstrate (cf. Rom. 3:5; 5:8; 2 Cor. 7:11; Gal. 2:18)
2. to endure (cf. Col. 1:17)
3. to commend (cf. Rom. 16:1; 2 Cor. 3:1; 4:2; 5:12; 6:4; 10:12,18; 12:11)

■ **"as some"** Paul uses this term often in 2 Corinthians because of the conflict with the aggressive false teachers from Palestine who tried to elevate themselves by contrasting themselves to Paul and his background and his gospel (cf. 2 Cor. 3:2; 2:17; 10:2). He also used the same expression in a negative sense in 1 Corinthians to relate to the actions and beliefs of some church members (cf. 2 Cor. 4:18; 15:12).

■ **"letters of commendation"** The early church adopted the procedure of letters of recommendation to assure the orthodoxy and trustworthiness of itinerant ministers (cf. Acts 18:27; Rom. 16:1; 1 Cor. 16:3,15-18; Phil. 2:29-30; 3 John 1:12).

**3:2 "You are our letter, written in our hearts,"** Paul is asserting that he does not need a letter to recommend himself to this church (or from this church), because he is its spiritual founder as Christ is its savior and Lord. They were his flesh-and-blood letter (cf. 2 Cor. 3:3).

The phrase "written in our hearts" is a perfect passive participle. Paul loved this church. They were permanently in his heart and mind. The passive voice implies that God/Christ/Spirit is the agent (cf. 2 Cor. 3:3), which produces Paul's love.

See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HEART](#) at 1 Cor. 14:25.

■ **"known and read"** There is a sound play between these two Greek words (i.e., *ginōskomenē* and *anaginōskomenē*, cf. 2 Cor. 1:13). Both are present passive participles.

■ **"by all men"** This is the use of the term "all" where it is not inclusive (cf. Rom. 11:26). This is obviously a hyperbole, so common in Jewish literature (cf. Matt. 5:29-30,38-42; 6:24; 7:3-5; 23:23-24).

**3:3 "being manifested"** See note at 2 Cor. 2:14.

■ **"you are a letter of Christ"** Believers are meant to clearly reveal Christ by their motives, words, and actions. How we live reflects on His reputation!

■ **"cared for by us"** See [SPECIAL TOPIC: SERVANT LEADERSHIP](#) at 1 Cor. 4:1.

■ **"the Spirit of the living God"** The terminology referring to the Triune God is very fluid. The Spirit is often referred to as the Spirit of Jesus (cf. Rom. 8:9; 2 Cor. 3:17; Gal. 4:6; 1 Pet. 1:11). Here the same type of fluidity is directed toward the Father. The title "living God" is a play on YHWH, which is from the Hebrew verb "to be" (cf. Exod. 3:14). The descriptive title is common for the Father in the NT (cf. Matt. 16:16; 26:63; Acts 14:15; Rom. 9:26; 2 Cor. 6:16; 1 Thess. 1:9; 1 Tim. 3:15; 4:10; Heb. 3:12; 9:14; 10:31; 12:22; Rev. 7:2). In the OT the pagan idols were lifeless. They could not respond or they were dead part of the year (i.e., the winter) following the fertility cycles of nature. YHWH was the only truly alive, always-alive God!

■ **"not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts"** This seems to relate to the giving of the law in Exod. 31:18 and to the promise of a New Covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34 and Ezek. 36:22-38). This is an obvious contrast between the Old Covenant as external law versus the New Covenant as internal (i.e., new heart, new mind, and new spirit, cf. Ezek. 11:19; 36:26).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 3:4-6**

**<sup>4</sup>Such confidence we have through Christ toward God. <sup>5</sup>Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as *coming* from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, <sup>6</sup>who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter**



**3:4 "confidence"** This is another Pauline term used mostly in 2 Corinthians . It comes from the same Greek root as faith, trust, believe (i.e., *peithō* and *pistis, pisteuō*). It basically means trust, confidence, or reliance.

1. positive context:
  - a. Paul's travel plans, 2 Cor. 1:15
  - b. Paul's confidence in God through Christ, 2 Cor. 3:4
  - c. Paul's confidence in Titus, 2 Cor. 8:22
  - d. Paul's confidence in Christ, Eph. 3:12
2. negative context:
  - a. Paul wants to be gentle with them, 2 Cor. 10:2
  - b. Paul's reluctant comparison of his credentials with the false teachers, Phil. 3:4

**3:5 "Not that we are adequate in ourselves"** The Greek term *hikanos* is common in the NT and is used in two senses.

1. as a large number of something (cf. 2 Cor. 11:30), even time
2. fit, appropriate (cf. 2 Cor. 2:6), competent, qualified, able, or adequate

The second sense is used here. Paul expresses his sense of unworthiness using this term in 1 Cor. 15:9. He also asserts that gospel ministers are not worthy in themselves in 2 Cor. 2:16 and 3:5.

Yet, even as we are inadequate in ourselves, God has called us and empowered us as His representatives (cf. 2 Cor. 3:6; 2 Tim. 2:2). We are adequate in Him (cf. Col. 1:12).

▣ **"to consider"** This is the term *logizomai*, which is used thirty-four times by Paul, but less than seven in the rest of the NT (cf. 2 Cor. 3:5; 5:19; 10:2,7; 11:5; 12:6). It reflects Paul's logical presentation of truths and then as encouragement to think through the issues clearly.

The term is a major theological word because of:

1. its use in the Septuagint for personalized truth (cf. the *New International Dictionary of NT Theology*, vol. 3, p. 823)
2. its use in Gen. 15:6, which Paul uses to justify OT righteousness based on a free gift of God through faith (cf. Rom. 4:3)
3. it may have been a technical term used by Sophists in their rhetorical presentations (see Bruce W. Winter, *Philo and Paul Among the Sophists*)

Modern believers should also carefully consider what they believe about the faith and why. Our mental and verbal abilities are part of the image of God in mankind. We must worship God with our minds (cf. LXX Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:37). We need to be able to give an account of the hope that is in us (cf. 1 Pet. 3:15). We must think through our faith beliefs for our own stability and for evangelism. See the video "Why I Trust the NT" online at [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org), click on "Biblical Interpretation Sermons," then on Video Seminar, Dallas, TX, 2009" and then on the right side of the screen at lesson 3.

**3:6 "servants of a new covenant"** See Special Topic: Servant Leadership at 1 Cor. 4:1.

▣ **"not of the letter but of the Spirit"** There is a series of comparisons.

1. written versus spiritual, 2 Cor. 3:3 and 6
2. letter versus Spirit, 2 Cor. 3:6
3. old service versus spiritual service, 2 Cor. 3:7
4. the service connected with condemnation versus the service connected with right-standing, 2 Cor. 3:9
5. what has passed away versus what is permanent, 2 Cor. 3:11
6. the veil remains unlifted versus the veil is removed, 2 Cor. 3:14

Paul is contrasting the old and new covenants, but really heart faith (cf. Rom. 2:29; 7:6) versus head faith (i.e., legalism, human performance, self-righteousness).

■ **"the letter kills"** This seems to relate to the primary purpose of the Mosaic law. It was given not to give life, but to accentuate and reveal our sinfulness (cf. Rom. 7:9-11; Gal. 3:10). The Law brings condemnation (cf. Rom. 5:13), wrath (cf. Rom. 4:15), and death (cf. Rom. 7:19; 2 Cor. 3:6). See George E. Ladd's *A Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 495-510. The place of the law is also clearly seen in Rom. 3:20; 5:20; 10:4; Gal. 3:24-25. The relationship between the NT believer and the OT Law has been a greatly confused issue. It seems to me, based on all the passages of the NT, that the Christian is not under OT law (cf. Rom. 6:14; Gal. 5:18). This is not because the OT law has passed away, but because the NT Christian fulfills the OT law in God's love relationships with us seen in believers' love for others (cf. Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14). The purpose of the law is to bring fallen mankind to Christ, so as to redeem them. However, just because the OT law is not a means of salvation does not mean it is not God's will for humanity in society (cf. Matt. 5:17; Rom. 8:4). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL'S VIEWS OF THE MOSAIC LAW](#) at 1 Cor. 9:9.

■ **"the Spirit gives life"** This context does not provide a hermeneutical method! This paragraph does not relate to the historical-grammatical method of biblical hermeneutics versus the allegorical method. It relates primarily to the distinction between the purpose of the OT and the purpose of the NT.

Even more to the point, the role of heart-felt faith in God's resources (cf. John 6:63) versus trusting in human resources (i.e., knowledge, works, racial standing). The key is God's love, Christ's work, and the Spirit's enabling. Notice that both the killing of the letter and life-giving of the Spirit are both present active indicatives.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 3:7-11**

**<sup>7</sup>But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was, <sup>8</sup>how will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory? <sup>9</sup>For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory. <sup>10</sup>For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory because of the glory that surpasses it. <sup>11</sup>For if that which fades away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory.**

**3:7 "if"** This is a first class conditional sentence, which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes.

■ **"the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones"** The purpose of the law was to show sinfulness (cf. Gal. 3:24). This section, 2 Cor. 3:7-18, is a rabbinical *Midrash* on Exod. 34:23-35. There is a threefold use of "the veil" metaphor: (1) Moses; (2) contemporary Jews; (3) believers.

The old covenant is written by the finger of God on tablets of stone on Mt. Sinai (cf. Exodus 19-20). The new covenant, also written by God, is on the hearts of faithful followers (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38). The first is characterized by obedience to an external code, but the second, obedience to an internal relationship.

■ **"came with glory"** See [SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY \(DOXA\)](#) at 1 Cor. 2:7.

■ **"could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was"** This relates to Exod. 34:30-35. There has been much discussion about this passage. Some think Moses veiled his face to keep the Israelites from seeing the fading glory (cf. 2 Cor. 3:7,13). Others, however, think that Moses veiled his face because the Israelites could not stand the glory of God because of their sins.

**3:8** This verse is contrasting the ministry of Moses, which reflected God's glory with the ministry of the Spirit who shares the Father's glory.

**3:9 "if"** This is another first class conditional sentence, which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes.

- **"the ministry of condemnation"** What a strong, shockingly negative way to describe the Old Covenant.
- **"the ministry of righteousness"** The OT produced condemnation for most of the children of Abraham. The NT produces righteousness for all the children of Adam if only they will trust in God's finished work in Christ and the wooing of the Spirit. See Special Topic: Righteousness at 1 Cor. 1:30.
- **"abound"** This is a present active indicative of *perisseuō*, which emphasizes its ongoing nature. See fuller note at 2 Cor. 1:5 and Special Topic at 2 Cor. 2:7.

### 3:10

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"For indeed what had glory, in this case has not glory because of the glory that surpasses it"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect because of the glory that excels"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"Indeed, what once had glory has lost its glory because of the greater glory"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"We may say that because of the far brighter glory now the glory that was so bright in the past is gone"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"Indeed, what was once considered glorious has lost all claim to glory, by contrast with the glory which transcends it"</b>

The OT is characterized as "had glory" (perfect passive indicative). It was surely from God and reflected God. However, the fuller revelation is in Christ, the glory of the NT (perfect passive participle). This comparison of YHWH's covenants is also developed in the book of Hebrews. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY \(DOXA\)](#) at 1 Cor. 2:7.

The definite article "to" (nominative, neuter, singular) is used as a grammatical place holder for "the old covenant" (most English translations have "what"). It is characterized in this context as

1. "written on tablets of stone," 2 Cor. 3:3,7
2. "the letter," 2 Cor. 3:6
3. "the ministry of death," 2 Cor. 3:7
4. "the ministry of condemnation," 2 Cor. 3:9

- **"surpasses"** This is an intensified term from "over" or "beyond" and "to throw." Paul uses it here and in 2 Cor. 9:14 (i.e., "The surpassing grace of God"). He also uses both *perisseuō* and *huperballō* in 2 Cor. 11:23, where he compares his background and ministry with the credentials of the false teachers. Paul speaks with intense feelings and hyperbolic vocabulary! See Special Topic: Paul's Use of *Huper* Compounds at 1 Cor. 2:1.

**3:11 "if"** This is another first class conditional sentence.

- **"that which fades away"** This is the term *katargeō*, which is used so often by Paul in his Corinthian letters (cf. 1 Cor. 1:28; 2:6; 6:13; 13:8,10,11; 15:24,26; 2 Cor. 3:7,11,13,14). For the Special Topic see 1 Cor. 1:28.
- **"that which remains is in glory"** The contrast is not between that which is from God or has God's glory, but which has the greater glory and the abiding glory. The answer is the New Covenant in Christ, the New Age of the Spirit, and the now complete predestined eternal plan of redemption (cf. Acts 2:22-24; 3:18-21; 4:28; 13:29-41).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 3:12-18**

**<sup>12</sup>Therefore having such a hope, we use great boldness in our speech, <sup>13</sup>and are not like**

**Moses, who used to put a veil over his face so that the sons of Israel would not look intently at the end of what was fading away. <sup>14</sup>But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ. <sup>15</sup>But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; <sup>16</sup>but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. <sup>17</sup>Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. <sup>18</sup>But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.**

**3:12 "Therefore having such a hope"** This seems to relate to eschatological glory (cf. 2 Cor. 3:11). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: HOPE](#) at 1 Cor. 13:13.

▣ **"we use great boldness in our speech"** See Special Topic below.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: BOLDNESS \(PARRHĒSIA\)](#)

**3:13** This verse refers to verse 7, which is an allusion to Exod. 34:29-35. In the OT the reason for Moses wearing a veil is the fear of what his glowing face might cause to the Israelites (cf. Exod. 34:30). Paul interprets the reason so as to accentuate his depreciation of the Old Covenant. As Moses' face fades, so too, Moses covenant!

Paul makes several comparisons between Moses' covenant and Jesus' covenant.

1. the Lord of Exodus = the Spirit of Jesus
2. only Moses could approach God intimately versus all believers in Christ can approach God
3. Moses' glory faded versus Jesus' glory never fades
4. Moses' followers cannot see Christ in the OT versus Jesus' followers through the Spirit can correctly interpret the OT in light of Christ
5. Moses brought the bondage of performance versus Christ brings the freedom of grace
6. the letter of the Mosaic Law brings death versus the Spirit of the New Covenant brings life, life eternal, life abundant
7. Moses' covenant was unable to produce a righteous people versus Jesus' covenant does produce righteous people (both objectively in justification and subjectively in sanctification)

**3:14 "But their minds were hardened"** This is an aorist passive indicative. This Greek term comes from the idea of "thick skinned" or "calloused" (cf. Mark 6:52; 8:17; Rom. 11:7,25). Spiritual blindness has both a spiritual origin (i.e., [1] God by the use of the passive voice, cf. Isa. 6:9-10; 29:10; John 12:40; Rom. 9:18 and [2] Satan, cf. 2 Cor. 4:4) and human origin (cf. John 3:19-20). For a good discussion of the theological mystery of Israel's hardening read Rom. 9-11 and *Hard Sayings of the Bible* from Inter Varsity Press, pp. 619-621.

The verb "lies" in 2 Cor. 3:15 can be either present passive (i.e., #1) or present middle (i.e., #2).

See [SPECIAL TOPIC: SCHEMES](#) at 2 Cor. 2:11.

▣ **"the same veil remains unlifted"** Moses used a literal veil; this term is now used to describe the inner blindness of contemporary Judaism. Jews were/are walking in the judgment of Isa. 6:9-10 and 29:10. This also relates to the Jews of our day who refuse to accept Jesus as the Messiah (cf. 2 Cor. 3:15).

▣ **"because it is removed in Christ"** Only the grace of God can remove the blindness of tradition, self-righteousness, and sin. Religious people are as prone to spiritual blindness as non-religious people. Fallen mankind's only hope is

1. the unchanging mercy of the Father
2. the full and finished atonement of the Son
3. the universal wooing/work of the Spirit

Salvation is a spiritual gift and not a matter of family, tradition, intellect, performance, or preference!

What Paul may be asserting in this context is the believer's ability through the Spirit to see the life, teachings, and work of Jesus in the OT. Jesus Himself opened the minds of the two on the road to Emmaus (cf. Luke 24:13-35, especially 2 Cor. 3:25-27).

NASB, TEV	"is removed"
NKJV	"taken away"
NRSV	"set aside"
NJB	"done away"

See Special Topic: *Katargeō* at 1 Cor. 1:28.

**3:15 "heart"** See [SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HEART](#) at 1 Cor. 14:25.

**3:16 "but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away"** This could be a quote from Exod. 34:34. If so it relates to Moses' actions when approaching God. It also seems to be a universal appeal and invitation for anyone and everyone to turn to the Lord. The term "turn" in Hebrew (*shub*) refers to repentance. The term, "the Lord," here could refer contextually either to YHWH or to Jesus. The ambiguity is probably purposeful. Notice the combined emphasis on human volitional choice and divine action (i.e., covenant).

**3:17 "Now the Lord is the Spirit"** The ministry of Jesus and the Spirit are inseparably linked (cf. 2 Cor. 3:17-18). The ministry of the Spirit is to magnify Jesus (cf. John 16:8-14).

In context it is possible that Paul is not commenting on the connection between Jesus and the Spirit, but defining the word "Lord" (*kurios*) in 2 Cor. 3:16, which in the context of Exod. 34:34, refers to YHWH (see Special Topic at 2 Cor. 1:1), but Paul is using it in the sense of the REB translation, "Now the Lord of whom this passage speaks is the Spirit." If this is accurate then the entire section is not referring to Jesus by the term "Lord," but to the Spirit (cf. Gen. 1:2 also note Gordon D. Fee, *To What End Exegesis*, pp. 218-239). This then would be the only place where Paul uses *Kurios* for the Spirit. It is a contrast between the OT law code and the then unwritten gospel (i.e., written versus living).

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: JESUS AND THE SPIRIT](#)

■ **"there is liberty"** This refers to freedom from spiritual blindness, self-righteousness, and legalism caused by a personal faith relationship with Jesus Christ (cf. John 8:32,36; Rom. 14: 1 Cor. 8; 10:23ff; Gal. 5:1,13).

One of my favorite commentators, F. F. Bruce, in his book, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, says "Paul certainly knew the love of Christ to be the all-compelling power in life. Where love is the compelling power, there is no sense of strain or conflict or bondage in doing what is right: the man or woman who is compelled by Jesus' love and empowered by his Spirit does the will of God from the heart. For (as Paul could say from experience) 'where the Spirit of the Lord is, there the heart is free'" (p. 21).

**3:18 "with unveiled face"** This is a perfect passive participle implying a permanent unveiling. Also note the inclusive "we all" referring to the believers in the confused and factious Corinthian church.

■ **"beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord"** The gospel has fully revealed both YHWH and Jesus of Nazareth (cf. 2 Cor. 4:6). As we respond in repentance and faith the revelation changes us into His image. This same metaphor is found in 2 Cor. 4:4. These Corinthian Christians had clearly seen God in Christ through the gospel.

The term "beholding" is a rare term. *The Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* by Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Danker lists the possible uses based on the voice (p. 424).

1. Active, produce a reflection

2. Passive, what is seen in a mirror
3. Middle, look at oneself in a mirror

- **"are being transformed"** This is a present passive indicative. All of the verbals in this context are passive voice, implying God's activity on our behalf, transforming believers into Christ's likeness (cf. Rom. 12:2). This same verb is used of the Transfiguration (cf. Matt. 17:2; Mark 9:2). We get the English word metamorphosis from this Greek term.
- **"into the same image"** Jesus is the image of God (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4; John 1:14-18; 14:9; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3). Humans were created in the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). Believers are in the image of Christ (cf. Rom. 8:29-30). Christlikeness is God's primary goal for all believers (cf. Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4).
- **"from glory to glory"** There are stages in God's plan of restoration and renewal. Believers are in a process (see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 3:15) that leads to Christlikeness (cf. 1 John 3:2). See Special Topic: Glory at 1 Cor. 2:7.
- **"the Lord, the Spirit"** Some possible translations:
  1. King James, "even as by the Spirit of the Lord"
  2. Vulgate, "even as from the Lord (who is) the Spirit"
  3. Westcott and Hort, "even as from the sovereign Spirit"
  4. from the context of 2 Cor. 3:16-17, "even as from the Lord who is Spirit" (cf. TEV, NJB, and NIV)It is hard in some contexts to know if *pneuma* (i.e., spirit) should be
  1. little "s," referring to the human spirit (cf. KJV of 2 Cor. 3:6,8; Rom. 7:6; 1 Cor. 15:45)
  2. capital "S," referring to the Holy Spirit, the third person of the eternal Trinity (cf. 2 Cor. 3:3; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6; 1 Pet. 1:11)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Describe the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant?
2. Why is the OT said to be death? Does this mean the OT is evil?
3. What is the relationship between the OT and the NT?
4. Does this passage speak of the Holy Spirit or the spiritual realm?
5. What is the metaphor of "the veil" trying to communicate to modern day Christians?

# 2 CORINTHIANS 4

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Treasure in Earthen Vessels	The Light of Christ's Gospel	True Treasure, Mortal Ministers	Spiritual Treasure in Clay Pots	From Troas to Macedonia- The Apostolate: Its Importance  (2:12-4:6)
4:1-6	4:1-6  Cast Down but Unconquered	4:1-6	4:1-6	4:1-6  The Hardships and Hopes of the Apostolate  (4:7-5:10)
4:7-15	4:7-15	4:7-12	4:7-12	4:7-12
Living By Faith  (4:16-5:5)	Seeing the Invisible	4:13-15	4:13-15  Living By Faith  (4:16-5:5)	4:13-15
	4:16-18	4:16-18	4:16-18	4:16-18

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

#### **BRIEF CONTEXTUAL OUTLINE**

- A. Presentation of the message, 2 Cor. 4:2
- B. Opposition to the message, 2 Cor. 4:3-4a
- C. The message veiled, 2 Cor. 4:4b-6

D. Paradox of the message, 2 Cor. 4:7-13

E. Results of the message, 2 Cor. 4:14-18

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 4:1-6

**<sup>1</sup>Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, <sup>2</sup>but we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. <sup>3</sup>And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, <sup>4</sup>in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. <sup>5</sup>For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup>For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.**

**4:1 "we"** It is obvious that Paul is using the plural pronoun to refer to himself, as he does throughout this chapter.

▣ **"we have this ministry"** Paul is referring to "the ministry of the Spirit" (cf. 2 Cor. 3:8), also called "the ministry of righteousness" (cf. 2 Cor. 3:9). Paul uses this word for service, *diakonia*, so often in 2 Corinthians.

1. *diakonēō*, 2 Cor. 3:3; 8:19,20

2. *diakonia*, 2 Cor. 3:7,8,9; 4:1; 5:18; 6:3; 8:4; 9:1,12,13; 11:8

3. *diakonos*, 2 Cor. 3:6; 6:4; 11:15,23

Christians are saved to serve (cf. Eph. 2:10). Christianity is not a "what's in it for me" focus as much as "what can I do for others because of what Christ has done for me" focus. Paul served and called to service (cf. Gal. 2:20). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: SERVANT LEADERSHIP](#) at 1 Cor. 4:1.

▣ **"as we received mercy"** God's mercy for Saul, who was such a staunch, militant, anti-Christian (cf. 1 Tim. 1:13,16), on the road to Damascus (aorist passive indicative) encouraged him to continue to preach the Good News in the face of adversity.

Paul wrote in Greek, but thought in Hebrew. The Greek term *elēēō* (i.e., mercy, pity, compassion) is used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew term *hesed* (see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 13:1), which relates to covenant fidelity. YHWH is faithful to His covenant promises, even when humanity is not! Paul's dramatic conversion clearly reveals the compassion of God. He acts in mercy to Jews (cf. Rom. 9:15,16,18,23-24; 11:30) and to Gentiles (cf. Rom. 11:32) for His own covenant purpose, which is the restoration of His image in mankind through the work of Christ and the ministry of the Spirit. God's loyalty to His covenant and His unchanging character of mercy is mankind's only hope.

▣ **"we do not lose heart"** This is present active indicative. This must be understood in the light of Paul's overall ministry and this particular context (cf. 2 Cor. 4:16). Paul did feel like giving up several times. Jesus appeared to him in visions several times to encourage him (cf. Acts 18:9-10; 23:11; 27:24; 2 Tim. 4:17). In this particular context, in the face of physical trials and problems with the church at Corinth, Paul had confidence that the merciful, covenantal God was there and in control (cf. 2 Cor. 3:12). The task was too important to lose heart (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8).

**4:2 "we have renounced"** This is aorist middle indicative. There is a series of things which Paul personally refused to use in his own ministry.



1. no underhanded means
2. no disgraceful methods
3. no cunning
4. no tampering with or watering down God's message

Each of these methods reflect the false teachers' charges or their actions.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"the things hidden because of shame"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"the hidden things of shame"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"the shameful things that one hides"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"secret and shameful deeds"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"shameful secrecy"</b>

Paul uses similar phrases to describe slavery to sin in Rom. 6:21 and sins of humanity which will be revealed in 1 Cor. 4:5 (also see 1 Cor. 14:25). In this context the phrase seems to describe the methodology of the itinerant false teachers.

<b>NASB, NKJV</b>	<b>"not walking in craftiness"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"we refuse to practice cunning"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"we do not act with deceit"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"it is not our way to be devious"</b>

This is a present active participle. Paul uses the term "crafty" (i.e., "all" plus "work") several times in his letters to Corinth (cf. 1 Cor. 3:19; 2 Cor. 4:2; 11:3; 12:16). We must be very careful about our methods as well as our goals. For in Christianity the means determine the end. This same word is used by Paul

1. in a quote from Job 5:13 referring to human wisdom (cf. 1 Cor. 3:19)
2. of Satan tempting Eve (cf. 2 Cor. 11:3)
3. of the trickery of Satan and the false teachers (cf. Eph. 4:14)
4. here of the methods of false teachers

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"or adulterating the word of God"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"nor handling the word of God deceitfully"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"to falsify God's word"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"nor do we falsify the word of God"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"or to falsify the word of God"</b>

This term and its related forms mean

1. watered down (cf. 2 Cor. 2:17)
2. entrapped with bait (cf. Matt. 26:4; Mark 14:1)
3. defrauded or deceived (cf. 2 Cor. 11:13; Rom. 3:13)

It refers to a changing message based on the hearer's sensibilities or trying to trick the hearers (cf. 1 Cor. 1:23).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"by the manifestation of truth"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"by manifestation of truth"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"by the open statement of the truth"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"in full light of truth"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"by showing the truth openly"</b>

For "manifestation" see full note at 2 Cor. 2:14. The term "truth" has the article and refers to the gospel of Christ, the New Covenant. The false teachers acted in shameful ways, secret ways, but Paul preached the full truth publicly. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: "TRUTH" IN PAUL'S WRITINGS](#) at 2 Cor. 13:8.

▣ **"commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God"** Paul is referring to his

self-limiting love for others (cf. 1 Cor. 9:19-23). This does not speak of compromise, but voluntary self-limiting of freedom because of the cultural hang-ups or personal preferences of others. His intentionality was evangelism, not personal freedom (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13; 1 Cor. 8; 10:23ff).

Paul uses these same terms in 2 Cor. 5:11-21, which also emphasize the gospel and our part in its proclamation. See fuller note on "commend" at 2 Cor. 3:1. See fuller note on "conscience" at 1 Cor. 8:7 and 10:25.

■ **"in the sight of God"** This seems to be an idiomatic phrase parallel to "God is my witness." Other Pauline texts also use this phrase in a similar way (cf. Gal. 1:20; 1 Tim. 5:21; 6:13; 2 Tim. 2:14; 4:1), also notice Paul's oath formula in 2 Cor. 1:23; 11:31; and 1 Thess. 2:5,10).

**4:3 "if"** This is a first class conditional sentence, which is assumed to be true. Some people just do not get it (cf. Matthew 13).

■ **"our gospel is veiled"** This is a Periphrastic perfect passive participle of "veiled" (cf. 2 Cor. 3:14,16). It is obvious to Paul that when he preached the gospel some men absolutely could not respond to it. As the Jews are "hardened" (cf. 2 Cor. 3:14; and Isa. 6:9-10), hearers in every age are also "blinded" (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4). This is the mystery of predestination versus free will, the paradox of the gospel (cf. John 1:12; 3:16 vs. 6:44,65).

■ **"those who are perishing"** Paul is continuing his analogy of the gospel as an aroma of life and of death (cf. 2 Cor. 2:15; 1 Cor. 1:18-19; 8:11; 10:9-10; 15:18). The proclamation of the gospel is serious business, to some life, but to some death.

For the concept of "perishing" see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 8:11 and a discussion at 1 Cor. 1:18.

**4:4 "the god of this world"** This evil personality is called by several names by Paul.

1. Satan (cf. Rom. 16:20; 1 Cor. 5:5; 7:5; 2 Cor. 2:11; 11:14; 12:7; 1 Thess. 2:18; 2 Thess. 2:9; 1 Tim. 1:20; 5:15)
2. Devil (cf. Eph. 4:27; 6:11-12; 1 Tim. 3:6,7; 2 Tim. 2:26; the plural used of the demonic, 1 Cor. 10:20-21; 1 Tim. 4:1)
3. "the prince of the power of the air" (cf. Eph. 2:2)
4. "the god of this age/world" (John calls him "the ruler of this age/world," John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11)
5. "the tempter" (cf. 1 Thess. 3:5)
6. "the evil one" (cf. 2 Thess. 3:3, this title is common in Matthew's and John's writings)
7. "an angel of light" (cf. 2 Cor. 11:14)

This verse caused great concern to the early Church Fathers because it seemed to add fuel to the fire of the Gnostic and Arian false teachers. Therefore, unfortunately, they (Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen, Chrysostom, Ambrose, Theodoret, and Augustine) changed the Greek of this text to: "in who God has blinded the mind of the unbeliever of this world." Now Satan is obviously referred to as the prince and power of this world (cf. John 12:31; 14:30; Eph. 2:2). These early Church Fathers were not reacting to the concept of a personal force of evil, but to the theological concept of the Gnostic Demiurge and the Arians' view of a less-than-divine Christ. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSONAL EVIL](#) at 1 Cor. 7:5.

■ **"of this world"** This is also the Greek term for "age" (i.e., *aiōnos*) This seems to refer to the Jewish view of two ages: the current evil age dominated by sin and the age to come, set up and dominated by the Messiah (cf. Matt. 28:20; Eph. 2:2). For the full discussion of the two ages see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:20. The terms "this world" (*kosmos houtos*) and "this age" (*aiōn houtos*) are used interchangeably (cf. George E. Ladd's *A Theology of the New Testament*, p. 223).

■ **"has blinded the minds of the unbelieving"** This is an aorist active indicative. The term is used of spiritual blindness in Matt. 15:14; 23:16; 1 John 2:11 and the concept is in John 9. This same term is used in a quote from the Septuagint of Isa. 6:10 in John 12:40. It is a rather rare term in Paul's writings (cf. Rom. 2:19 and here), but common in the Gospels.

In the Isaiah passage (i.e., 6:9-10) it is God's judgment that blinded the Israelites' spiritual eyes because

of their continual unbelief. This same truth is expressed in Rom. 1:21, where the passive voice implies God (cf. Rom. 11:8-10, quoting Isa. 29:10 and Ps. 69:22-23). It is difficult to balance

1. human unbelief
2. divine hardening
3. satanic blinding

Belief is a gift and a necessary response! The covenantal paradox is the mystery of predestination and free will. We must let God be God and demand human accountability. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: ELECTION/PREDESTINATION AND THE NEED FOR A THEOLOGICAL BALANCE](#)/Predestination and the Need for A Theological Balance at 2 Cor. 8:16-17.

Can you imagine the power that the evil one must have that he is able to blind the eyes of humans to the compelling beauty of the gospel (cf. Matt. 13:19) and the wooing of the Holy Spirit to respond to it (cf. John 6:44, 65)? Paul uses several metaphors to describe unbelief: (1) hardened hearts; (2) blinded minds; (3) seared consciences; and (4) blinded eyes. There is an ongoing spiritual conflict (cf. Eph. 6:10-19).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. . .should shine on them"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"He keeps them from seeing the light shining on them, the light that comes from the Good News about the glory of Christ"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"so that they cannot see shining the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ"</b>

If you will notice in this context, there are several words that relate to light. This refers to

1. Jesus, often called "light" (cf. John 1:4,9; 3:19; 8:12)
2. possibly Paul's experience on the Damascus road (cf. Acts 9)
3. possibly an allusion to the *Shekinah* glory of God from the Exodus mentioned in 2 Cor. 4:6; 3:7)

To not see Christ in the Scriptures is to miss salvation. The NT proclaims the glory of Christ, the gospel. The OT is fulfilled and completed in Him. He is the necessary foundation, cornerstone, cap stone, top stone. To miss Him is to shipwreck one's faith.

■ **"who is the image of God"** To see Jesus is to see the Father (cf. John 1:18; 14:8,9; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3). The NT asserts that Jesus was incarnated to serve three purposes.

1. to fully reveal the Father
2. to atone for sin
3. to give believers an example to follow

**4:5 "we do not preach ourselves"** Trying to interpret Paul's letter is like listening to only half of a phone conversation. We assume from Paul's statements the things that might have caused them. From 3:1, here, and chapters 10-13, it is obvious that Paul had those at Corinth who attacked him personally and his gospel. Paul is forcefully asserting Jesus' Lordship and his servanthood (cf. 1 Cor. 3:5-9). He only defends himself (i.e., "ourselves" is emphatic) or magnifies his credentials (cf. chapter 12) in order to protect the validity of his gospel. For an interesting discussion on the limits of apostolic authority see George Ladd's *A Theology of the New Testament*, p. 382.

■ **"Christ Jesus as Lord"** This phrase was the early church's profession of faith at baptism (cf. Rom. 10:9-13; 1 Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:9-11). All three of the major terms used in the NT to designate the Promised One, the Suffering Servant, are used in this phrase.

1. Christ - This is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew term *messiah*, which meant "an anointed one." It implies "one called and equipped by God for a specific task." In the OT three groups of leaders: priests, kings, and prophets were anointed. Jesus fulfills all three of these anointed offices (cf. Heb. 1:2-3).
2. Jesus - This Hebrew name meant "YHWH saves" or "YHWH brings salvation." It was revealed to his parents by an angel (cf. Matt. 1:21). "Jesus" is derived from the Hebrew word for salvation, *hosea*,

suffixed to the covenant name for God, "YHWH." It is the same as the Hebrew name for Joshua.

3. Lord - The term "lord" (*kurios*) can be used in a general sense or in a specific theological sense. It can mean "mister," "sir," "master," "owner," "husband," or "the full God-man." The OT usage of this term (*adon*) came from the Jews' reluctance to pronounce the covenant name for God, YHWH (see Special Topic at 2 Cor. 1:1), which was from the Hebrew verb "to be" (cf. Exod. 3:14). They were afraid of breaking the commandment which said, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" (cf. Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11). They thought if they did not pronounce it, they could not take it in vain. So, they substituted the Hebrew word, *Adonai*, which had a similar meaning to the Greek word, *Kurios* (Lord). The NT Authors used this term to describe the full deity of Christ.

There are several confessional phrases used of Jesus.

1. Jesus is the Messiah/Christ - Acts 5:42; 9:22; 17:3; 18:5,28; 1 Cor. 1:23
2. Jesus is the Son of God - Acts 9:20; Rom. 1:3-4; Heb. 4:14
3. Jesus is Lord - Acts 2:36; 10:36; 11:20; Rom. 10:9; 2 Cor. 4:5; Phil. 2:11; Col. 2:6

In a sense these summarize the early church's understanding of Jesus of Nazareth.

**4:6 "For God who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness'"** This is an allusion to Gen. 1:3 and a personal allusion to Paul's Damascus road experience (cf. Acts 9:1-22; 22:3-16; 26:9-18). For Peter the same kind of revelatory experience involving Jesus and light (i.e., glory) occurred on the Mount of Transfiguration (cf. 2 Pet. 1:19).

▣ **"hearts"** See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 14:25.

▣ **"glory of God"** This seems to relate to the *Shekinah* cloud of glory that symbolized the presence of YHWH in the book of Exodus (cf. 2 Cor. 3:17). This symbol of God's presence was transferred to the Ark of the Covenant after the crossing of the Jordan River into the Promised Land. YHWH is fully known, not as a visible, physical object, but in Jesus, the incarnation of deity. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY \(DOXA\)](#) at 1 Cor. 2:7.

▣ **"in the face of Christ"** This is the continuing comparison between the veil of Moses (cf. 2 Cor. 3:13) and the perfect reflection of Jesus Christ (cf. Heb. 1:3). Believers have seen the glory of Christ in the gospel (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18).

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 4:7-12**

**<sup>7</sup>But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; <sup>8</sup>we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; <sup>9</sup>persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; <sup>10</sup>always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. <sup>11</sup>For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. <sup>12</sup>So death works in us, but life in you.**

**4:7 "But we have this treasure"** This refers to God's indwelling Spirit that magnifies, reveals, and forms the person of Christ in our lives (cf. John 16:8-14; Rom. 8:9; Col. 1:27; 2 Pet. 1:3-4).

▣ **"in earthen vessels"** This is an emphasis on the human body (cf. 2 Cor. 4:10,16; 5:1ff; Gen. 2:7; 3:19; 18:27). This entire context is a dialectic between Paul's physical earthly condition and the tremendous spiritual power of the gospel and the indwelling Holy Spirit in his life.

▣ **"the surpassing greatness"** *Huperbolē*, see Special Topic: Paul's Use of *Huper* Compounds at 1 Cor. 2:1.

**4:8-11 "we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed"** Verses 8-10 contain a series of nine present (mostly passive) participles which are word plays on Koine Greek words describing Paul's difficult ministry. The first eight participles are in contrasting pairs. The first describes Paul's ministry experience and the second limits the consequences. Examples of this word play are: (1) "at loss but not utter loss" and (2) "knocked down but not knocked out." This section can be compared to 2 Cor. 1:6; 6:4-10; 11:23-28.

**4:9 "destroyed"** For the concept of "destroyed" see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 8:11 and the discussion at 1 Cor. 1:18.

**4:10 "always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus"** This refers to the paradox of our being rightly related to God, but exposed to physical problems because of a fallen world. We have eternal life, but we are physically dying (cf. 2 Cor. 1:8). As Jesus was rejected and persecuted (cf. John 15:20), so too, are believers (cf. 1 Cor. 15:31; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24; 1 Pet. 4:12-19).

■ **"so that the life of Jesus"** This refers to (1) the resurrected Christ, which was Paul's hope or (2) the faithfulness of Jesus under persecution. Paul wanted to exhibit Jesus' faithfulness (cf. 2 Cor. 4:11) and participate in the resurrection of His followers (cf. 2 Cor. 4:14; 1 Cor. 15).

■ **"may be manifested in our body"** This is an aorist passive subjunctive. Read Gal. 6:17, which obviously refers to Paul's physical scars in Jesus' service. As our earthly vessel is broken, the treasure inside is more visible (cf. 2 Cor. 12:9-10).

Paul uses the Greek term *sarx* (i.e., flesh) in several senses.

1. the human body ("body" of 2 Cor. 4:10 parallel to "flesh" of 2 Cor. 4:11; also 2 Cor. 7:5; 10:3; 12:7)
2. human person (cf. 2 Cor. 5:16; 11:18)
3. human descent (i.e., father - son, cf. Rom. 1:3; 4:1)
4. humanity as a whole (cf. 1 Cor. 1:26,29)
5. human sinfulness (cf. Rom. 7:5,18; 8:3,4,5,8,9,12,13; 2 Cor. 7:1; 10:2)

**4:11 "we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake"** Theological insight into this verse can be seen in 1 Cor. 4:9, where the Apostles are on exhibition both to angels and men. Believers also are on exhibition to a lost world and the angelic world (cf. Eph. 2:7; 3:10).

The term "constantly" (cf. 2 Cor. 6:10) is parallel to "always" of 2 Cor. 4:10. The call to ministry is a call to intentional daily death to self (cf. 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Rom. 6:7; 1 Cor. 15:31; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:8,10; 1 John 3:16). This attitude is the reversal of the fall of mankind in Genesis 3. It is evidence of Christlikeness, which is the restoration of the image of God in humanity.

The term "been delivered over" (*paranididōmi*) was used of Judas handing over Jesus to the authorities (cf. Matt. 20:18-19; Mark. 10:33). It is used by Jesus in a prophetic sense describing His followers in Matt. 10:17; 24:9; Mark 13:11-12.

The phrase "for Jesus' sake" is to be understood as causality. Our ministry burdens do not benefit Christ, but they are ours because we follow Him. As they persecuted Him, they will persecute us. However, it is also true that the things we suffer as Christ's followers are the very things that can help us grow more and more like Him.

Paul's identification with Jesus' death functions theologically on several levels.

1. sacramental theology (cf. Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12; 3:1,3-5)
2. church doctrine (cf. 1 Thess. 4:14-15)
3. personal experience (cf. 2 Cor. 4:10-11; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:10)

■ **"mortal flesh"** See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:26.

**4:12 "So death works in us, but life in you"** This is a present middle (deponent) indicative which personifies death. This refers to physical persecution for Paul and his mission team (cf. 2 Cor. 4:16) and spiritual life in them to whom he preaches the gospel.

In *The Anchor Bible* series on 2 Corinthians Victor Furnish believes it is passive voice (p. 257) because that voice dominates 2 Cor. 4:10-11, where the understood subject is the power of God (cf. 2 Cor. 4:7). This would imply that God uses trials and persecutions as a means of producing Christlikeness in His followers. Leaders' lives give power to their messages (cf. 2 Cor. 1:3-11; 2 Tim. 2:9-10).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 4:13-15**

**<sup>13</sup>But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed, therefore I spoke," we also believe, therefore we also speak, <sup>14</sup>knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you. <sup>15</sup>For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.**

**4:13 "having the same spirit of faith"** The significant thing here is that the same faith that made a person right with God in the OT (i.e., the writer of Psalm 116) is the faith that makes a person right with God in the NT (i.e., Abraham in Gen. 15:6, quoted by Paul in Rom. 4:3,9,22).

Paul is using the term "spirit" in the sense of a person's self. He often uses "spirit" as a way of referring to the inner qualities of a human person (see note at 2 Cor. 4:21). This is not related to the similar phrase found in 1 Cor. 12:9, which refers to the Spirit gifting believers with faith. This refers to saving faith such as Abraham's (cf. Gen. 15:6). Interestingly, in *Word Studies in the New Testament*, vol. 2, M. R. Vincent says, "not distinctly the Holy Spirit, nor, on the other hand, a human faculty or disposition, but blending both; faith as a gift of the Spirit of God" (p. 82).

In *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, Robert Girdlestone has an interesting discussion of the uses of the term "spirit" in the NT (pp. 61-63).

1. evil spirits
2. the human spirit
3. the Holy Spirit
4. things that the Spirit produces in and through human spirits
  - a. 'not a spirit of slavery vs. a spirit of adoption' - Rom. 8:15
  - b. 'a spirit of gentleness' - 1 Cor. 4:21
  - c. 'a spirit of faith' - 2 Cor. 4:13
  - d. 'a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him' - Eph. 1:17
  - e. 'not a spirit of timidity vs. power, love and discipline' - 2 Tim. 1:7
  - f. 'spirit of error' vs. "spirit of truth" - 1 John 4:6"

▣ **"according to what is written"** This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE, which is used by OT authors to refer to the givenness and relevance of Scripture (cf. Matt. 5:17-19).

▣ **"I believed, therefore I spoke"** This is a quote from the Septuagint of Psalm 116:10, which speaks of God's rescue of a saint.

**4:14 "that He who raised the Lord Jesus"** This phrase is an excellent opportunity to show that the NT often attributes the works of redemption to all three persons of the Godhead.

1. God the Father raised Jesus (cf. Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30,33,34,37; 17:31; Rom. 6:4,9; 10:9; 1 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 4:14; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12; 1 Thess. 1:10)
2. God the Son raised Himself (cf. John 2:19-22; 10:17-18)
3. God the Spirit raised Jesus (cf. Rom. 8:11)

There are several variants related to the phrase, "the Lord Jesus."

1. "the Lord Jesus" - MSS  $\kappa$ , C, D, F, G
2. "the Lord Jesus Christ" - MS 436
3. "the Lord Jesus from the dead" - MSS 104, 459
4. "Jesus" - MSS P<sup>46</sup>, B

The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives option #1 a "B" rating (almost certain), but Bruce Metzger prefers option #4 (as does the NET Bible). As with so many of the variants, which one was original does not affect the overall thrust of the passage.

▣ **"will raise us. . .will present us"** These are both future active indicatives. Believers will be raised from the dead (*syn* with Jesus) and presented to the Father (*syn* with all believers).

Paul's understanding as to the time of the Second Coming is ambiguous. In some texts it seems that he expected to be alive at the *parousia* (cf. 1 Thess. 4:15,17; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; and Phil. 3:20; 4:5), but in other texts he seems to identify himself with those believers who have died (cf. 1 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 4:14; 5:1-10). Only the Father knows the time of the Second Coming (cf. Matt. 24:36; Mark 13:32; Acts 1:7). The Second Coming is the hope of every generation of believers, but the reality of only one generation. Believers are to live ready, ready by being active in Christ's service.

**4:15** Paul's heart was to help sinful people come to faith in Christ and find true peace and joy and give God praise (cf. 2 Cor. 1:11 and NASB, NRSV, TEV, NJB). The NKJV is a bit more literal "to the majority." This may refer to Paul's supporters in the Corinthian church. It would be opposite of the "some" (cf. 2 Cor. 3:1; 10:12; 1 Cor. 4:18; 6:11; 8:7; 10:7,8,9,10; 15:6,12,34,35). Verse 15 is obviously a doxological summary.

▣ **"the glory of God"** See [SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY \(DOXA\)](#) at 1 Cor. 2:7.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 4:16-18**

**16**Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. **17**For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, **18**while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

**4:16 "Therefore we do not lose heart"** This is a recurrent theme in Paul's writings (cf. 2 Cor. 4:1; Gal. 6:9; Eph. 3:13; 2 Thess. 3:13). Circumstances are, in reality, for strengthening our spiritual stamina and fruitfulness.

▣ **"but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day"** These are both present passive indicatives, which denote ongoing action. The passive voice is hard to translate and understand in this context. Most English translations translate them as Active voice, but they also may denote divine action in using physical problems and persecutions as a means to strengthen and mature Jesus' followers (cf. Matt. 5:10-12; John 15:18-21; 16:1-2; 17:14; Acts 14:22; Rom. 5:3-4; 8:17; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; Phil. 1:29; 3:11; 1 Thess. 3:3; 2 Tim. 3:12; Heb. 5:8; James 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 4:12-19). In Eph. 3:16 and 4:24 there is a comparison of the old man and the new man, but the contrast here is between our outer physical body and our inner spiritual nature.

▣ **"is being renewed"** See Special Topic following.

#### **[SPECIAL TOPIC: Renew \(ANAKAINŌSIS\)](#)**

▣ **"day by day"** Paul uses Hebrew idiomatic (cf. Gen. 39:10; Esther 3:4; Ps. 68:19) repetition in 2 Cor. 4:16, "day by day," and a similar Hebraic repetition in 2 Cor. 4:17, "excessively to excess" (i.e., *hyperbolēn eis hyperbolēn*). Remember, NT authors (except Luke) are Hebrew/Aramaic thinkers writing in Koine Greek. There are many Hebraic idioms and grammatical constructions, as well as numerous OT allusions and quotes in the NT.

**4:17-18** Verse 17 is very similar to Rom. 8:18, while 2 Cor. 4:18 is similar to Rom. 8:24. Paul wrote

Romans from Corinth! He had been thinking about his call and the problems connected to it. There was, in reality, no comparison between the momentary light affliction and the eternal glory! This is the biblical world view that sustains God's people in this fallen world. He is with us, for us, and will bring us to His personal presence to remain forever!

**4:17 "is producing"** This same verb is used in Rom. 5:3-4 and James 1:2-4, which also speaks of the benefits of suffering and persecution.

■ **"an eternal weight of glory"** See [SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY \(DOXA\)](#) at 1 Cor. 2:7.

■ **"far beyond all comparison"** *Huperbolē*. See Special Topic: Paul's Use of *Huper* Compounds at 1 Cor. 2:1.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How does 2 Cor. 4:1 speak of the methods of the false teachers?
2. Were the early church fathers justified in changing the Greek text of 2 Cor. 4:4 to meet the problem of their day?
3. What does it mean that Satan is the "god" of this world?
4. Why is Paul drawing such attention to his physical problems versus his spiritual strengths?



# 2 CORINTHIANS 5

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Living By Faith  (4:16-5:10) 4:16-5:5	Assurance of the Resurrection  5:1-8	Confidence in Facing Death  5:1-5	Living By Faith  (4:16-5:10)	The Hardship and Hopes of the Apostolate  (4:7-5:10)
5:6-10	The Judgment Seat of Christ 5:9-11	5:6-10	5:6-10	5:6-10
The Ministry of Reconciliation  5:11-15	5:9-11	Further Defense of His Ministry of Reconciliation  5:11-15	Friendship with God Through Christ  5:11-15	The Apostolate in Action  5:11-15
5:16-6:10	Be Reconciled to God 5:12-21	(5:11-6:13)  5:16-6:10	(5:11-6:13)  5:16-19 5:20-6:3	5:16-19 5:20-6:10

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

#### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Paul discusses his death in 2 Cor. 5:1-10.
  1. He uses two metaphors.
    - a. an earthly tent versus a permanent, God-made building
    - b. clothed versus unclothed (i.e., naked)

2. It is very difficult to follow Paul's antecedent thoughts. Is he talking about
    - a. our being clothed in Christ at baptism (cf. 2 Cor. 5:2-4)
    - b. the Spirit's indwelling at salvation (cf. 2 Cor. 5:5)
    - c. our receiving a new spiritual body at Christ's return (cf. vv 3 and 10)
  3. The best Pauline parallels to interpret this text are found in Rom. 8:18-25,26-30 (i.e., groaning) and 1 Cor. 15:53-54 (i.e., "swallowed up").
  4. Somehow this text must be related to Paul's discussion of suffering in chapters 4 and 6. Faithful, godly living amidst difficult circumstances is a recurrent theme.
- B. Paul makes a major theological assertion in 2 Cor. 5:6 and 8. Previously believers and non-believers were thought to go to *Hades* at death to await judgment (see [SPECIAL TOPIC: Where Are the Dead?](#) at 2 Cor. 5:6). Rabbinical Judaism even asserted a division in this holding place of the dead (i.e., OT *Sheol*) between the righteous and the wicked. Paul asserts that at Jesus' resurrection He took the righteous with Him to heaven. Now believers do not go to *hades*, but are with the Lord. Whether this implies a full fellowship or a limited fellowship is uncertain. The Bible does not reveal detailed information about the afterlife.
- C. Paul makes another startling statement in 2 Cor. 5:10. Apparently all believers and unbelievers will stand before Christ as Judge. Is this a parallel to the sheep and goat judgment of Matthew 25 or the Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20? If believers are forgiven of all sin through Christ, what will they be judged for? Again these specific questions cannot be answered biblically. The logical assumption is that they are responsible for
1. the gospel message
  2. their spiritual giftedness
  3. their use of physical resources
  4. their availability for service
- But, this is only conjecture based on the content of 2 Cor. 5:11-21.
- D. Paul's discussion of spiritual responsibility in 2 Cor. 5:11-21 obviously reflects the false teachers' selfish, possibly immoral actions/teachings.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-5

**<sup>1</sup>For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. <sup>2</sup>For indeed in this *house* we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, <sup>3</sup>inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. <sup>4</sup>For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. <sup>5</sup>Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.**

**5:1 "we know"** It is difficult in this book to know the antecedent to Paul's plural pronouns. Sometimes he refers to (1) himself; (2) his mission team; or (3) all believers. Context alone must determine which is implied. Here I assume it is #3.

■ **"if"** This is a third class conditional which means potential action. Paul's death was certain unless the Second Coming occurred first. He had thought he was going to die in Asia (cf. 2 Cor. 1:8-10). His life as an Apostle had not been easy or painless (cf. 2 Cor. 4:7-12; 6:3-10; 11:24-28). Paul simply did not know the time or circumstances of his death. He may have thought or hoped he would be alive when Christ

returned (cf. 1 Cor. 15:51-52; Phil. 3:20; 1 Thess. 4:15,17). However, in other passages he expected to be raised from the dead (cf. 1 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 4:14. For a good discussion see F. F. Bruce's *Answers to Questions*, pp. 200-201). The hope of being alive at Christ's return is the hope of every generation of believers but reality for only one persecuted generation.

■ **"tent"** This is one of several biblical metaphors for the frailty of the human body (i.e., grass, pottery). Paul knew his body was wearing out. He had tried to repair many an old tent!

**NASB, TEV** "is torn down"  
**NKJV, NRSV** "is destroyed"  
**NJB** "is folded up"

This is an aorist passive subjunctive. Paul knew that life and death were in the hand of God (i.e., passive voice). He knew he would die, but he did not know when or how (i.e., subjunctive mood).

This term has a wide semantic field. In the OT and the NT *kataluma* was used for a lodging place and *kataluō* for a place to live or settle or rest. However, it is also used of the destruction or abrogation of something (which is the metaphorical extension of *luō*, i.e., loose, cf. Matt. 24:2). In Isa. 38:12 it is used of taking down a tent. This seems to be the best parallel of Paul's usage here.

■ **"we have a building from God"** This is a permanent building (cf. John 14:2-3; Heb. 11:10) compared with a moveable, transient tent (cf. Heb. 11:9). This is a present tense. Paul is stating a prophetic truth as if it were a current reality.

■ **"house not made with hands"** Our new bodies will be spiritual (cf. 1 Cor. 15:35-49), like Jesus' (cf. Mark 14:58; 1 John 3:2).

■ **"eternal in the heavens"** This is referring to the dwelling place of God. The term "heaven" is plural because the rabbis debated over how many "heavens" there were. In Genesis 1 the term heaven refers to the atmosphere above the earth. So the rabbis used their knowledge of biblical numerology to assert a third heaven or a seventh heaven as the place where God dwelt. See Special Topic "Heavens at 2 Cor. 12:2.

Heaven is not up or out. It probably is another dimension without time and space. Jesus was able after the resurrection to appear and disappear, as well as move from place to place. Once the size of the physical universe is understood the awesomeness of the spiritual realm is staggering.

**5:2 "in this"** This is neuter in gender, which refers to "house" in 2 Cor. 5:1.

■ **"groan"** This word is a present active indicative, believers continue to groan or sigh deeply for God's new order and our new spiritual bodies (cf. Rom. 8:18-27; creation groans, 2 Cor. 5:22; believers groan, 2 Cor. 5:23; and the Spirit groans, 2 Cor. 5:26).

■ **"longing"** This is a strong term for desire (cf. 2 Cor. 9:14). The noun form is in 2 Cor. 7:7 and 11. Paul was a man of strong feelings.

**5:3-4 "Put it on"** Paul often uses clothing as a metaphor for the spiritual life. The garment referred to here was the outer or upper tunic (*ependutēs*, cf. John 21:7). He used clothing as a metaphor for a person's lifestyle choices. Believers are encouraged to take off the old life and lay it aside like a garment (cf. 2 Cor. 3:8,9; Eph. 4:22,25,31; James 1:21; 1 Pet. 2:1). They are to put on Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 3:10,12,14; Eph. 4:24; Rom. 13:14; Gal. 3:27). These believers were once controlled and dominated by their evil desires, but now, through Christ, they can turn from them (cf. Romans 5-6). This terminology of putting on Christ may have even been connected to the ordinance of baptism in the early church, where new converts put on clean, white clothing after baptism. Paul did not want to experience a disembodied state between death and the resurrection, but wanted to participate in the events related to the Second Coming (cf. 1 Thess. 4:15-17), one of which is the new spiritual body.

The theological concept of a disembodied state is not specifically stated in Scripture, but is only a reluctant implication because the concept was used in Greek philosophy as a permanent state conceived of as superior to physical embodiment. In *Word Pictures in the New Testament* A. T. Robertson says "Paul does not wish to be a mere disembodied spirit with his spiritual garment" (vol. 4, p. 228). The following is a brief note from my commentary, vol. 7, 1 Thess. 4:16 (see [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org)).

"'And the dead in Christ will rise first' This phrase causes confusion about where the dead go between their death and resurrection day. This verse implies that they will remain in the grave (cf. Matt. 27:52-53).

However, 2 Cor. 5:8 implies that they are with the Lord. The solution may be in postulating a disembodied state. The physical body remains in the grave, the life force goes to be with the Lord. There are many unanswered questions here. The Bible does not provide a clear teaching passage on this subject.

Most translations translate it as if the saints are with God/Jesus and return with Him (cf. NASB). Another view is found in TEV, "Those who have died believing in Christ will rise to life first."

**5:3** Verse three is possibly a parenthesis. It is difficult to know exactly what Paul is referring to because

1. the text mixes metaphors
2. the uncertainty of how "naked" relates to "put on"
3. the contextual relationship to Apostolic suffering (death) or opposition (false teachings)
4. there is also the added problem of a textual variant. The best textual evidence is behind *eudusamenoī* ("put off," i.e., MSS P<sup>46</sup>, κ, B, C, D<sup>2</sup>), but the very similar term *ekdusamenoī* ("put on," i.e., MS D<sup>\*</sup>) makes more sense in the context. If one chooses by the criteria of textual criticism
  - a. older Greek manuscripts are better
  - b. the most unusual text is probably originalthen Paul has written a tautology (i.e., "put off. . .naked"). The UBS<sup>4</sup> is unable to decide ("C" rating), but puts "put on" in the text. The Net Bible also prefers option #2, "put on."

■ **"naked"** This word is often used in Greek literature for the preferred disembodied state at death (cf. Vincent, *Word Studies*, vol. 2, p. 822; Frank Stagg, *New Testament Theology*, pp.322-324; George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 552-554). The Greeks longed for this incipient release from the physical body, however, Christianity, like Judaism, asserts that we will always have a bodily expression (both believers and unbelievers, cf. Dan. 12:1-2; Matt. 25:46; John 5:28-29). Possibly Paul is again refuting the false teaching (i.e., incipient Gnosticism).

**5:4** This brief and cryptic verse must be interpreted in light of Rom. 8:18-25,26-30 (i.e., "groaning") and 1 Cor. 15:53-54 (i.e., "mortal," "swallowed up"). It seems to be a restatement of verse 2.

**5:5 "prepared"** Paul uses this word often in 2 Corinthians (cf. 2 Cor. 4:17; 5:5; 7:10,11; 9:11; 12:12). Our lives are not controlled by luck, chance, fate, but by God. Even our trials can be the means of maturity and greater faith (cf. Rom. 8:28-30; Heb. 5:8).

The giving of the Spirit is

1. the sign the New Age has dawned
2. the evidence of personal salvation
3. the means of ministry
4. the means for maturity
5. the surety of heaven

**NASB, NJB** "pledge"

**NKJV, NRSV,**

**TEV** "guarantee"

This concept of a pledge had an OT precedent (remember, NT writers are Hebrew thinkers writing in

Koine Greek).

1. a promise to pay a debt (cf. Gen. 38:17,18,20; Deut. 24:10-13)
2. a promise of providing sustenance (cf. 1 Sam. 17:18)
3. a personal promise (cf. 2 Kgs. 18:23; Isa. 36:8)

This Greek term refers to a "down-payment" or earnest money (cf. 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5). In modern Greek it is used of an engagement ring, which is the promise of a marriage to come. The Spirit is the fulfilled promise of a new age of righteousness. This is part of the "already" and "not yet" tension of the NT, which is the overlapping of the two Jewish ages because of the two comings of Christ (see the excellent discussion in *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Fee and Stuart, pp. 129-134). The Spirit is a pledge given now for a future consummation.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 5:6-10**

**<sup>6</sup>Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord-<sup>7</sup>for we walk by faith, not by sight-<sup>8</sup>we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. <sup>9</sup>Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. <sup>10</sup>For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.**

**5:6**

<b>NASB</b>	"good courage"
<b>NKJV, NRSV</b>	"confident"
<b>TEV</b>	"full of courage"
<b>NJB</b>	"full of confidence"

This term is used several times in 2 Corinthians in two senses.

1. confidence, good cheer (cf. 2 Cor. 5:6,8; 7:16)
2. boldness (cf. 2 Cor. 10:1,2)

Our ongoing confidence (i.e., present active participle) in Christ gives us boldness in prayer and ministry.

■ **"at home. . . absent"** There is a word play between these two related terms (also in 2 Cor. 5:8, 9).

1. *endēmountes*, being at home (present active participle)
2. *ekdēmoumen*, we are away from home (present active indicative)

When you know who you are in Him, you are always at home with Him, although, while on earth, we live by faith (cf. v.7).

#### **SPECIAL TOPIC: Where Are the Dead?**

**5:7 "for we walk by faith, not by sight"** This is a recurrent NT theme (cf. 2 Cor. 4:18; Heb. 11:1,10,27; 1 Pet. 1:8). "Walk" is a biblical metaphor for lifestyle. Believers live in the physical realm, but by faith realize and trust in the invisible realm.

**5:8** This is such a wonderful verse for Christians. It asserts that we will be with the Lord in some sense at death. This refutes the concept of soul sleep. Although our fellowship with other believers is uncertain at this stage and our fellowship with the Lord is not all it will be after we receive our new bodies on Resurrection Day, the great confidence is that we will be with Him! This truth is not clearly taught elsewhere in the Bible except possibly Phil. 1:21-23, which makes this a very significant verse! In light of this truth Paul and all believers can face any and every circumstance in life.

**5:9 "we also have as our ambition. . .to be pleasing to Him"** This is the ambition and motivation for believers (cf. Eph. 5:8-10; Col. 1:10).

The term "well pleasing" has been found in several inscriptions, even before Paul's day. It was a slogan of loyalty and fidelity in the Hellenistic first century cultural milieu (cf. Moulton and Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*, p. 259). Paul was a well-read scholar of both Greek and Hebrew thought.

**5:10 "all appear before the judgment seat of Christ"** The immediate context is written to believers; even believers will stand before God (cf. Rom. 14:10; 1 Cor. 3:10-17). Apparently, we will be judged/rewarded for our motives, availability, and use of spiritual gifts. Sin and sins have been completely dealt with in Christ's substitutionary death, but discipleship is an issue!

On the concept of Jesus as Judge, here is a brief note from my commentary on John 3:17 (see it online at [www.freebiblecommentary.org](http://www.freebiblecommentary.org)).

"There are several passages in John that assert that Jesus came as Savior, not Judge (cf. John 3:17-21; 8:15; 12:47). However, there are other passages in John that assert that Jesus came to judge, will judge (cf. John 5:22-23,27; 9:39; and in other parts of the NT Acts 10:42; 17:31; 2 Tim. 4:1; 1 Pet. 4:5).

Several theological comments are in order: (1) God gave the work of judgment to Jesus, as He did the work of creation and redemption, as a sign of honor (cf. John 5:23); (2) Jesus did not come the first time to judge, but to save (cf. John 3:17), but by the fact that people reject Him, they judge themselves; (3) Jesus will return as King of Kings and Judge (cf. John 9:39).

These seemingly contradictory statements are similar to the statements about John the Baptist being or not being Elijah."

■ **"according to what he has done, whether good or bad"** It is a universal principle that humans are responsible for their actions and will give an account to God (cf. Job 34:11; Prov. 24:12; Eccl. 12:14; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Matt. 16:27; 25:31-46; Rom. 2:6; 14:12; 1 Cor. 3:8; Gal. 6:7-10; 2 Tim. 4:14; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12; 22:12). Even believers will give an account of their lives and service to Christ (i.e., "the book of remembrances"). Believers are not saved by works but are saved unto works (cf. Eph. 2:8-10; James and 1 John). See Special Topic: Christian Freedom vs. Christian Responsibility at 1 Cor. 10:23.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 5:11-15**

**<sup>11</sup>Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest to God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences. <sup>12</sup>We are not again commending ourselves to you but *are* giving you an occasion to be proud of us, so that you will have *an answer* for those who take pride in appearance and not in heart. <sup>13</sup>For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are of sound mind, it is for you. <sup>14</sup>For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; <sup>15</sup>and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.**

**5:11 "the fear of the Lord"** This phrase relates to the judgment seat of Christ mentioned in 2 Cor. 5:10. There is a respect and awe (cf. Acts 5:11; 9:31) due the Judge of the Universe (cf. Heb. 10:31; 12:29; Jude 22-23)! Believers are motivated to live godly lives and share the gospel by the knowledge that each will give an account to God.

The title "Lord" can refer to YHWH or Jesus. The phrase "fear of the Lord" is common in the Septuagint, referring to YHWH. However, it is also a common NT title for Jesus. Judgment belongs to YHWH, but He has allocated it to His incarnated Son.

■ **"we persuade men"** In context this could refer to several specific groups of people.

1. unbelievers (cf. 2 Cor. 5:10)
2. false teachers (cf. 2 Cor. 5:12)
3. weak believers (cf. 2 Cor. 5:11-12)

Paul's ministry fulfilled the Great Commission both in evangelism (cf. Matt. 28:19) and also discipleship (cf. Matt. 28:20).

- ▣ **"we are made manifest to God"** This is a perfect passive indicative. Paul boldly asserts that God fully and completely knows his motives and intents (cf. 2 Cor. 4:2). See note at 2 Cor. 2:14.
- ▣ **"we are made manifest also in your consciences"** This is a perfect passive infinitive. Paul is returning to a previous thought expressed in 2 Cor. 4:2. His ministry with them had been completely open and honest. Paul wanted this church to understand his ministry motives and actions as clearly as God knew them.
- ▣ **"consciences"** See full note at 2 Cor. 1:12.

**5:12 "commending ourselves"** See full note at 2 Cor. 3:1.

- ▣ **"so that you will have an answer for those who take pride in appearance and not in heart"** Ministry motives and methods are crucial! Apparently Paul is comparing his with other leaders in the Corinthian church (cf. 2 Cor. 4:2, also note 1 Cor. 3:10-15). Some leaders were all show and no substance.
- ▣ **"proud. . .pride"** These are both forms of the term *kauchēma*. There is an appropriate boasting (i.e., the church is proud of Paul) and inappropriate pride (i.e., the boasting of the false teachers). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: BOASTING](#) at 1 Cor. 5:6.
- ▣ **"appearance"** See full note at 2 Cor. 1:11.

**5:13 "if. . .if"** These are both first class conditional sentences, which are assumed true from the author's perspective or for his literary purposes.

**NASB, NKJV,**  
**NRSV**           **"besides ourselves"**  
**TEV**             **"really insane"**  
**NJB**             **"unreasonable"**

This is the Greek term "stand" (*histēmi*, see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 15:1) with the preposition "out of" (*ek*). It can be used of

1. amazement (cf. Matt. 12:23; Mark 5:42)
2. fear (cf. Mark 16:8; Luke 5:26)
3. a trance (cf. Acts 10:10; 11:5; 22:17)
4. loss of senses or mad (cf. Mark 3:21; 2 Cor. 5:13)

It is difficult to know exactly to what Paul is referring. Many commentators relate it to 11:1,16; 12:11. However, a different word is used: "foolish." In these chapters Paul compares his spiritual experience and qualifications to the charismatic false teachers. Possibly this is a comment that these fake teachers had made referring to Paul.

- ▣ **"we are of sound mind, it is for you"** Paul certainly had his moments of spiritual ecstasy (cf. Acts 9; 1 Cor. 14:5,18; 2 Cor. 12), but for ministry he lived and presented the gospel with clarity and thoughtfulness, in line with the cultural expectations of the group to which he ministered (cf. 1 Cor. 9:19-23).

**5:14 "For the love of Christ"** Grammatically this is either: "Christ's love for us" (i.e., subjective genitive) or "our love for Christ" (i.e., objective genitive). In this context option #1 is best.

**NASB**           **"controls"**  
**NKJV**           **"constrains"**  
**NRSV**           **"urges"**

**TEV** "ruled"  
**NJB** "overwhelms"

This term means "to hold together tightly." Love constrains our options and actions. The nature of the gospel mandates appropriate action; in this case death to selfish ambitions and lifestyle.

■ **"one died for all"** The universal love of God is seen in Christ as He died for Jew and Gentile (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13). All humans are potentially saved in Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 5:19; John 3:16-18; 4:42; Rom. 5:18; 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9; 1 John 2:2; 4:14). Verses 14-15 are in a parallel relationship. Christ's vicarious atonement (cf. Isaiah 53) is emphasized three times. This same truth is expressed in Rom. 5:12-21. It is often called the Adam/Christ typology (cf. 1 Corinthians 15).

■ **"therefore all died"** Theologically believers are joined with Christ's death at their baptism. His death gives us forgiveness and eternal life (cf. Romans 6).

As we are identified in His death we are also to be identified in His sacrificial life for others (cf. 1 John 3:16). Selfish, self-centered living is inappropriate for blood-bought believers (cf. 2 Cor. 5:15).

In *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, Robert B. Girdlestone has a good discussion on this new connotation of "death" for believers.

"Our Lord said to His disciples (Matt. 16. 28), 'There are some standing here who shall not taste of death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.' The words are given in another form by St. Mark (9. 1), 'There are some who shall not taste of death until they see the kingdom of God come with power.' See also Luke 9. 27.

The object of this passage was to prepare the minds of the disciples for the grand truth that death, which had been hitherto the terror of the world, was to lose its *taste* or *sting* in the case of those who united themselves to the Lord by faith. Christ Himself was to die, He was to suffer the pains of death, His soul was to be exceeding sorrowful even unto death, and to deliver them who through fear of death had been all their lives subject to bondage. He thus introduced a new view of life and death, telling His disciples that he who would save his life by denying the Lord, should lose it, whilst he who was willing to lose his life for the Lord's sake, the same should save it. The Lord would be ashamed of the one on the Great Day, but would confess the other.

The entrance into a new life which takes place through faith in Christ involves death in another sense. It is a cutting off of human nature from its old modes and principles of existence—in other words, it is death to sin. Just as in physical dissolution the body ceases to feel, the heart to beat, the hands to work, and the feet to walk, so in this mystical death the body and all its members are to be no longer servants to sin; the same breach or gulf is to be made between the Christian and sin as there is between a dead man and the outer world in which he used to live and move and have his being. This death is related to the crucifixion of Christ, who 'died to sin.' The believer is baptized into Christ's death, he dies with Christ, is made conformable to His death, is crucified with Christ (Rom. 6. 5; 2 Cor. 5. 14; Gal. 2. 19, 20; Col. 2. 20, 3. 3)" (pp.285, 286).

**5:15** Verse 15 parallels and defines 2 Cor. 5:14. This is such an important truth. Salvation is free, but Christlike living costs everything we are and have (cf. Gal. 2:20)!

**NASB, NKJV** "rose again"  
**NRSV, TEV,**  
**NJB** "was raised"

This is an aorist passive participle with an unexpressed agent. The NT often attributes the works of redemption to all three persons of the Godhead.

1. God the Father raised Jesus (cf. Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30,33,34,37; 17:31; Rom. 6:4,9; 8:11; 10:9; 1 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 4:14; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12; 1 Thess. 1:10)
2. God the Son raised Himself (cf. John 2:19-22; 10:17-18)
3. God the Spirit raised Jesus (cf. Rom. 8:11)



## NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 5:16-19

<sup>16</sup>Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know *Him in this way* no longer.

<sup>17</sup>Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he* is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. <sup>18</sup>Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, <sup>19</sup>namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

**5:16 "Therefore from now on"** Christ's life and death inaugurated a new age. Everything is different in light of Him (cf. Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11).

NASB	"we recognize no one according to the flesh"
NKJV	"we regard no one according to the flesh"
NRSV	"we regard no one from a human point of view"
TEV	"no longer, do we judge"
NJB	"we will not consider anyone by human standards"

This may reflect 1 Sam. 16:7; Isa. 11:3; John 7:24; 8:15. Jesus has changed every area of evaluation. Human standards are now an inadequate means of judgment (cf. Rom. 3:22; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11). Knowing Christ changes us (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17).

This may reflect that some within the Corinthian church had attempted to evaluate Paul, his gospel, and his ministry (cf. chapters 4, 11, and 12).

What this does not mean is that Paul considered the historical Jesus unimportant or even contrasted with the glorified Christ. Paul mentions Jesus' earthly life, teaching, and redemptive acts (i.e., cross, resurrection) often. Paul is referring to human evaluation (i.e., knowing according to the flesh). Redemption allows believers to view all of life and history in a new Christ-centered light. Human history turns into salvation history. The man Jesus becomes the Messiah, the promised One. His life and teachings become inspired Scripture. Israel's history must be reinterpreted in light of Him!

For "flesh" see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:26.

**5:17 "if"** This is another first class conditional sentence like those in 2 Cor. 5:13 and 16.

▣ **"in Christ"** This is one of Paul's favorite metaphors to describe the Christian. It speaks of our position in Christ.

NASB	"new creature"
NKJV, NRSV, NJB, NIV	"new creation"
TEV	"new being"

Paul also personifies creation in Rom. 8:18-25. He characterizes God's new creation, new age, age of the Spirit in 2 Cor. 5:17 and Gal. 6:15. Believers should live like citizens of the new age (cf. Rom. 6:4).

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: KTISIS](#)

▣ **"the old things passed away; behold, new things have come"** Notice the purposeful interchange of verb tenses.

1. "old things passed away" This is aorist tense in the indicative mood often refers to a completed act in past time. This refers to conversion.
2. "new things have come" This is perfect tense which refers to a past completed act with abiding

results. This refers to discipleship.

There is a Greek manuscript variant which reflects "all things" in the final clause (i.e., MS D<sup>2</sup>). This type of clarifying addition is common for the later scribes. The oldest Greek manuscripts (i.e., MSS P<sup>46</sup>,  $\kappa$ , B, C, D\*, F, G) end with *kaina*. The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives this reading an "A" rating (certain).

This concept of "new" is part of OT terminology for the *eschaton*. The OT prophets spoke of this new age.

1. "new things" (cf. Isa. 42:9; 43:19; Jer. 31:22)
2. "new covenant" (cf. Jer. 31:31-34)
3. "new heart, new spirit" (Ezek. 11:19; 18:31; 36:26)
4. "new name" (cf. Isa. 62:2; 56:5; 65:15)
5. "new song" (cf. Ps. 96:1; Isa. 42:10)
6. "new heavens and new earth" (cf. Isa. 65:17; 66:22)

This eschatological newness had come in Jesus, but the old was still present. The new has not been fully consummated. The overlapping of the Jewish "two ages" (see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:20) by Jesus' two comings was unforeseen by OT prophets though they did depict the Messiah in lowly servant terms as well as victorious royal terms.

**5:18 "Now all these things are from God"** It is God's love that sent the Son into the world (cf. John 3:16). Salvation is totally from God (see Special Topic at 2 Cor. 8:16-17, cf. John 6:44,65; Eph. 1:4; 2:8-9), but believers must respond and continue to respond to the new covenant in repentance, faith, obedience, and perseverance.

■ **"reconciled"** This is a major theological truth. The word basically means to exchange or change and thereby to bring together that which was alienated. Rebellious humans have been brought back into fellowship with God through Christ. God exchanged Christ's righteousness (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21) for their sin. Christ died in our place (cf. 2 Cor. 5:14,21).

This context (i.e., 2 Cor. 5:16-21) and Rom. 5:10-11 are the definitive passages on this theological term. Sinners are now friends, even family, with the Holy One. Restoration of the fellowship damaged in the Fall (cf. Genesis 3) has been made complete in Christ.

A discussion of "reconciliation" as a theological concept is in Frank Stagg's *New Testament Theology*, pp. 102-104, 142.

■ **"and gave us the ministry of reconciliation"** Theologically this is parallel to 2 Cor. 5:14-15. Jesus became believers' reconciliation, now they must become the means of sharing the gospel of reconciliation with others. Believers share in Jesus' death and we share in His ministry (cf. 2 Cor. 5:19). Christlike service is the goal (cf. 1 John. 3:16). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: SERVANT LEADERSHIP](#) at 1 Cor. 4:1.

**5:19 "God was in Christ"** This is the main issue of Christianity. Was God (i.e., the God, the OT YHWH), in Jesus of Nazareth, reconciling the world to Himself (cf. Gal. 1:3-4)? If so, Christianity is true; if not, it is false. Is Jesus truly the fullness of God (cf. John 1:1-14; Col. 1:15-16; Phil. 2:6-11; Heb. 1:2-3)? Is He truly the only way to reconciliation and forgiveness (cf. John 14:6)? If so, then the gospel is the most important information that people will ever hear! We must tell the truth; we must preach the gospel; we must lift up Christ; we must offer a free salvation to a lost world.

■ **"the world"** God loves the world (cf. John 3:16). The world can be saved (cf. 1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9). See Special Topic: Paul's Use of *Kosmos* at 1 Cor. 3:21b-22.

■ **"not counting their trespasses against them"** This may reflect Ps. 32:2, which is quoted in Rom. 4:6-8. Before the Law, sin was not imputed to individuals (cf. Rom. 4:15; 5:13-14; Acts 17:30). But this text has an even greater truth. In the face of known human rebellion there is forgiveness in Christ. Jesus' blood cleanses from all sin! Sin is no longer the barrier between God and mankind, but now it is

1. unbelief
2. rejection of faith in Christ

### 3. unwillingness to respond to God's offer

■ **"not counting"** This is the term *logizomai*, which is used thirty-four times by Paul, but in two completely different senses. The first can be seen in 2 Cor. 3:5, "consider." See the full note there.

The second is "counting" or "imputing." This sense is clearly seen in Rom. 4:3,4,5,6,8,9,10,11,22,23,24, and Gal. 3:6. This theological usage implies depositing something into someone else's bank account.

God imputes the righteousness of Jesus into our account (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21). Also God does not count or impute sin to our account. What an amazing God! What an effective Savior!

■ **"He has committed to us the word of reconciliation"** A lost world is not on the doorstep of a powerless, loveless God, but is on the doorstep of an apathetic, unconcerned church. We have the message; we have the keys of the Kingdom (cf. Matt. 16:19; Rev. 1:18; 3:7). We have the indwelling Holy Spirit (cf. Rom. 8:9,11; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; 2 Tim. 1:14). We have the marching orders of Jesus (cf. Matt. 28:18-20). What will we do?

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 5:20-21**

**<sup>20</sup>Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup>He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**

**5:20 "we are ambassadors for Christ"** To whom does the "we" and "you" in this verse refer? Is Paul speaking to the church? If so the "we" is Paul and his missionary team and the "you," believers at Corinth. These people did not need to be saved, but they did need to be brought back into unity.

Notice that Paul does not say believers should be ambassadors, but that they are ambassadors. This is similar to Jesus' statements in Matt. 5:13-16. Believers are salt and light. The question is what kind of salt and light. This is the question here. Believers are Christ's representatives, but what kind of ambassadors are they: factious, heretical, unloving, etc.?

■ **"beg"** See full note at 2 Cor. 1:4-11.

■ **"be reconciled to God"** This is a present passive imperative. Is this a command to lost people or to saved people? The larger context is mandating an appropriate lifestyle on the part of believers. Jesus saved us from sin and strife; we are saved to serve! We are called to Christlike ministry, not personal agendas.

This context has a message to a lost, needy world—Christ died for you (positional righteousness). This context has a message for a factious, unloving church—Christ died for you (progressive righteousness).

The passive voice could be translated "let God reconcile you to Himself"; "allow yourselves to be reconciled" (cf. *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, p. 281); or "let God change you from enemies into his friends" (cf. TEV). Believers proclaim the truth, the Spirit convicts the lost, the Son provides the means, and the Father accomplishes His will through covenant response.

**5:21** This text has several great truths.

1. God sent Jesus to die for us (cf. John 3:16). Jesus came to die for us (cf. Mark 10:45).
2. Jesus knew no sin (cf. John 8:46; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; 1 Pet. 1:19; 2:22; 1 John 3:5).
3. The goal is personal righteousness, serving Christlikeness (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; 2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; 1 Thess. 3:13; 4:3; 1 Pet. 1:15). However, there is a note of contingency (subjunctive mood). All believers do not fully realize God's complete purpose in salvation. It is a call to service, a call to self denial, a call to holiness. Christianity only begins when one trusts Christ. Belief is only the first step of a long journey.

**NASB** "to be sin on our behalf"  
**NKJV** "to be sin for us"

<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"to be sin"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"share our sin"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"a victor for sin"</b>

How did God make Jesus become sin? This may be an OT allusion to a sin offering (cf. Isaiah 53; Rom. 8:3). God offered Jesus as the sinless lamb (cf. John 1:29,36).

I think Jesus' words from the cross, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me" (cf. Mark 15:34), which is a quote from Psalm 22, reflects the spiritual reality of the Father turning away from the Son (i.e., symbolized by the darkness, cf. Mark 15:33), as He bore the sin of the world. This is theologically parallel to Gal. 3:13, "having become a curse for us"!

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Does this chapter teach a disembodied period between death and resurrection?
2. Does 2 Cor. 5:10 imply that believers will also be judged? If so, for what?
3. List Paul's two motives for evangelism (2 Cor. 5:11,14).
4. Explain why verses 14-15 are crucial for a proper understanding of the Christian life.

# 2 CORINTHIANS 6:1-7:1

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Ministry of Reconciliation	Marks of the Ministry	Further Defense of His Ministry of Reconciliation	Friendship with God Through Christ	The Apostolate in Action
(5:11-6:13)		(5:11-6:13)	(5:11-6:13)	(5:11-6:10)
5:11-6:10	6:1-10			
	Be Holy		6:3-10	A Warning
6:11-13	6:11-7:1	6:11-13	6:11-13	6:11-13
The Temple of the Living God		A Parenthesis on Relations with Unbelievers	Warning Against Pagan Influences	
6:14-7:1		6:14-7:1	6:14-7:1	6:14-7:1

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

A. Verse 1 of this chapter is the crux to the interpretation of the entire chapter. The context involves the believers of the church at Corinth and, therefore, does not involve apostasy (see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 6:9), but failure to live the Christian life effectively.

B. Beginning in verse 4 there is a series of prepositions.

1. *en* with the dative, eighteen times, 2 Cor. 6:4-7
2. *día* with the genitive, three times, 2 Cor. 6:7-8
3. *hōs* with present participles, seven times, 2 Cor. 6:9-10

These seem to involve a description of Paul's ministry as far as the problems and the

pressures, both internal and external, as well as the commensurate grace of God.

C. The concluding paradoxes of 2 Cor. 6:8-10 seem to describe Paul's life, both from the critics' point of view and from God's point of view.

D. The section 6:14-7:1 seems to be out of context. Verse 7:2 picks up the terminology and discussion of 2 Cor. 6:13. This section is very Jewish in nature. It is a warning against identifying oneself too closely with pagan culture. The warnings are from an OT setting (i.e., Jews vs. Gentiles or people of God vs. idolaters). However, Paul is using it in a similar way to 1 Cor. 10:14-33, where he discusses Christian participation in pagan worship.

This paragraph's seeming disjunction has caused theories of 2 Corinthians being a composite letter from several letters of Paul's sent to Corinth.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 6:1-10

<sup>1</sup>And working together *with Him*, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain<sup>2</sup>for He says, "At the acceptable time I listened to you, And on the day of salvation I helped you." Behold, now is "the acceptable time," behold, now is "the day of salvation"<sup>3</sup>giving no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited,<sup>4</sup>but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses,<sup>5</sup>in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger,<sup>6</sup>in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love,<sup>7</sup>in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left,<sup>8</sup>by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; *regarded* as deceivers and yet true;<sup>9</sup>as unknown yet well-known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death,<sup>10</sup>as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.

**6:1 "working together *with Him*"** This is a present active participle. There is no stated object, but the context implies "with God" (cf. 2 Cor. 5:20; 1 Cor. 3:9). Paul uses this same term to describe his co-workers in the gospel (cf. 2 Cor. 1:24; 8:23; 1 Cor. 16:16; Rom. 16:3,9,21), but here the context strongly implies God. What an awesome thought that believers are co-laborers for God (cf. 1 Cor. 3:5-9).

▣ **"we also urge you"** Paul used the same verb in 2 Cor. 5:20. See full note at 2 Cor. 1:4-11.

▣ **"not to receive the grace of God in vain"** The infinitive is aorist, which refers to the Corinthian believers receiving Christ. But the "in vain" refers to the purpose of salvation, which is fruitfulness for the Kingdom, not just personal salvation. Paul often used this term to express this expected Kingdom service (cf. 1 Cor. 15:10,14,58; Gal. 2:2; Phil. 2:16; 2 Thess. 2:1; 3:5). This concept is parallel to Paul's use of "walk" in Ephesians (cf. Eph. 4:1,17; 5:2,15).

**6:2 "He says"** Paul is quoting an OT passage relating to Israel, but by the use of this present active indicative (i.e., says), he shows that the promise is relevant to all times and all peoples. Paul uses this quote as a direct appeal from God to the Corinthian church. Scripture is current and relevant!

▣ **"at the acceptable time"** This is a quote from the Septuagint of Isa. 49:8 (i.e., one of the Servant poem/songs), which deals with God welcoming and equipping (1) the Messiah and (2) a Messianic community. There is often a tension in Isaiah 40-53 between corporate (i.e., national Israel) and the ideal Israelite King (i.e., Messiah).

■ **"the acceptable time. . .the acceptable time"** The first is a quote from the Septuagint of Isa. 49:8, using *dektos*, but Paul uses a more intensified form (i.e., *eurosdektos*, cf. Rom. 15:16) when he applies this prophecy to the Corinthian situation (cf. 2 Cor. 6:2b). The Messiah has come and now the invitation to be fully accepted by God has come to them. They must seize the moment. They must be the eschatological Messianic community.

The day of one's salvation is a wondrous, marvelous event, but it is often accompanied by persecution and difficulties (cf. 2 Cor. 6:4-10).

**NASB, NKJV** "Behold"  
**NRSV** "see"  
**TEV** "Listen"  
**NJB** "well"

This is the Greek particle *idou*, which serves to call attention to a truth statement. Paul used it often in 2 Corinthians (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17; 6:2,9; 7:11; 12:14).

■ **"now is 'the day of salvation'"** This last sentence in 2 Cor. 6:2 is Paul's comment on the quote from Isaiah. This can refer to both an individual's invitation to respond to the gospel, as well as to the life of service to the Messianic kingdom.

**6:3 "giving no cause for offense in anything"** This is a strong double negative in Greek. Paul was determined, both in his personal life and ministry, not to put any barriers between himself and the hearers of the gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 9:19-23). He is using his life to accomplish two things: (1) giving them a model to follow in their ministry and (2) counteracting the charges of the false teachers (cf. 2 Cor. 11:12).

The only "stumbling block" was Christ Himself (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18-25). The gospel was rejected by

1. the Jews because of a suffering Messiah
2. the Gentiles because of a body resurrection
3. the Corinthian false teachers because of Paul's lack of rhetorical presentation

Because of Satan's blinding (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4) and the tension of the gospel message itself, Paul did not want to do anything to cause people to reject his preaching (cf. 1 Cor. 9:19-23,24-27).

**NASB** "so that the ministry will not be discredited"  
**NKJV** "that our ministry may not be blamed"  
**NRSV** "so that no fault may be found with our ministry"  
**TEV** "We do not want anyone to find fault with our work"  
**NJB** "so that no blame may attach to our work of service"

The term "our" (cf. NKJV, NRSV, TEV, NJB) is not in the Greek text, which simply has the definite article, "the ministry." This verse is related theologically to 1 Tim. 3:2-10, which asserts that ministers must have no handle for criticism. Believers live and serve for the advancement of the Messianic Kingdom, not personal aggrandizement or personal agendas (cf. 1 Cor. 9:12). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: SERVANT LEADERSHIP](#) at 1 Cor. 4:1.

**6:4-7** This is a series of terms introduced by the Greek preposition *en*. It is repeated eighteen times for emphasis. There are several lists in Paul's writings of the problems that he faced (cf. 1 Cor. 4:9-13; 2 Cor. 7:5; 11:23-29). He mentions them to motivate the faithful and depreciate the false teachers' claims. See Special Topic: NT Vices and Virtues at 1 Cor. 5:9.

## GREEK PHRASES WITH *EN*

	<b>NASB</b>	<b>NKJV</b>	<b>NRSV</b>	<b>TEV</b>	<b>NJB</b>
v. 4, <i>hupomonē</i>	much endurance	much patience	great endurance	patient enduring	resolute perseverance

v. 4, <i>thliphis</i>	afflictions	tribulations	afflictions	troubles	hardships
v. 4, <i>anagkē</i>	hardships	needs	hardships	hardships	difficulties
v. 4, <i>stenochōria</i>	distresses	distresses	calamities	difficulties	distress
v. 5, <i>plēgē</i>	beatings	stripes	beating	beaten	flogged
v. 5, <i>phulakē</i>	imprisonments	imprisonments	imprisonments	jailed	sent to prison
v. 5, <i>akatastasia</i>	tumults	tumults	riots	mobbed	mobbed
v. 5, <i>kopos</i>	labors	labors	labors	overwhelmed	laboring
v. 5, <i>agrupnia</i>	sleeplessness	sleeplessness	sleepless nights	without sleep	sleepless
v. 5, <i>nēsteia</i>	hunger	fastings	hunger	without food	starving
v. 6, <i>hagnotēs</i>	purity	purity	purity	purity	purity
v. 6, <i>gnōsis</i>	knowledge	knowledge	knowledge	knowledge	knowledge
v. 6, <i>makrothumia</i>	patience	long suffering	patience	patience	patience
v. 6, <i>chrēstotēs</i>	kindness	kindness	kindness	kindness	kindness
v. 6, <i>pneumati hagiō</i>	Holy Spirit	Holy Spirit	holiness of spirit	Holy Spirit	Holy Spirit
v. 6, <i>agatiē anuplkritō</i>	genuine love	sincere love	genuine love	true love	love free of affectation
v. 7, <i>logō aletheias</i>	the word of truth	the word of truth	truthful speech	message of truth	the word of truth
v. 7, <i>dunamei theou</i>	the power of God	the power of God	the power of God	the power of God	the power of God

**6:4 "but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God"** This is the issue. This is the referent of the phrase "in vain" of 2 Cor. 6:1. Paul affirms the priority of Kingdom service. All believers are gifted (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7,11) ministers (cf. Eph. 4:12). The gospel has both an individual focus (i.e., personal salvation) and a corporate focus (i.e., gospel proclamation and gospel service, cf. 1 Cor. 12:7). See Special Topic: Servant Leadership at 1 Cor. 4:1.

**6:6 "in purity"** This refers to either (1) the root meaning of this term, singleness of purpose or (2) Paul's moral, ethical lifestyle.

■ **"in patience"** This term is often used to refer to patience with people, however, it is also used in the NT to refer to God's character (cf. Rom. 2:4; 9:22; 2 Pet. 3:9,15).

■ **"in kindness"** This term is often translated "a sweetness of spirit." It is the attitude that one would rather be hurt than to hurt others, rather make others feel welcome than to feel welcome themselves.

■ **"in the Holy Spirit"** The New English Bible translates this as "gifts of the Holy Spirit." The *Jerome Biblical Commentary* has "in a holy spirit" (p. 282). The reason that they change the translation is that it is unusual for Paul to mention the person of the Holy Spirit in the midst of a series of descriptive words. I agree that it is referring to Paul's personal spirit of holiness produced by the Holy Spirit, however, one cannot be dogmatic of this because of Rom. 9:1; 14:17; 15:16; 1 Cor. 12:3; 1 Thess. 1:5.

■ **"in genuine love"** This same phrase is used in Rom. 12:9. Paul uses the same adjective to describe faith in 1 Timothy 1:5 and 2 Tim. 1:5. Peter uses the same adjective with a synonym of *agapē*,



*philadelphia* in 1 Pet. 1:22.

**6:7 "in the word of truth"** It must be remembered that the Hebraic background to this term is not "truth versus falsehood," but "loyalty and trustworthiness," as in interpersonal relationships (cf. 1 John 8:32; 14:6). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: "TRUTH" IN PAUL'S WRITINGS](#) at 2 Cor. 13:8.

### Greek Phrases Introduced with *dia*

	NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB	NIV
v. 7, <i>hoplōntēs dikaiosunēs</i>	weapons of righteousness	armor of righteousness	weapons of righteousness	righteousness as our weapon	weapons of uprightness	weapons of righteousness
v. 8, <i>dozēs kai atimias</i>	glory and dishonor	honor and dishonor	honor and dishonor	honored and dishonored	times of honor and disgrace	glory and dishonor
v. 8, <i>dusphēmias kai euphēmias</i>	evil report and good report	evil report and good report	insulted and praised	ill repute and good repute	blame and praise	bad report and good report

■ **"the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left"** This refers to the provisions of God for our earthly spiritual warfare (cf. 2 Cor. 2:11; Rom. 6:13; Eph. 2:2; 4:14,27; 6:10-18; 1 Pet. 5:8). It is possible that the right hand refers to offensive weapons and the left hand refers to defensive weapons. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: RIGHTEOUSNESS](#) at 1 Cor. 1:30.

**6:8 "dishonor"** This term is used for a resident losing the rights of citizenship.

### Greek Phrases Introduced with *hōs*

	NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
v. 8, <i>planoi kai alētheis</i>	as deceivers and yet true	as deceivers yet true	as impostors yet true	as liars yet speak the truth	taken for impostors yet genuine
v. 9, <i>agnooumenoi kai epigninōskomenoi</i>	as unknown yet well known	as unknown yet well known	as unknown yet well known	as unknown yet known by all	as unknown yet acknowledged
v. 9, <i>apothnēskontes kai idou zōmen</i>	as dying yet, behold, we live	as dying yet we live	as dying yet we are alive	as dead but we live	dying yet we are alive

v. 9, <i>paideuomenoi kai mē thanatoumenoi</i>	as punished yet not put to death	as chastened yet not killed	as punished yet not killed	although punished we are not killed	scourged but not executed
v. 10, <i>lupoumenoi aei de chairontes</i>	as sorrowful yet always rejoicing	as sorrowful yet always rejoicing	as sorrowful yet always rejoicing	although saddened we are always glad	in pain yet always full of joy
v. 10, <i>ptōchoi pollous de ploutizontes</i>	as poor yet making many rich	as poor yet making many rich	as poor yet making many rich	we seem poor but make many people rich	poor yet making many people rich
v. 10, <i>mēden echontes kai panta katechontes</i>	as having nothing yet possessing all things	as having nothing and yet possessing all things	as having nothing yet possessing everything	we seem to have nothing yet really possess everything	having nothing and yet owning everything

**6:8-9 "and yet. . .yet"** The Greek text has *kai*, which usually means "and," but in some texts it can mean "and yet" (cf. John 20:29). Remember context determines meaning, not a lexicon.

**6:10 "sorrowful yet always rejoicing"** (cf. Rom. 5:3-5; Phil. 2:17-18; 3:1; 4:4; 1 Thess. 5:16)

▣ **"yet possessing all things"** This series of paradoxes seems to contrast the world's perspective and God's perspective. Believers are heirs of all things through Christ (cf. Rom. 8:17,32; 1 Cor. 3:21).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 6:11-13**

**<sup>11</sup>Our mouth has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide. <sup>12</sup>You are not restrained by us, but you are restrained in your own affections. <sup>13</sup>Now in a like exchange-I speak as to children-open wide to us also.**

**6:11** The two verbs are both perfect tense. Paul has shared the whole, complete gospel truth and its implications with the Corinthian believers in complete openness and honesty.

▣ **"O Corinthians"** This is one of only three places in Paul's writings that he personally addresses the particular church he is writing (cf. Gal. 3:1; Phil. 4:15). All of these passages show the intensity of the Apostle's heart.

**6:12**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"You are not restrained by us"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"You are not restricted by us"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"There is no restriction"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"It is not we who have closed our hearts to you"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"Any distress you feel is not on our side"</b>

The noun form of this verb is used in 2 Cor. 6:4 and 12:10 (cf. Rom. 2:9; 8:35). It literally refers to something or someone crowded together into a narrow place, thereby becoming cramped. It was used

metaphorically for "straits," "cramped," or "anguish" (cf. 2 Cor. 4:8; 6:12).

**NASB, NKJV,**  
**NRSV** "affections"  
**TEV** "closed your hearts"  
**NJB** "distress"

This is an OT metaphor from "bowels." The ancients thought the lower viscera or the major organs (i.e., heart, liver, lungs) were the seat of the emotions (cf. Septuagint Prov. 12:10; 26:22; Jer. 28:13,51; II Macc. 9:5-6; IV Macc. 10:8; Baruch 2:17). Paul uses this metaphor often (cf. 2 Cor. 6:12; 7:15; Phil. 1:8; 2:1; Col. 3:12; Philemon 1:7,12,20).

**6:13**  
**NASB** "Now in a like exchange"  
**NKJV** "Now in return for the same"  
**NRSV** "In return"  
**NJB** "In fair exchange"

In this phrase the main word is *antimisthia*, which is the term *misthos* (i.e., recompense based on what a person deserves, cf. 1 Cor. 3:8,14; 9:17-18; 1 Tim. 5:18) plus the preposition *anti*. This form is found only here and in Rom. 1:27.

This term can be used in a positive or negative sense; the context must determine. In Rom. 1:27; it is negative, but here it seems to be used positively in the sense of Gal. 4:12.

▣ **"to children"** Paul, like John, addresses his converts as children (cf. 1 Cor. 4:14,17; Gal. 4:19; 1 Tim. 1:2,18; 2 Tim. 1:2; 2:1; Titus 1:4; Philemon 1:10).

▣ **"open wide to us also"** As Paul stretched his heart to include them, as factious and contentious as they had been, he earnestly desired that they reciprocate. This is aorist passive imperative. Notice the passive idea that they cannot do it themselves, but they must allow God to do it.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 6:14-18**

**14**Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? **15**Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? **16**Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. **17**"Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord. "And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you. **18**And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," says the Lord Almighty.

**6:14**  
**NASB** "Do not be bound together with unbelievers"  
**NKJV** "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers"  
**NRSV** "Do not be mismatched with unbelievers"  
**TEV** "Do not try to work together as equals with unbelievers"  
**NJB** "Do not harness yourselves in an equal team with unbelievers"

Paul often uses OT agricultural quotes to illustrate Christian truths (cf. 1 Cor. 9:9; 1 Tim. 5:18) to reflect Deut. 22:10. It is a present imperative with the negative particle, which implies "they were forming" these inappropriate, intimate, interpersonal relationships with unbelievers. The Greek term is a compound of "yoked" (*zugeō*) and "another of a different kind" (*heteros*, i.e., different kinds of animals). This verse has

been proof-texted in relation to believers marrying unbelievers. However, this text does not seem to be dealing with marriage specifically, although that is surely included in this broader statement. Believers must restrict their most intimate, personal relationships to fellow believers. This helps us fight the pull of fallen culture away from Christ. Faith in Jesus and the indwelling Spirit have caused a sharp and deep cleavage within families, businesses, hobbies, amusements, even churches.

One must take into account passages like 1 Cor. 5:9-13; 7:12-16; 10:27 to get the theological balance of this truth. We must remember the wickedness of first century pagan culture. This is not an affirmation of monastic living, but an attempt to reduce intimate personal relationship with the fallen world system (cf. 1 John 2:15-17).

▣ **"what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness"** This same truth is repeated in the cyclical letter of Ephesians (cf. 2 Cor. 5:7,11). Paul's contrast of righteousness with lawlessness shows clearly that in this context righteousness does not refer to imputed righteousness (cf. Romans 4; Galatians 3), but righteous living (cf. Matt. 6:1). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: RIGHTEOUSNESS](#) at 1 Cor. 1:30.

▣ **"fellowship":** See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:9.

## 6:15

NASB, NKJV "Belial"

NRSV, NJB "Beliar"

TEV "the Devil"

This is a Hebrew term (i.e., *beli* and *ya'al*, see BDB 116) whose etymology is somewhat in doubt. *Beliar* is a variant spelling from some Jewish writings. The possible backgrounds are:

1. worthlessness (i.e., a description of evil people, cf. Deut. 13:13; 2 Sam. 23:6; 1 Kgs. 21:10,13)
2. lawlessness (cf. 2 Sam. 22:5)
3. place from where there is no ascent (i.e., *Sheol*, cf. Ps. 18:4)
4. another term for Satan (cf. Nahum 1:15; Jubilees 1:20; 15:33; and the Dead Sea Scrolls [ex. IQS 1:18,24; 2:5,19])

**6:16 "Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols"** This verse must be compared with 1 Cor. 3:16, where the local church is called the temple of God. In 1 Cor. 3:16 there is no article with "temple" (i.e., *naos*, the central shrine itself). The pronoun "you" is plural, while "temple" is singular, therefore, in this context "temple" must refer to the whole church at Corinth (cf. Eph. 2:21-22).

The focus of Jewish faith developed into Temple ritual and liturgy (cf. Jeremiah 7) instead of personal faith in YHWH. It is not where or when or how one worships, but **who** one is in relationship with, God. Jesus saw His body as the temple of God (cf. John 2:21). Jesus is greater than the OT Temple (cf. Matt. 12:6). God's activity has moved from a sacred building into a sacred (i.e., redeemed, holy) believers' body.

Idols and believers are fully discussed in 1 Cor 8 and 10:14-22. These must be mutually exclusive! All roads do not lead to heaven!

▣ **"the living God"** The covenant name for the God of the OT was YHWH (see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 2:8), which was a form of the verb "to be." OT authors often used the adjective "living" to reflect the ever-existing, only-existing God. The OT allusions in 2 Cor. 6:16-18 contain covenant terminology, "I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (cf. Ezek. 37:27).

The phrase "walk among them" seems to come from Lev. 26:12. The OT texts in 2 Cor. 6:16 reflect the new age when YHWH will dwell among His people as was intended in Genesis 2 and temporarily and partially occurred during the wilderness wandering period, but will be fully realized in the new heavens and the new earth (cf. Revelation 21-22).

▣ **"God said"** This is a loose combination of Lev. 26:11-12 and Ezek. 37:27 from the Septuagint. In this context Paul is applying these promises originally to covenant Israel to the church who is spiritual Israel (cf. Rom. 9:6; Gal. 6:16).

**6:17 "come out. . .be separate"** These are both aorist imperatives. These are allusions to Isa. 52:11 in the Septuagint. God's people are to disassociate themselves from sinners and unbelievers lest they be caught up in their judgment (cf. Rev. 18:4).

Often today I hear this verse quoted in connection to which denomination one belongs. Let me quote F. F. Bruce in *Answers to Questions*, "The use of these words to justify ecclesiastical separation between Christians betokens a grotesque failure to read them in their context" (p. 103).

▣ **"and do not touch what is unclean"** This is a present middle imperative. Believers must not participate in the sinful actions of their respective cultures. As the redeemed we must exhibit and proclaim the new heart and new mind of God's people. Everything has changed in Him!

**6:18** This verse reflects the truth of many prophets, but most fully, Hosea (or possibly 2 Sam. 7:14). Christianity is a family affair.

▣ **"Lord Almighty"** This reflects the OT term for God, YHWH (cf. Exod. 3:14), and *El Shaddai* (cf. Exod. 6:3). In the Septuagint it translates the phrase "Lord of Hosts." See [SPECIAL TOPIC: NAMES FOR DEITY](#) at 1 Cor. 2:8.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 7:1**

**<sup>1</sup>Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.**

**7:1 "having these promises"** This is a Present active participle. Paul quoted the OT prophetic words from God as if they currently applied to the Corinthians (cf. 2 Cor. 6:2). The OT is also quoted in 2 Cor. 6:16-18, showing YHWH's continual desire to have a people who reflect His character. Paul is trying to motivate the Corinthian believers to live godly, separated lives. They have experienced "grace" (cf. 2 Cor. 6:1), now they must live in it. This verse is a call to Christlike holiness (cf. Eph. 1:4; 2:10).

▣ **"beloved"** This phrase is used in Matt. 3:17 and 17:5 as a title for Jesus. Paul uses this same term to describe Jesus' followers (cf. 2 Cor. 12:19; 1 Cor. 10:14; 15:58; Rom. 12:19; Phil. 2:12; 4:1). This term speaks of God's established, loyal covenant love (Hebrew, *hesed*; Greek, *agapē*) for us in Christ, but here it speaks of Paul's love for this fractious, arrogant, disruptive church.

▣ **"let us cleanse ourselves"** This is an aorist active subjunctive. The aorist tense is the way Koine Greek affirms an action. It can have many different implications (see D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 68-73). Here it is a call for decisive action (i.e., hortatory subjunctive used as an imperative). The subjunctive mood gives an element of contingency. Believers must cooperate with God in salvation and then cooperate in maturity.

▣ **"of flesh and spirit"** This speaks of our whole human being. Many people have disallowed this verse as being original because of Paul's technical use of these two terms in other contexts. However, 2 Cor. 7:5, when linked with 2 Cor. 2:13 (which is the beginning and end of Paul's extended parentheses), used these two terms synonymously. Paul often uses the same terms in different senses (read *A Man in Christ* by James S. Stewart, Harper and Row).

▣ **"perfecting holiness in the fear of God"** This is a present active participle. It is theologically true that when we are saved, we are both instantaneously justified and sanctified (cf. 1 Cor. 1:30, also see [SPECIAL TOPIC: NEW TESTAMENT HOLINESS/SANCTIFICATION](#) at 1 Cor. 1:2). This speaks of our position in Christ. However, we are to live in light of our position. Therefore, we are urged to fulfill our calling by progressive sanctification or Christlikeness (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; Eph. 4:1). This is an ongoing struggle (cf. Romans 7). As salvation is both a free gift and a costly commitment, so too, is sanctification. This same concept is true of believers being called saints (indicative) and then called to be saintly

(imperative). I do not believe in the possibility of sinlessness in this life, but I do believe in the appropriateness of believers sinning less and less! This is the theological and practical tension caused by believers being in the Kingdom, but the Kingdom not being consummated (cf. Fee, Stewart, *Howto Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 131-134).

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Does 2 Cor. 6:1 teach that we can lose our salvation?
2. How can a Christian live so as not to put any stumbling blocks in front of others?
3. Why was Paul's life so hard?
4. What does it mean to "be ye separate"?
5. Is salvation absolutely free or does it cost us everything?

# 2 CORINTHIANS 7:2-16

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
				A Warning (6:11-7:4)
Paul's Joy at the Church's Repentance 7:2-4	The Corinthian's Response 7:2-12	Paul's Joy 7:2-4	Paul's Joy 7:2-4	7:2-4
7:5-13a		7:5-13a	7:5-7 7:8-11 7:12-13a	Paul in Macedonia: He is Joined by Titus 7:5-7 7:8-13a
7:13b-16	The Joy of Titus 7:13-16	7:13b-16	7:13b-16	7:13b-16

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

#### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

##### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 7:2-4

<sup>2</sup>Make room for us *in your hearts*; we wronged no one, we corrupted no one, we took advantage of no one. <sup>3</sup>I do not speak to condemn you, for I have said before that you are in our hearts to die together and to live together. <sup>4</sup>Great is my confidence in you; great is my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort; I am overflowing with joy in all our affliction.

7:2 "**Make room for us *in your hearts***" This paragraph picks up the thought of 2 Cor. 6:13. It is an aorist

active imperative, a decisive command, but with a continuing emphasis. Paul mentions this same idea in 2 Cor. 6:13. He uses an antonym in 2 Cor. 6:12 (i.e., restrain). Paul desires that they open themselves up to him as he has opened himself up to them.

The term "heart" in 2 Cor. 6:11 is a way of referring to himself. Paul does the same thing with "flesh" in 2 Cor. 7:5 and "spirit" in 2 Cor. 7:13b. See fuller note at 2 Cor. 7:5.

■ **"we wronged no one, we corrupted no one, we took advantage of no one"** These are all aorist active indicatives. "No one" is repeated and fronted in each phrase for emphasis. These relate to the actions of the false teachers or the charges made by Paul's critics against him and his ministry (cf. 2 Cor. 12:17-18).

■ **"corrupted"** See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 15:42.

**7:3 "to die together and to live together"** The Greek has, "I would die with you or continue to live with you." The first verb is an aorist active infinitive and the second is a present active infinitive. This may refer to 6:1. Paul desires a mature, functioning church in Corinth. If they follow his leadership and authority they will bear fruit, but if not, they will have come into existence in vain. It is also possible that this is a cultural idiom of devotion to the end.

**7:4 "confidence"** See Special Topic: *Parhēsia* at 2 Cor. 3:12.

■ **"boasting"** See full word study at 1 Cor. 5:6 and Special Topic at 2 Cor. 1:12.

■ **"I am filled with comfort; I am overflowing with joy"** This seems to refer to Titus' report in 2 Cor. 7:6-13a. Paul was very emotional about the spiritual status of his churches (cf. Gal. 4:19).

The term overflowing (i.e., *huperperisseuomai*, cf. Rom. 5:20) is an intensified form of *perisseuō*. It and its related forms are used often by Paul in his letters to Corinth. See Special Topic: Paul's Use of *Huper* Compounds at 1 Cor. 2:1.

1. *perissos/perissoteros*

- a. exceedingly (cf. 1 Cor. 12:23,24; 15:10)
- b. excessive (cf. 2 Cor. 2:7; 10:8)
- c. superfluous (cf. 2 Cor. 9:1)

2. *perissotērōs*, more abundantly (cf. 2 Cor 1:12; 2:4; 7:13,15; 11:23; 12:15)

3. *perisseuō*

- a. to abound (cf. 2 Cor. 1:5; 3:9; 9:8,12)
- b. abundantly gifted (cf. 1 Cor. 14:12; 2 Cor. 8:7)
- c. to abound in performance (cf. 1 Cor. 15:58)
- d. abound in food (cf. 1 Cor. 8:8)
- e. cause to be abundant (cf. 2 Cor. 4:14; 9:8)

4. *perisseuma*, superabundance (cf. 2 Cor. 8:13,14)

5. *perisseia*, superabundance (cf. 2 Cor. 8:2; 10:15)

■ **"in all our affliction"** See [SPECIAL TOPIC: TRIBULATION](#) at 2 Cor. 1:4.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 7:5-13a**

<sup>5</sup>For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within. <sup>6</sup>But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus; <sup>7</sup>and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced even more. <sup>8</sup>For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it-*for* I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while-<sup>9</sup>I now



rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to *the point of* repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to *the will of God*, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. <sup>10</sup>For the sorrow that is according to *the will of God* produces a repentance without regret, *leading* to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death. <sup>11</sup>For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter. <sup>12</sup>So although I wrote to you, *it was not for the sake of the offender nor for the sake of the one offended, but that your earnestness on our behalf might be made known to you in the sight of God.* <sup>13a</sup>For this reason we have been comforted.

**7:5 "For even when we came into Macedonia"** Paul resumes the account related to Titus' report which he started in 2 Cor. 2:13. There has been a wonderful Pauline digression between 2:13 and 7:5, where he discusses the joys and sorrows of apostolic ministry.

▣ **"our flesh had no rest"** Paul was worried sick over this church (cf. 2 Cor. 2:12-13, both perfect active indicatives). It is helpful for me in the midst of my worry and doubts to know the great apostle to the Gentiles was also plagued with his doubts about the abiding results of his ministry (cf. 2 Cor. 6:1).

Paul uses the term "flesh" as a synonym for himself (see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:26). He does the same thing in connection to spirit in 2 Cor. 7:13b (see parallel in 2 Cor. 2:13, "rest in my spirit"), referring to Titus. The NT does not support a trichotomous view of mankind. Mankind is a unity (cf. Gen. 2:7). Paul expresses this multifaceted unity in several ways.

▣ **"but we were afflicted on every side"** This is the present passive participle. This verse is a brief summary of the problems Paul mentions in 2 Cor. 1:4-10; 4:7-12; and 6:3-10.

▣ **"conflicts without, fears within"** Since the time of Chrysostom, this phrase has been interpreted as referring to problems with unbelievers and believers (cf. 2 Cor. 11:28). Paul worried about Satan's schemes (cf. 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Cor. 7:5).

**7:6 "But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us"** What a wonderful title for God-"the One who continually comforts" (present active participle). See full note on comfort at 2 Cor. 1:4-11.

**7:7** Paul's prayers and letters had proven effective. The majority in the church had responded appropriately to his apostolic authority and gospel presentation. They had rejected the immoral and heretical teachers (cf. 2 Cor. 7:8-13a).

**7:8**

NASB	"For though I caused you sorrow"
NKJV, NRSV	"for even if I made you sorry"
TEV	"for even if. . .made you sad"
NJB	"so now, though I did distress you"

This is a first class conditional sentence, which is assumed to be true.

▣ **"by my letter"** This seems to refer to the third letter by Paul to Corinth which is called by scholars "the severe letter" (cf. 2 Cor. 2:3.4.9). This is one of the two lost letters unless chapters 10-13 are excerpts from it.

**7:8-11 "sorrow. . .regret. . .repentance"** There are three very significant Greek terms used in this passage to describe sorrow and repentance. The first term (i.e., *lupeō*) is the general term for "grief" or "distress." It is a theologically neutral term found twice in 2 Cor. 7:8; three times in 2 Cor. 7:9; twice in 2

Cor. 7:10; and once in 2 Cor. 7:11 (cf. 2 Cor. 2:2,4,5; 6:10).

The term regret (i.e., *metamelomai*), found twice in 2 Cor. 7:8 and negated in 2 Cor. 7:10, is a term that means "after care." This seems to mean sorrow over the consequences of past acts: Example: (1) those who did not truly repent in Jesus' parable, Matt. 21:29,32; (2) Judas, Heb. 12:16-17; and (3) Esau, Matt. 27:3.

The last term (i.e., *metanoeia*), found in 2 Cor. 7:9 and 10, is extremely significant theologically. Literally, it means "after mind." It not only involves a change of attitude, but a change of action (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16; 20:21). Examples of this type of repentance can be found in King David and the Apostle Peter.

Paul is referring to his "painful" letter, which he had written to the church in Corinth. He fully and truly expressed himself, but worried that the letter might cause overwhelming sorrow instead of a healthy repentance, which would result in a restored fellowship. They had forced Paul to act as a spiritual surgeon instead of a spiritual father. Paul addressed the inappropriate actions and attitudes and fully expected for them to respond appropriately. But, as a father disciplines his children in sorrow, Paul wrote in sorrow and feared the worst, that they would not respond in true repentance and that fellowship would not be restored and his work there would be in vain (cf. 2 Cor. 6:1).

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: REPENTANCE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**

7:9

NASB	"for you were made sorrowful according to <i>the will of God</i> "
NKJV	"for you were made sorry in a godly manner"
NRSV	"for you felt a godly grief"
TEV	"that sadness was used by God"
NJB	"your distress was the kind that God approves"

Literally this is "for you were grieved according to God." You can see the different theological perspectives in the different translations. Does God use sorrow, pain, even evil, for His purposes? Some would quote Rom. 8:28 and say "yes." Others would quote James 1:13,17 and say "no." Paul lists the problems and sufferings he faced as an Apostle. He lists the source of these in Eph. 2:2-3 as Satan, the fallen world system, and mankind's fallen Adamic nature. God is willing to forgive, work with, and welcome sinful people. He uses evil for His purposes, but is not personally involved in it. Suffering and problems often produce a positive effect. In this context it produced repentance (cf. 2 Cor. 7:9-11).

■ **"so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us"** This is an aorist passive subjunctive. Notice there is an element of contingency. Paul wanted to be a blessing to this church and not a hindrance in any way. However, the church must receive Paul and his ministry.

**7:10 "leading to salvation"** Repentance is one of the necessary elements of salvation. Repentance was mentioned as a requirement by John the Baptist (cf. Matt. 3:2), Jesus (cf. Matt. 4:17), Peter (cf. Acts 2:38), and Paul (cf. Acts 26:20). Repentance is turning from sin and faith is turning to Christ; both are required (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21). I have come to believe there are several normative requirements for a mature salvation: repentance, faith, baptism, obedience, service, and perseverance. Christianity is a lifestyle relationship, not a set of hoops to jump through, yet eternal life does have observable characteristics!

The covenantal tension between a sovereign God and a mandated human response can also be seen in this area of theology because Acts 11:18 asserts that God gives repentance. Salvation can be seen biblically as all of God and yet also requiring a human response. This is the paradox of a free salvation and a cost-everything Christian life.

The NT concept of salvation is described as an initial act of faith followed by a growing faith relationship and to be culminated at the future coming of Christ. This text seems to imply a future consummation. See Special Topic: Greek Verb Tenses for Salvation at 1 Cor. 3:15.

■ **"but the sorrow of the world produces death"** This sentence has the three key words that must be understood in their NT context.

1. "Sorrow." This verse contains all three Greek words for sorrow, regret, repentance. In this phrase sorrow is *lupeō*, which means grief. Humans are sorry for past actions, but for selfish reasons.
2. "The world." This is a reference to human society organized and functioning apart from God. This is fallen humanity!
3. "Death". The use of this term is possibly purposeful ambiguity. It refers to spiritual death (cf. Genesis 3) and physical death (cf. Genesis 5).

**7:11** Godly sorrow (i.e., *lupeō*) produces spiritual results (i.e., true repentance, *metanoēō* and its fruit). The godly results are listed in verse 11.

▣ **"what avenging of wrong"** The literal term is "vengeance," but it is used in the sense of meting out justice. There has been some divergence of opinion among scholars as to what exactly this verse is referring. Some assert that (1) it refers to 1 Cor. 5:5, while others believe (2) it refers to the factions or false teachers (cf. 2 Cor. 7:12).

**7:12** Verse 12 seems to be a Hebrew idiom of comparison, not a negative statement (cf. *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*, p. 283).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 7:13b-16**

<sup>13b</sup>And besides our comfort, we rejoiced even much more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all. <sup>14</sup>For if in anything I have boasted to him about you, I was not put to shame; but as we spoke all things to you in truth, so also our boasting before Titus proved to be *the* truth. <sup>15</sup>His affection abounds all the more toward you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling. <sup>16</sup>I rejoice that in everything I have confidence in you.

**7:13b "we rejoiced even much more for the joy of Titus because his spirit has been refreshed by you all"** The church treated Titus well (i.e., he was refreshed, perfect passive indicative). Apparently Paul was worried about this because of the treatment that Timothy had received earlier.

Notice Paul is using "spirit" as a synonym of the person of Titus, not just an aspect (i.e., body, soul, spirit, cf. Elwell's *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, pp. 676-680). See full note on "spirit" at 2 Cor. 4:13.

For "much more" see Special Topic at 2 Cor. 2:7.

**7:14 "if"** This is a first class conditional sentence, which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purpose. Paul had boasted about the Corinthian church to Titus.

▣ **"boasted"** See Special Topic: Boasting at 1 Cor. 5:6.

▣ **"in truth"** See Special Topic at 2 Cor. 13:8.

**7:15 "affection"** This is literally the Greek word, *splagchna*. See the full note at 2 Cor. 6:12.

▣ **"abounds"** See Special Topic at 2 Cor. 2:7.

▣ **"as he remembers the obedience of you all"** This is a present middle participle (i.e., Moulton's *Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, p. 24) or a present passive participle (i.e., Friberg's *Analytical Greek New Testament*, p. 562). How churches treat God's ministers says something about them (cf. 1 Cor. 16:16; 1 Thess. 5:12; Heb. 13:17).

**7:16** This statement concludes this literary unit (cf. 2 Cor. 2:14-7:16) with a note of confident assurance.

▣ **confidence** See note at 2 Cor. 5:6.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why was Titus' report so important to Paul?
2. Define the three different words for "sorrow" found in vs. 8-11 and relate their theological significance.

# 2 CORINTHIANS 8

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Liberal Giving	Excel in Giving	The Collection for the Relief of the Jerusalem Church  (8:1-9:15)	Christian Giving	Why the Corinthians Should be Generous
8:1-7	8:1-7  Christ Our Pattern	8:1-7	8:1-7	8:1-15
8:8-15	8:8-15	8:8-15	8:8-9  8:10-12  8:13-15	
Titus and His Companions	Collection for the Judean Saints		Titus and His Companions	The Delegates Recommended to the Corinthians
8:16-24	8:16-24	8:16-24	8:16-19  8:20-21  8:22-24	8:16-9:5

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

A. Chapters 8 and 9 form a literary unit related to the Corinthian's part in the Gentile churches' contribution for the poor of the church in Jerusalem (cf. 1 Cor. 16:1-3).

B. Background to Paul's gift to the Jerusalem church

1. In Acts 11:27-30 the church at Antioch started the program of relief work for Jerusalem. It was a

way of uniting the Jewish and Gentile churches.

2. In Gal. 2:10 and 6:10 Paul began a similar emphasis in his early mission work.
3. In 1 Cor. 16:1-4 it is shown that this contribution had already started at Corinth.
4. In Rom. 15:26 the contributions of both Macedonia and Achaia are mentioned.

C. Paul's overall argument concerning Christian giving

1. example of others (Macedonians) 2 Cor. 8:1-5
2. giving is an aspect of spiritual growth, 2 Cor. 8:7-8
3. example of Christ, 2 Cor. 8:9; 9:15
4. their own start, 2 Cor. 8:6,10
5. encouragement to put desire into action, 2 Cor. 8:10
6. motive, not amount, is the key, 2 Cor. 8:12
7. giving equals out, 2 Cor. 8:14

D. New Testament guidelines for Christian giving based on the model of the churches of Macedonia

1. joyous and genuine, even amidst poverty, 2 Cor. 8:2; 9:7
2. gave to utmost of ability, 2 Cor. 8:3
3. gave sacrificially beyond ability, 2 Cor. 8:3,12
4. gave freely, 2 Cor. 8:3; 9:7
5. gave sincerely, 2 Cor. 8:4
6. gave more than money, 2 Cor. 8:5

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 8:1-6

**<sup>1</sup>Now, brethren, we *wish* to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, <sup>2</sup>that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. <sup>3</sup>For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, *they gave* of their own accord, <sup>4</sup>begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, <sup>5</sup>and *this*, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God. <sup>6</sup>So we urged Titus that as he had previously made a beginning, so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well.**

**8:1 "the grace of God"** This word "grace" (*charis*) is used over ten times in chapters 8 and 9. It is used in the sense of

1. God's undeserved, unmerited love in Christ, 2 Cor. 8:1,9; 9:8,14
2. favor/privilege, 2 Cor. 8:4
3. the offering to Jerusalem, 2 Cor. 8:1,6,7,19
4. thanks, 2 Cor. 8:16; 9:15

Notice that grace is understood as referring to God's undeserved, unmerited love in Christ or as a way of referring to the contribution from Paul's Gentile churches to the mother church in Jerusalem. The Greek term has a wide semantical field.

■ **"the churches of Macedonia"** This would refer to Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea (cf. Acts 16-17). There was a cultural sense of competition between Achaia and Macedonia. See Special Topic: Church at 1 Cor. 1:2.

**8:2 "that in a great ordeal of affliction"** We see something of this persecution from Acts 17:1-15 and 1 Thess. 1:6; 2:14. There are two Greek words that are translated "trial," "test," or "tempt" (here "ordeal").

One refers to a test with the view toward destruction, while the other refers to a test with a view toward approval (cf. 2 Cor. 8:2,8,22; 9:13). See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 3:13.

For "affliction" see [SPECIAL TOPIC: TRIBULATION](#) at 2 Cor. 1:4.

■ **"their abundance of joy"** It is so surprising that this phrase occurs between "great ordeal of affliction" and "their deep poverty." This joy amidst adverse circumstances is a characteristic of the believer (cf. Matt. 5:10-12; Rom. 5:3; James 1:2). Joy is a fruit of the Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:22) and it is not related to circumstances!

For Paul's repeated use of "abundance" or "overflow" see note at 2 Cor. 1:5.

■ **"their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality"** The term, "poverty" (i.e., *ptōchos*) is a very strong Greek term used of (1) extreme poverty in the Septuagint of Deut. 8:9; Jdgs. 6:6; 14:15 (2) beggars (cf. 2 Cor. 6:10; Rom. 15:26; Rev. 2:9; 3:17). They did not give out of excess. They trusted God to provide their needs (cf. Mark 12:42; Luke 21:2). In this context "their deep poverty" seems related to their being persecuted for the gospel (cf. 2 Cor. 8:13-18).

■ **"liberality"** This term's root meaning is "single-mindedness," which can mean "genuine" or "sincere" (cf. Septuagint 2 Sam. 15:11; 1 Chr. 29:17). But, it is used in the NT (i.e., term only in Paul's writings) in the sense of "liberality" or "generosity" (cf. 2 Cor. 9:11,13). The *Jerome Biblical Commentary* (p. 284) thinks the word reflects a Hebrew term meaning "perfection" or "integrity" and, therefore, refers to their purity of motives. The motive for our giving is the key (cf. 2 Cor. 8:12). See full note at 2 Cor. 1:12.

**8:3** Paul had seen their poverty first-hand.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"they gave of their own accord"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"they were freely willing"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"they voluntarily gave"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"of their own free will"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"it was of their own accord"</b>

This term is from *autos* and *haireomai*, which means "self choices." It is used in both 2 Cor. 8:3 and 17. The root term has the added connotation of choosing with delight or love (cf. Matt. 12:18, which is a quote from the Servant Song of Isa. 42:1-3). It is used in (1) II Maccabees 6:19 and III Maccabees 6:6; 7:10 and (2) the Koine papyri from Egypt of someone acting on their own accord freely.

*A Handbook on Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians* by Roger L. Omanson and John Ellington shows how English translations differ grammatically over which clause to attach this phrase.

"These words may be considered a part of the sentence which precedes, that is, the Macedonians gave of their own free will (so RSV, NRSV, NJB, SPCL), or to the sentence which follows in verse 4, that is, of their own free will they begged to take part in the collection (so TEV, NIV, REB, NJB, TNT, FRCL). The latter interpretation follows the punctuation of the UBS *Greek New Testament* and is probably more likely" (p. 142).

**8:4 "with much urging"** See full note on this phrase at 2 Cor. 1:4-11.

■ **"for the favor of participation"** For "favor" see note at 2 Cor. 8:1. The term "participation" (i.e., *koinōnia*) is used often by Paul in his Corinthian letters in several, but related, senses. See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:9.

1. intimate, close, personal relationships (related term *koinōneō* often used of initiations into the mystery religions)

a. with the Son, 1 Cor. 1:9

b. with the Spirit, 2 Cor. 13:14

c. not with evil, 2 Cor. 6:14

d. Titus and Paul in ministry, 2 Cor. 8:23

2. generosity (related term *koinōnikos* means the liberal sharing of one's own goods), 2 Cor. 9:13

3. participation in something

- a. 1 Cor. 10:16 (i.e., in the blood of Christ)
- b. 2 Cor. 8:4 (i.e., in contribution for poor saints in Jerusalem)
- c. 2 Cor. 1:7 (i.e., in suffering)

There is an obvious word play between participation (*koinōnia*) and support (or ministry, *diakonia*). This word for ministry or service is used so often in 2 Corinthians.

1. *diakonos* (servant), 2 Cor. 3:6; 6:4; 11:15,23
2. *diakoneō* (serving), 2 Cor. 3:3; 8:19,20
3. *diakonia* (service), 2 Cor. 3:7,8,9; 4:1; 5:18; 6:3; 8:4; 9:1,12,13; 11:8

Christianity is servanthood. We were saved to serve!

▣ **"in the support of"** See note at 1 Cor. 16:1.

▣ **"saints"** See [SPECIAL TOPIC: SAINTS](#) at 1 Cor. 1:2.

**8:5 "they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God"** Stewardship involves everything we are and have. If you give yourself to the Lord there remains nothing to give! Christian stewardship is a thermometer of our spiritual maturity. Believers are owners of nothing and stewards of God in everything. This truth is sometimes easier for poor people to grasp and obey than wealthy people.

**8:6 "Titus"** In *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, F. F. Bruce comments on the theory that chapters 10-13 are a segment of a previous letter, "but this is rendered improbable by 12:18, which seems clearly to refer back to 8:6,16-19" (p. 274 footnote 51).

▣ **"this gracious work"** This refers to the contribution from Paul's Gentile churches to the poor of the mother church in Jerusalem (cf. 1 Cor. 16:1-4; Rom. 15:26). In *Jesus and the Rise of Early Christianity*, Paul Barnett makes a good point about the variety of terms Paul used to describe this love offering for the poor believers in Jerusalem.

"The appeal is characterized by its own vocabulary: 'contribution for the saints' (1 Cor 16:1); 'gift' (1 Cor 16:3); 'grace' (2 Cor 8:6, 7, 9; 9:14); 'service' (2 Cor 9:12; cf. Rom. 15:27) and 'fellowship' (2 Cor 8:4; 9:13; Rom 15:26)" (p. 344).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 8:7-15**

**<sup>7</sup>But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also. <sup>8</sup>I am not speaking *this* as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also. <sup>9</sup>For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich. <sup>10</sup>I give *my* opinion in this matter, for this is to your advantage, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do *this*, but also to desire *to do it*. <sup>11</sup>But now finish doing it also, so that just as *there was* the readiness to desire it, so *there may be* also the completion of it by your ability. <sup>12</sup>For if the readiness is present, it is acceptable according to what *a person* has, not according to what he does not have. <sup>13</sup>For *this* is not for the ease of others *and* for your affliction, but by way of equality -<sup>14</sup>at this present time your abundance *being a supply* for their need, so that their abundance also may become *a supply* for your need, that there may be equality; <sup>15</sup>as it is written, "He who *gathered* much did not have too much, and he who *gathered* little had no lack."**

**8:7 "just as you abound in everything"** Notice that the list (i.e., faith, speech, knowledge, earnestness, love) does not relate to material possessions. We do not give to get more things for ourselves. We abound



in Him (cf. 1 Cor. 1:5). He supplies everything we need (cf. 2 Cor. 9:8).

■ **"abound"** This term is used twice in this verse. The first is present active indicative, they were abounding in the blessings of the gospel. The second is present active subjunctive, which adds a note of contingency. As they had abounded in the benefits of the New Covenant, they should abound in the responsibilities. Their help for the poor in the church in Jerusalem is one of these "gracious works."

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"in the love we inspired in you"</b>
<b>NKJV, TEV</b>	<b>"in your love for us"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"in our love for you"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"and love for us too"</b>

These translations reveal the Greek variant.

1. "in our love for you" (NRSV) from MSS P<sup>46</sup>, B
2. "in your love for us" (NKJV, TEV, NIV) from MSS  $\kappa$ , C, D, F, G
3. NASB takes option #1, but slightly changes the focus, "the love we inspired in you"
4. the UBS<sup>4</sup> puts option #1 in the text, but gives it a "C" rating.

The same pronoun confusion is seen in the Greek variants in 2 Cor. 8:9.

**8:8 "I am not speaking *this* as a command"** Commands are inappropriate and ineffective in the area of Christian stewardship. Proper motives are crucial in this area of the Christian life.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: TITHING

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"but by showing how eager others are to help, I am trying to find out how real your own love is"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"but testing the genuineness of your love against the concern of others"</b>

Paul is challenging the Achaian churches to follow the lead of the Macedonian churches (cf. 2 Cor. 8:1-5) through Titus' visit (cf. 2 Cor. 8:6,16-24).

■ **"proving"** See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 3:13.

**8:9 "the grace"** See note at 2 Cor. 8:1.

■ **"of our Lord Jesus Christ"** See note at 2 Cor. 1:2.

■ **"though He was rich"** This refers to the pre-existent glory of Jesus the Christ (cf. John 1:1; 8:56-59; 16:28; 17:5,24; 2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:6-7; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3; 10:5-8; 1 John 1:1).

■ **"yet for your sake He became poor"** This is an emphasis on the incarnation of the pre-existent *Logos* in the manger at Bethlehem. He was born to a young, virgin peasant woman, into the life of a village carpenter, but He was God in human form (cf. George Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 241-242).

■ **"so that you through His poverty might become rich"** Paul is using Jesus' incarnation in two ways.

1. He came to die in our place for our sins (cf. Mark 10:45).
2. He came to give us an example to follow (cf. 1 John 3:16).

This tremendous thought parallels 9:15. This church thought they already were rich (cf. 1 Cor. 4:8). Now the true definition of wealth is clearly spiritual and service-oriented, not self-seeking or intellectual, or

materialistic.

**8:10 "I give my opinion"** Although Paul asserts that this is his opinion, because of his comments in 1 Cor. 7:25,40 it is an authoritative (i.e., inspired) statement.

■ **"the first to begin a year ago"** 2 Corinthians was written between six and eighteen months after 1 Corinthians (cf. 2 Cor. 16:1-4).

**8:11 "now finish doing it also"** This is an aorist active imperative. They were one of the first churches to originally desire to help the poor in Jerusalem. Now it is time to do it (cf. TEV).

NASB, NKJV	"readiness"
NRSV	"eagerness"
TEV	"be as eager"
NJB	"enthusiasm"

This is the Greek word *prothumia*, which is also used in 2 Cor. 8:12 and 2 Cor. 8:19 as well as 9:2. Its basic meaning is "readiness, promptness" (cf. Acts 17:11).

■ **"the completion of it by your ability"** Notice Paul returns to this theme again. It is so surprising to me that Paul never discusses regular Christian giving. His only comments on "giving" relate to this one-time gift for the church in Jerusalem. He admits that a worker is worthy of his hire and that churches should help traveling missionaries, but gives no further guidelines.

New Covenant believers must be careful of proof-texting OT cultic criteria in a NT setting (cf. *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, p. 539 footnote #1). If we assert tithing is the will of God, what is to keep others from mandating sacrifice or Sabbath worship? Jesus did mention tithing in talking to a Jewish legalist (cf. Matt. 23:23; Luke 11:42), but this cannot be claimed to be the only NT evidence that this OT rite is perpetually valid (see Special Topic at 2 Cor. 8:8).

I am not trying to lower what believers should give, but accentuate Paul's guidelines in 2 Corinthians 8-9 as the only NT information (also see 1 Cor. 16:2). Believers should never be content with an OT standard! Read Paul again (cf. Frank Stagg, *New Testament Theology*, pp. 285-293).

**8:12 "if"** This is a first class conditional sentence. Paul assumes they were ready and eager to give.

■ **"it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have"** The key to Christian stewardship is our attitude and motive, not the amount or percentage (cf. Mark 12:41-44).

**8:13-14** The key word in these two verses is "equality" and the key concept is reciprocity. The family of God should help one another in need (cf. Eph. 4:28). The Jerusalem church has spread the good news of Christ (cf. Rom. 15:27). The Gentile churches can help in providing for the believing poor in Jerusalem. Some may be poor because of their faith in Christ.

■ **"affliction"** See Special Topic: Tribulation at 2 Cor. 1:4.

**8:15 "as it is written"** This perfect passive indicative (Hebrew idiom) was used to introduce an OT quote. It implies the divine inspiration and eternal relevance of Scripture. The text quoted relates to the miracle of the daily gathering of manna where each Israelite had just enough (cf. Exod. 16:17,18). God will provide believers' needs as they seek and obey Him (cf. Matt. 6:19-34).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 8:16-24**

**<sup>16</sup>But thanks be to God who puts the same earnestness on your behalf in the heart of Titus. <sup>17</sup>For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest, he has gone to you of his own accord. <sup>18</sup>We have sent along with him the brother whose fame in the things of**

the gospel *has spread* through all the churches; <sup>19</sup>and not only *this*, but he has also been appointed by the churches to travel with us in this gracious work, which is being administered by us for the glory of the Lord Himself, and *to show* our readiness, <sup>20</sup>taking precaution so that no one will discredit us in our administration of this generous gift; <sup>21</sup>for we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. <sup>22</sup>We have sent with them our brother, whom we have often tested and found diligent in many things, but now even more diligent because of *his* great confidence in you. <sup>23</sup>As for Titus, *he is* my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brethren, *they are* messengers of the churches, a glory to Christ. <sup>24</sup>Therefore openly before the churches, show them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you.

**8:16-17 "But thanks be to God who puts the same earnestness on your behalf in the heart of Titus"** Notice Paul's understanding of God's equipping (cf. Eph. 4:12) and motivating for ministry. This same understanding of God's sovereign leadership in the affairs of mankind is also seen in Rev. 17:17. This is the mystery of divine sovereignty and human free will.

### **SPECIAL TOPIC: Election/Predestination and the Need for a Theological Balance**

**8:16-24** Verses 16-24 seem to be a letter of recommendation for Titus. See fuller note at 2 Cor. 3:1. A brief biographical sketch of Titus follows.

1. Titus was one of Paul's most trusted co-workers. This is evidenced by the fact that Paul sent him to the trouble spots of Corinth and Crete.
2. He was a full Gentile (Timothy was only half-Greek), converted under Paul's preaching. Paul refused to circumcise him (cf. Gal. 2).
3. He is mentioned often in Paul's letters (cf. 2 Cor. 2:13; 7:6-15; 8:6-24; 12:18; Gal. 2:1-3; 2 Tim. 4:10) and it is very surprising that Luke does not mention him in Acts. Some commentaries theorize that (1) he may have been a relative of Luke (possibly a brother) and to include his name would have been seen as an act of cultural impropriety on Luke's part or (2) Titus is Luke's major source of information about Paul's life and ministry and, therefore, like Luke, would not be named.
4. He accompanied Paul and Barnabas to the all important Jerusalem Council, recorded in Acts 15.
5. A letter to Titus focuses on advice Paul gives Titus about his work on Crete. Titus is acting as Paul's official surrogate.
6. The last information in the NT about Titus is that he was sent to work in Dalmatia (cf. 2 Tim. 4:10).

**8:16 "heart"** Paul uses this term often in 2 Corinthians (cf. 2 Cor. 1:22; 3:2-3,15; 4:6; 5:12; 6:11; 7:3; 8:16; 9:7). See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 14:25.

**8:18 "We have sent along with him the brother whose fame in the things of the gospel has spread through all the churches"** Church tradition has asserted that this could be Paul's co-worker, Luke. Luke is not included in the list of Paul's traveling companions recorded in Acts 20:4, but the "we" section, which implies Luke's presence and starts in Acts 20:5-6, occurs at this point in the context (cf. Origen recorded in Eusebius' *Hist. Eccl.* 6:25:6; A. T. Robertson' *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, p. 245).

F. F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, comments on Titus and Luke being brothers.

"One explanation of Luke's silence about one who was such a trusted lieutenant of Paul's is that Titus was Luke's brother; cf. W. M. Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen* (London, 1895), p. 390; *Luke the Physician and Other Studies* (London, 1908), pp. 17 f.; A. Souter, 'A Suggested Relationship between Titus and Luke', *Expository Times* 18 (1906-7), p. 285, and 'The Relationship between Titus and Luke', *ibid.*, pp. 335 f. But if this relationship is maintained, then the possibility that Luke is the 'brother' of 2 Corinthians 8:18 f. (see. p. 320) is ruled out: Paul's purpose

in sending this 'brother' along with Titus was that he should be an independent guarantor of the probity of the administration of the relief fund, and this purpose would have been frustrated if critics had been given an opportunity to draw attention to a blood-relationship between the two. Nothing could have been better calculated to foster already existing suspicions" (p. 339 footnote #5).

M. R. Vincent's *Word Studies* mentions another theory.

"The person referred to has been variously identified with Titus' brother, Barnabas, Mark, Luke, and Epaenetus, mentioned in Rom. 16:5. The reference to Epaenetus has been urged on the ground of a supposed play upon the word *praise, epainos*; Epaenetus meaning praiseworthy; and the parallel is cited in the case of Onesimus *profitable* of whom Paul says that he will henceforth be *useful*, Philem. v.11" (p. 830).

**8:19 "but he has also been appointed by the churches"** The verb is *cheirotoneō*, which is a compound from "hand" and "to stretch out." It originally referred to a vote by raising the hand. It cannot mean this in Acts 14:23, but does imply it here in 2 Cor. 8:19.

Here is another example of congregational polity linked to several different congregations. See fuller note at 1 Cor. 16:3.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"to travel with us in the gracious work"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"to travel with us with this gift"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"to travel with us while we are administering this generous undertaking"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"to travel with us as we carry out this service of love"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"to be our traveling companion in this work of generosity"</b>

Paul was always leery about the accusation of his mishandling of money (cf. 2 Cor. 8:20; 11:9,12). Therefore, he wanted to take several representatives from the different churches with him to give the contribution from the Gentile churches to the mother church in Jerusalem.

▣ **"for the glory of the Lord Himself, and to show our readiness"** This monetary gift had several purposes. Two are stated here.

1. to glorify the Lord
2. to show the Gentile churches' willingness to help the mother church in Palestine

It probably helped Paul show his devotion and loyalty to the believing Jewish part of the universal church. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY \(DOXA\)](#) at 1 Cor. 2:7.

There is a Greek manuscript variant connected to "Himself." This reciprocal pronoun appears in two forms,

1. *auto* - MSS  $\kappa$ , D<sup>1</sup>
2. *autēn* - MS P
3. omitted in the uncial MSS B, C, D\*, F, G, and L (NJB)

The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives option #1 a "C" rating which means the textual committee cannot decide.

**8:20 "taking precaution"** The phrase "taking precaution" (i.e., "avoiding," a present middle participle used only here and in 2 Thess. 3:6) was a nautical metaphor for the extra care in handling the sails when approaching a dock (cf. Moulton and Milligan, p. 587 from *Homer*).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"discredit"</b>
<b>NKJV, NRSV</b>	<b>"blame"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"stir up any complaints"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"be able to make any accusations"</b>

This is the Greek term *mōmos*, which basically means blame, ridicule, disgrace, or strain (cf. 2 Pet. 2:13). The verb here (i.e., aorist middle [deponent] subjunctive) implies "to find fault," "to censure," or "to blame" (cf. 2 Cor. 6:3; 8:20).

**NASB, NRSV,**  
**TEV** "this generous gift"  
**NKJV** "this lavish gift"  
**NJB** "this large sum"

This is not the usual term for gift. It was used in the Septuagint for mature adults (cf. 2 Sam. 15:18; 1 Kgs. 1:9) and of leaders (cf. 2 Sam. 15:18; 2 Kgs. 10:6,11; Isa. 34:7). From Greek literature it was used of ripened grain or of something thick. It is found only here in the NT.

**8:21 "for we have regard for what is honorable"** This seems to be a quote from Pro. 3:4 in the Septuagint. Believers need to be above suspicion in all things (cf. Matt. 10:16; Rom. 12:17; 1 Thess. 5:22).

The term "honorable" (NASB) or "right" (NKJV, NIV) is the Greek term, *kalos*, which has a variety of nuances.

1. beautiful
2. good
3. useful
4. excellent
5. just
6. honorable
7. distinguished
8. moral excellence
9. worthy
10. virtuous
11. propriety

▣ **"in the sight of the Lord"** This refers to one's motives and knowledge of Scripture. If 2 Cor. 8:21 is from Pro. 3:4, then Lord refers to YHWH.

▣ **"but also in the sight of men"** This refers to our witness (cf. Rom. 14:18; Phil. 2:15; 4:8; 1 Tim. 3:7; 1 Pet. 2:12).

**8:22 "We have sent with them our brother"** This seems to be a second unknown companion to fulfill the OT requirement for two witnesses (cf. Deut. 17:6; 19:15). This means that Paul is referring in this context to three people.

1. Titus
2. the brother of 2 Cor. 8:18
3. the brother of 2 Cor. 8:22

▣ **"we have often tested"** This term *dokimazō* also occurs in 2 Cor. 8:8 and another form of the word in 2 Cor. 8:2. See Special Topic: Greek Terms for "Testing" and Their Connotations at 1 Cor. 3:13.

▣ **"great confidence in you"** See full note at 2 Cor. 3:4.

**8:23**  
**NASB, NKJV,**  
**NRSV** "they are messengers of the churches"  
**TEV** "they represent the churches"  
**NJB** "they are emissaries of the churches"

This is the word *apostolos*, which meant "messenger" or "agent." Because of the terms' unique usage in John's Gospel referring to Jesus as the "Sent One" and His sending His followers, the term took on a specialized sense of official representation (i.e., Apostle). Here it is used in its normal sense of those (i.e., Titus and two unnamed brothers) sent to represent churches in the trip to Jerusalem with the offering. See

Special Topic: Send at 1 Cor. 4:9.

▣ **"a glory to Christ"** This must refer to 2 Cor. 8:19. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY \(DOXA\)](#) at 1 Cor. 2:7. It is possible that this phrase refers to the churches that sent offerings.

**8:24** The exegetical question is to whom does "them" refer?

1. It could refer to the poor in the church in Jerusalem. The Corinthian church demonstrated their love by their gift for the mother church. Their generosity showed the other Gentile churches that they were co-operating and following Paul's lead.
2. It could refer to the other churches themselves. The best option contextually and grammatically is #2.

▣ **"openly before"** See full note at 2 Cor. 1:11.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How does NT giving differ from OT giving?
2. Is the tithe a universal or cultural truth? Why or why not?
3. How does your giving stack up against the Macedonians?
4. Explain the difference between giving and stewardship.
5. Who is the brother mentioned in 2 Cor. 8:18?

# 2 CORINTHIANS 9

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Offering for the Saints	Administering the Gifts	The Collection for the Relief of the Jerusalem Church (8:1-9:15)	Help for Needy Believers	The Delegates Recommended to the Corinthians (8:1-9:5)
9:1-5	9:1-5	9:1-5	9:1-5	Blessing to Be Expected from the Collection
	The Cheerful Giver			
9:6-15	9:6-15	9:6-15	9:6-15	9:6-9 9:10-15

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

#### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. It must be remembered that chapters 8 and 9 form a literary unity. Also to some extent they are parallel. Possibly Paul has combined two sermons on Christian giving.
- B. These two chapters taken together, in my opinion, are the definitive NT discussion of stewardship.

#### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

##### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 9:1-5

<sup>1</sup>For it is superfluous for me to write to you about this ministry to the saints; <sup>2</sup>for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the Macedonians, *namely*, that Achaia has been prepared since last year, and your zeal has stirred up most of them. <sup>3</sup>But I have sent the brethren, in order that our boasting about you may not be made empty in this case, so that, as I

was saying, you may be prepared; <sup>4</sup>otherwise if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we-not to speak of you-will be put to shame by this confidence. <sup>5</sup>So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they would go on ahead to you and arrange beforehand your previously promised bountiful gift, so that the same would be ready as a bountiful gift and not affected by covetousness. 9:1 "it is superfluous" This is the term *perissos*. It is used here in the sense of over and above. It and its related forms are used often in 2 Corinthians . Paul often uses emotional or "over-the-top" language. See Special Topic at 2 Cor. 2:7.

■ **"for me to write to you"** It is unusual for Paul to say this when he has just written to them on this subject (i.e., the collection from his Gentile churches to the mother church in Jerusalem, cf. chapter 8).

These two chapters are parallel in the spiritual principles related to Christian stewardship. Possibly they are two sermons combined or parts of two catechisms.

■ **"this ministry"** This term (*diakonia*) is often used of Christian stewardship (cf. Acts 6:1; 11:29; Rom. 15:31; 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:1,12,13). Here it refers to servanthood. Believers' relationship to a gracious God and a self-giving Messiah demand a life of service to others (cf. John 17:18; 20:21; 1 John 3:16). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: SERVANT LEADERSHIP](#) at 1 Cor. 4:1.

■ **"to the saints"** See Special Topic: Saints at 1 Cor. 1:2.

**9:2 "I know your readiness"** Paul has alluded to this in 2 Cor. 8:8-12,20.

■ **"which I boast about you to the Macedonians"** This is a present middle indicative. Paul continued to boast about the Achaians. In 2 Cor. 8:1-5, Paul uses the Macedonians to encourage the Corinthians; now, in chapter 9, Paul states that he has used the Achaians to encourage the Macedonians.

■ **"boast"** See Special Topic: Boasting at 1 Cor. 5:6.

■ **"Achaia"** This was the Roman province along the south coast of Greece. This is in agreement with 2 Cor. 1:1, where the letter is written for all of God's people in Achaia. That shows that the letter was read in several churches of the area or that the church in Corinth, which was the capital of the province, had a wide geographical influence.

■ **"has been prepared since last year"** There seems to be a contradiction to chapter 8. However, the Corinthians wanted to begin the offering a year earlier, but they had never finished it. The real problem is the translation (the inflected forms are the same) of the verb.

1. if it is a perfect middle indicative, it should be translated "have made preparations"

2. if it is perfect passive indicative, it should be translated "has been prepared"

I think it should be perfect middle because of the context and the matching participle in 2 Cor. 9:3 (i.e., perfect middle).

■ **"your zeal has stirred up most of them"** The verb in this sentence can be used in a negative sense (cf. Septuagint of Deut. 20:21; Col. 3:21) or a positive sense (cf. 2 Cor. 9:2). Only the context can determine the meaning.

**9:3 "you may be prepared"** This is a perfect passive subjunctive. The tense and voice match 2 Cor. 9:2, but the subjunctive mood shows there is an element of contingency based on the volition of the believers at Corinth related to the collection (lit. "this matter").

**9:4 "if any Macedonians come with me"** This is a third class conditional sentence, which means potential action. These representatives are mentioned in 2 Cor. 8:19-24. In Acts 20:4, where the representatives to Jerusalem with this offering are mentioned, none from Corinth are listed. Some have asserted that it was possible that Titus, who went earlier, was their representative, but there is no mention



of him in Acts.

■ There are three aorist subjunctive verbs in 2 Cor. 9:4 which introduce an element of contingency based on the actions of the Achaian churches.

**NASB** "we - not to speak of you -"  
**NKJV** "we (not to mention you!)"  
**NRSV** "we. . .to say nothing of you -"  
**NJB** "we - to say nothing of yourselves -"

The problem which is translated in these different ways relates to the pronoun and how it should relate to the previous verb ("should be shamed," *kataischunthōmen*, aorist passive subjunctive, plural). The UBS<sup>4</sup> shows three options.

1. "*lego*" (present active subjunctive, singular) - MSS P<sup>46</sup>, C\*, D, F, G
2. "*legōmen*" - (present active subjunctive, plural) - MSS κ, B, C<sup>2</sup>
3. omit - MS K

The UBS4 gives option #1 a "B" rating (almost certain). Paul uses the first person singular in 2 Cor. 9:1, 2, 3, and 5 (Metzger, p. 582).

**NASB** "by this confidence"  
**NKJV** "by this confident boasting"  
**NRSV** "in this undertaking"  
**TEV** "for feeling so sure of you"  
**NJB** "by our confidence in you"

Why would Paul and the Corinthian church be ashamed? The term *hupostasis* (i.e., NASB, "confidence"), according Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Danker's *Greek-English Lexicon*, cannot be translated "confidence," but must be "frame of mind" or possibly "realization" of the collection for the poor in Jerusalem (cf. NRSV) (p. 847 #2 and #3). Paul was worried about the offering, not his boasting. This fits the word's usage in Heb. 1:3. However, when comparing this same term usage in 2 Cor. 11:17, "confident boasting," then one understands why NASB translated it this way in this verse.

The word "boasting" (NKJV) is missing in most early Greek manuscripts (i.e., MSS P<sup>46</sup>, κ\*, B, C, D\*, F, G). It is present in MSS κ<sup>2</sup>, D<sup>1</sup>. The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives its omission a "B" rating (almost certain).

**9:5** There are three words in this verse which begin with *pro* (i.e., before).

1. Paul sent the church representatives in advance (*proerchomai*, cf. Acts 20:5,13)
2. Paul wanted them to prepare in advance (*prokatartizō*, cf. Acts 3:18,24; 7:52)
3. Paul wanted them to fulfill their previous promise (*proepēngellomai*, cf. Rom. 1:2)

■ "**bountiful gift**" This is *eulogia* (i.e., literally "good word"). This term is also used in 2 Cor. 9:6 in the sense of "abundant."

This term has a wide semantic field. Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, list six senses (vol. 2, p. 108).

1. praise (cf. James 3:9)
2. flattery (cf. Rom. 16:18)
3. blessing (cf. 1 Cor. 10:16; James 3:10)
4. benefit (cf. Rom. 15:29)
5. gift (cf. 2 Cor. 9:5)
6. large amount (cf. 2 Cor. 9:6)

The #3 usage follows the Septuagint (cf. Jdgs. 1:15).

**NASB** "as a bountiful gift and not affected by covetousness"

NKJV	"as a <i>matter</i> of generosity and not as a grudging obligation"
NRSV	"as a voluntary gift and not as an extortion"
TEV	"you give because you want to, not because you have to"
NJB	"as a real gift and not an imposition"

Literally "thus as a blessing and not as greediness." Paul's whole discussion about giving in this literary unit (i.e., 2 Cor. 8-9) is written in tactful and positive ways, but this phrase shows that there was an element of opposition in the church. Paul wanted the church at Corinth to feel a part of the larger fellowship of his churches and be a part of this corporate benevolent ministry. He knew, however, some would take this opportunity to accuse him of being overbearing in regards to this contribution. So to stop all possible criticism, he said, "Get it done before I get there!"

The *Jerome Biblical Commentary* says that the noun often translated "greed" should, in this context, be translated "gift grudgingly given" (p. 285).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-15**

**<sup>6</sup>Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. <sup>7</sup>Each one *must do* just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. <sup>8</sup>And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; <sup>9</sup>as it is written, "He scattered abroad, he gave to the poor, His righteousness endures forever." <sup>10</sup>Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; <sup>11</sup>you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God. <sup>12</sup>For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God. <sup>13</sup>Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for *your* obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all, <sup>14</sup>while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you. <sup>15</sup>Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!**

**9:6 "he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly"** This seems to be an allusion to Pro. 11:24-25 (cf. Pro. 19:17; 22:9). It reflects Jesus' teaching on giving (cf. Matt. 7:2; Mark 4:24; Luke.6:38). The agricultural metaphor of sowing is often used in the Bible; sometimes in an eschatological, judicial sense (cf. Gal. 6:7), but also as a way of referring to supernatural actions like the resurrection (cf. 1 Cor. 15:35-37). In this context it speaks of one seed producing many seeds as a way of referring to abundance. But first the seed must be given away (i.e., sown)!

**9:7 "Each one *must do* just as he has purposed in his heart"** This is a perfect middle indicative. This is one of the key principles in spiritual giving. It ranks alongside 8:12 in giving believers major guidelines on stewardship.

▣ **"heart"** See full note at 1 Cor. 14:25.

▣ **"not grudgingly or under compulsion"** Spiritual giving must be voluntary and with the proper motive (cf. 2 Cor. 8:12). I am personally appalled when I hear OT tithing preached (usually from Malachi or Leviticus) as (1) a mandate for personal wealth or (2) a threat to physical health or well being. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: TITHING](#) at 2 Cor. 8:8.

▣ **"God loves a cheerful giver"** This seems to be from the Pro. 22:8 in the Septuagint. The statement does not occur in the MT. We get the English term, "hilarious," from this Greek root. The same term is used

in connection to mercy in Rom. 12:8. In the Koine Greek papyri (i.e., magical texts) the term *hilaros* (happy) is synonymous to *hileōs* (mercy). Because of this Moulton and Milligan, in *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, think it is used in the sense of gracious (p. 303).

**9:8 "God is able"** This is a powerful testimony of God's character and a wonderful title (i.e., "to Him who is able," cf. Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:20; Jude 24). Believers trust, love, and serve a God who acts!

■ **"to make all grace abound to you"** This phrase does not refer to the Corinthians' giving, it refers to God's basic nature, which is grace. Because of God's nature and God's gift (i.e., Jesus), believers must also give. Believers reflect the family characteristics of God.

■ **"always having all sufficiency"** Notice the number of inclusive "all"s (i.e., *pas*).

1. all grace (*pasan*)
2. always (*pantote*)
3. all sufficiency (*pasan*)
4. in everything (*panti*)
5. every good deed (*pan*)

Christian giving affects all of life! God provides for all needs (cf. Matt. 6:19-34).

The term "sufficiency" comes from two Greek terms, "self" and "contentment" (cf. 1 Tim. 6:6-10; Phil. 4:11-12,19; Heb. 13:15). A. T. Robertson's *Word Pictures In The New Testament*, vol. 4, p. 248 and M. R. Vincent's *Word Studies*, p. 831, both claim that the use of this term shows Paul was familiar with Stoic thought and terms. But he redefines them in light of the gospel. See Bruce Winter, *Philo and Paul Among the Sophists*.

■ **"you may have an abundance for every good deed"** God will give those who share their resources with Him, more resources. This abundance, however, is not for the personal use of the individual, but for the causes of Christ (cf. Eph. 4:28). The Christian giver becomes a channel of God's provisions for the needs of others. This is the truth that is so often lost in our teaching on Christian stewardship. Yes, covenant blessing and abundance will occur, but they are to be passed on for the Kingdom, not retained! Believers are saved to serve and blessed to give!

**9:9 "as it is written"** This is a quote from Ps. 112:9 from the Septuagint (i.e., 111:9). This quote includes one of the rare uses of the term "righteousness" (see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:30) to refer to human action (cf. Matt. 6:1). In Judaism it came to refer to the weekly practice of Jewish almsgiving for the poor of the synagogue (cf. Ps. 112:1-6). Usually in the NT, righteousness is a gift of God in Christ apart from human action or merit.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: ALMSGIVING**

■ **"forever"** See Special Topic below.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: FOREVER ('OLAM)**

**9:10** The first part of this verse seems to be a quote from Isa. 55:10, and the second part seems to be quoted from Hosea 10:12. These verses assert

1. God's ownership and provision of all things
2. believers' stewardship

God is the source, but believers receive a blessing when they share.

God's ownership is communicated through the Greek word "supplies" (i.e., *chorēgeō*), which comes into English as "chorus."

This term in Koine Greek was used of a benefactor lavishly supplying for a local choir. Often modern believers attribute their prosperity to their own creativity, work ethic, accumulated knowledge, or self-effort. However, a biblical worldview attributes all resources to God. See Special Topic: Servant Leadership at 1

Cor. 4:1.

**NASB, NRSV** "increase the harvest of your righteousness"  
**NKJV** "increase the fruits of your righteousness"  
**TEV** "produce a rich harvest from your generosity"  
**NJB** "make the harvest of your righteousness a bigger one"

In 2 Cor. 8:5 the term "grace" is used in several different senses, so too, righteousness. The theological mystery is how do believers receive a blessing or reward for things which God gives and inspires? This is the mystery of a Sovereign God and mandated covenant response! Believers give because

1. God gives
2. Jesus' example
3. human need
4. new world view
5. indwelling Spirit.

Giving is the natural result of salvation. A stingy Christian is a contradiction in terms!

**9:11 "you will be enriched in everything"** This is present passive participle of *ploutizō* with "in everything" fronted for emphasis. From 8:7-9, it is obvious that this does not refer to material blessings only, but also spiritual blessings (cf. 2 Cor. 6:10; 1 Cor. 1:5).

▣ **"all liberality"** Notice two more *pas* inclusives (cf. 2 Cor. 9:8). This Greek term can also mean single-mindedness (i.e., sincerity, purity) and genuineness (cf. 2 Cor. 8:2; 9:11,13). See note at 2 Cor. 1:12.

▣ **"producing thanksgiving to God"** The emphasis of this closing section of chapter 9 is on God's receiving the glory from believers' sharing (cf. 2 Cor. 9:11-13). This reminds me of Matt. 5:16, where it says, "they will see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Paul's major purpose in linking the mother church in Jerusalem with his Gentile churches was that an atmosphere of love and appreciation might develop (cf. 2 Cor. 9:14).

**9:12 "service"** This is the Greek term *leitourgia* (a compound from public and work) from which we get the English term "liturgy."

Originally it referred to someone who did public service at their own expense. In this sense it is similar to *chorēgeō* of 2 Cor. 9:10.

▣ **"fully supplying the needs of the saints"** This is the Greek term *prosanaplēroō*, (present active periphrastic indicative), which is *pros* plus *anaplēroō*, which means to fill up or complete (cf. 1 Cor. 14:16; 16:17). Paul uses many intensified, verbal forms with *pros* (cf. 2 Cor. 9:5), however, the exact resulting meaning is uncertain. Paul uses the same intensified form in 2 Cor. 11:9.

The term "needs" is literally "the things lacking" (cf. 1 Cor. 16:17; 2 Cor. 8:8,13,14; 11:8). The poor believers in Jerusalem had real needs that these Gentile churches could meet. For "saints" see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:2.

▣ **"overflowing through many thanksgivings to God"** The needy in Jerusalem and all believers in Palestine were thanking God for the concern and sacrificial help of the Gentile churches (cf. 2 Cor. 9:13).

**9:13 "proof"** This is the word for "test" (i.e., *dokimē*) used in 2 Cor. 2:9; 8:2; 13:3. See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 3:13.

▣ **"this ministry"** This refers to the contribution of Paul's Gentile churches to the mother church in Jerusalem. This is the same word used in 2 Cor. 9:1.

**SPECIAL TOPIC: CONFESSION**

NASB, NKJV,  
NRSV, NJB "obedience"  
TEV "loyalty"

This is literally the term "submission" (i.e., *hupotagē*, cf. Gal. 2:5; 1 Tim. 2:11; 3:4), but used in the sense of obedience because the object is "the gospel," not a person.

### [SPECIAL TOPIC: SUBMISSION \(HUPOTASSŌ\)](#)

- **"confession of the gospel of Christ"** Confession means "to agree with" (cf. 1 Tim. 6:12-13; 1 John 1:9). In this context their metaphorical confession is their liberal contribution, which confirmed their relationship with the other Gentile churches and with Christ. Eternal life has observable characteristics!
  - **"contribution"** This is the term *koinōnia* (cf. Rom. 15:26), which means "joint participation with." Here it refers to money given for the poor of the church in Jerusalem (see note at 1 Cor. 16:1). See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:9.
  - **"and to all"** This is a difficult phrase to interpret. It must somehow refer to the Corinthian influence in encouraging other Gentile churches to participate in the collection (cf. 2 Cor. 9:2).
- 9:14** This verse refers to those who receive the collection (i.e., the poor of the Jerusalem church and all its members). Paul wanted these two wings of the early church to be inseparably united.
- **"surpassing"** *Huperballō*. See Special Topic: Paul's Use of *Huper* Compounds at 1 Cor. 2:1.

**9:15 "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift"** Some take this context to refer to the Corinthian monetary gift, but because of

1. Jesus' great sacrifice mentioned in 2 Cor. 8:9
2. the gospel of Christ mentioned in 2 Cor. 9:1,

It probably refers to the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah. James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament* (p. 184) mentions that the "gift of God" in Acts refers to the Holy Spirit (i.e., the new age, cf. Acts 2:38; 8:20; 10:45; 11:17).

The self-giving ministry of the Son (cf. 2 Cor. 8:9) was meant to

1. inspire these believers to give thanks (i.e., *eucharistia*, 2 Cor. 9:11,12; *charis*, 2 Cor. 9:13) to God
2. impel them to share their financial resources with needy believers

NASB, NKJV,  
NRSV "indescribable"  
TEV "priceless"  
NJB "beyond all telling"

This is the term *ekdiēgeomai*, which means to explain completely or mention all the details, plus the Alpha privative, which negates it. In some ways the love of God is too wonderful for humans to grasp all its facets (cf. Deut. 30:11; Job 11:7; Ps. 139:6; Pro. 30:18; Isa. 55:8-9; Rom. 11:33).

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Outline in your own words the principles of stewardship mentioned in chapters 8 and 9.

2. Define in your own words what the quote from 2 Cor. 9:6 and 2 Cor. 9:10 mean in your life.

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# 2 CORINTHIANS 10

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Paul Defends His Ministry	The Spiritual War	An Appeal for True Apostleship	Paul Defends His Ministry	Paul's Reply to Accusations of Weakness
10:1-6	10:1-6	10:1-6	10:1-6	10:1-11
	Reality of Paul's Authority			
10:7-11	10:7-11	10:7-11	10:7-11	
	Limits of Paul's Authority			His Reply to the Accusation of Ambition
10:12-18	10:12-18	10:12-18	10:12-16 10:17-18	10:12-18

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Chapters 10 through 13 form a literary unit where Paul defends himself against the accusations of the false teachers. The false teachers had made Paul himself the crux of the argument. Therefore, reluctantly, he defends himself on human grounds, using their catch words and rhetorical style. His purpose ultimately was to defend the gospel.
- B. Some examples of the charges levied against Paul.
  1. He was condescending when face to face, but courageous in his letters, 2 Cor. 10:1,9,11.
  2. He was acting from the lowest human motives, 2 Cor. 10:2.
  3. His personal appearance was not pleasant and his rhetorical delivery was poor; 2 Cor. 10:2,10
  4. He preached simply for money, 2 Cor. 11:8,12; 12:16.

### C. Paul's enemies

1. There seem to be three groups involved.
  - a. a native Corinthian contingent (the factions of 1 Corinthians 1-4)
  - b. a Jewish contingent from Palestine (similar to Judaizers, 2 Cor. 10-13).
  - c. possibly a hybrid of both
2. From 1 Corinthians there seem to be groups attacking him for and from opposition positions
  - a. a legalistic group (asceticism)
  - b. an antinomian group (libertines)

D. Because Paul mentions several letters that he had written to the church at Corinth, which apparently have not been preserved, there has been scholarly speculation about 2 Corinthians being a composite of these lost letters. It is certainly true that Paul's use of the Epistolary aorist in referring to his different letters has caused confusion as well as the obvious different literary units which make up 2 Corinthians, which often seem to be out of chronological and rational arrangement.

It is surely possible that the disjunctions were caused by Paul writing this letter over a period of time and that new information continued to arrive after he had written a literary unit. The letter begins in a positive affirmation, but then turns negative.

Personally, the possibility that some of Paul's letters were lost does not bother me (possibly they contained information that the Spirit did not want to become Scripture), but the proposed composite nature of 2 Corinthians, which has no evidence in the Greek manuscript tradition nor church tradition, but is simply the speculation of modern western scholars does bother me! We must not force ancient eastern thinkers and writers into modern western literary categories.

### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

#### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 10:1-6

**<sup>1</sup>Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ-I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent! <sup>2</sup>I ask that when I am present I need not be bold with the confidence with which I propose to be courageous against some, who regard us as if we walked according to the flesh. <sup>3</sup>For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, <sup>4</sup>for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. <sup>5</sup>We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, <sup>6</sup>and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.**

**10:1 "Now I, Paul, myself urge you"** Paul does not use the "we" of previous chapters because he is defending himself personally before the accusations of the false teachers. Paul used *autos* and *ego* (cf. 2 Cor. 12:13; Rom. 7:25; 9:3; 15:24; and in Gal. 5:2 *egō* and *Paulos*) to emphasize that this was his personal plea.

For "urge" see full note at 2 Cor. 1:4-11.

▣ **"by the meekness and gentleness of Christ"** Paul used the appropriate attitude and methodologies even with these false teachers (cf. Matt. 11:29). Meekness was not seen as a virtue by Greek thinkers (i.e., Socrates, Aristotle, Stoics). This reflects one of their criticisms of Paul. M. R. Vincent's *Word Studies*, vol. 2, asserts that in the Septuagint that "meekness" (*praus*, 2 Cor. 10:1), "meek" (*tapeinos*, 2 Cor. 10:1), and "poor" (*penēs*, v 9:9) are used to translate the same Hebrew words. They contrast the rich and powerful vs. the lowly and down-trodden (p. 832).

▣ **"who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent"** This evaluation



may refer to Paul's severe letter that was lost (cf. 2 Cor. 1:9-11). Notice his play on the concept of "meekness." He calls Christ meek (i.e., *praus* used of the Messiah in Matt. 21:5 and of believers in Matt. 5:5; 1 Pet. 3:4,15). In this phrase he uses the synonym *tapeinos* (cf. Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, p. 748), which is also used of Jesus (cf. Matt. 11:29) and of Paul (cf. 2 Cor. 11:7; 12:21).

■ **"bold"** See note at 2 Cor. 5:6.

**10:2 "I ask"** This is the Greek term *deomai*, which means to ask with urgency or to plead. It is synonymous to the term (i.e., *parakaleō*, cf. Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, p. 408) Paul used it in 2 Cor. 10:1 (cf. 2 Cor. 2:8; 5:20; 6:1; 8:6; 9:5; 12:8,18; 13:11). He is urgently pleading with these believers to reevaluate what they have heard from the false teachers.

■ **"that when I am present"** Paul did not want to return to Corinth until things had changed. He did not want to be bold, but gentle.

■ **"I need not be bold with the confidence with which I propose to be courageous against some"** There is a play on the Greek word for "flesh." The false teachers were accusing Paul of acting from the lowest, base human motives (i.e., in the flesh). While Paul admits that he is in the flesh (i.e., physical body, cf. 2 Cor. 10:3), he strongly asserts that he is not acting from fleshly motives (cf. 2 Cor. 1:17; 2:17; 4:3; 7:2; 10:3-4).

For "confidence" see note at 2 Cor. 3:4.

■ **"propose. . . regard"** This is a play on the Greek word *logizomai*. Paul uses the verb (present middle [deponent] indicative) to describe his thoughts and the participle (present middle [deponent]) to describe the false teachers' false accusations. This may even have been a technical term from the Sophists (see Bruce W. Winter, *Philo and Paul Among the Sophists*). See fuller note of the term at 2 Cor. 3:5.

■ **"walked"** This is a Hebrew idiom for lifestyle behavior (e.g., Eph. 4:1,17; 5:2,1).

■ **"according to the flesh"** They were judging Paul in light of their society's norms (cf. 1 Cor. 9:8; 15:32; Rom. 3:5; Gal. 1:11; 3:15). Believers have a different standard—the revealed word of God: (1) Old Testament; (2) Christ; and (3) New Testament. See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:26.

**10:3-6** Paul uses a series of military metaphors to describe the daily struggle between the Christian and spiritual wickedness (cf. Rom. 7; 8:3-11). This spiritual wickedness is defined in 2 Cor. 10:5 as human logic, wisdom, and argumentation against the gospel (cf. Eph. 6:10-18).

**10:3 "in the flesh"** See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:26.

■ **"war"** This is the term *strateuō*, from which we get the English term strategy. It was used of a soldier (cf. 1 Cor. 9:7; 2 Tim. 2:4) or metaphorically of a spiritual battle (cf. here and 1 Tim. 1:18). There is an ongoing conflict in the spiritual realm.

**10:4-5** There is a series of things mentioned in 2 Cor. 10:4-5 which Paul attacks.

1. destruction of fortresses (*ochurōma*)
2. destruction of speculation (*logizomai*)
3. destruction of every lofty thing (*huphōma*)
4. taking captive every thought (*noēma*)

These things possibly refer to the Sophists' rhetoric, which Paul had depreciated in 1 Cor. 1-4 (cf. Bruce W. Winter, *Philo and Paul Among the Sophists*, pp. 180-202).

**10:4 "the weapons of our warfare"** Paul has alluded to this spiritual warfare earlier in 2 Cor. 6:7. The book of Romans was written from Corinth about this same time. He also mentions this warfare in Rom.

6:13 and 13:12. Peter uses the verb form in 1 Pet. 4:1, where he encourages believers to arm themselves in their fleshly struggles.

A good resource book in this area is *Three Crucial Questions About Spiritual Warfare* by Clinton E. Arnold, published by Baker.

■ **"for the destruction of fortresses"** This may be an allusion to Pro. 21:22 (larger context 2 Cor. 10:13-31). There has been much discussion about the meaning of this phrase among commentators, but it is obvious that 2 Cor. 10:5 is a description of what spiritual fortresses Paul is referring to. It appears he is addressing the false theology of the false teachers.

**10:5**  
**NASB** "destroying speculations"  
**NKJV** "casting down arguments"  
**NRSV** "destroy arguments"  
**TEV** "pull down"  
**NJB** "It is ideas that we demolish"

See note at 2 Cor. 3:5.

**NASB** "and every lofty thing"  
**NKJV** "and every high thing"  
**NRSV** "and every proud obstacle"  
**TEV** "every proud obstacle"  
**NJB** "every presumptuous notion"

This is the word for "height" used in the sense of lofty, human thinking. This reflects the false teachers' over-emphasis on

1. knowledge and human reasoning (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18-25; Col. 2:8)
2. legalism (cf. Col. 2:16-23)

■ **"taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ"** The verb is a compound of "spear" and "to capture in battle." These false teachers were capturing the thought and minds of the Corinthian believers. Paul would have us "renew our minds" (cf. Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23); protect our minds (cf. Phil. 4:7). Salvation is free, but the Christian life is characterized by obedience, service, worship, and perseverance. These are covenant responsibilities. There is an ongoing spiritual conflict!

Paul uses the word "thought" (*noēma*) often in 2 Corinthians (cf. 2 Cor. 2:11; 3:14; 4:4; 11:3), but only one other time, in Phil. 4:7. The Corinthian over-emphasis on knowledge may have been the reason for his recurrent use of the term. *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, Harold K. Moulton, ed., lists several connotations (p. 280).

1. the mind, the understanding, intellect - 2 Cor. 3:14; 4:4
2. the heart, soul, affections, feelings, disposition - 2 Cor. 11:3
3. a conception of the mind, thought, purpose, device - 2 Cor. 2:11; 10:5

**10:6** Paul warns the false teachers and their followers that their day of reckoning is coming. They accused him of being weak, but they simply misunderstood his patience with them (1) for Christ's sake and (2) for the corporate health of this church. Paul is warning this church to deal with its problems before he arrives or else he will deal with them (cf. 1 Cor. 5:3-5).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 10:7-11**

**<sup>7</sup>You are looking at things as they are outwardly. If anyone is confident in himself that he is Christ's, let him consider this again within himself, that just as he is Christ's, so also are we.**

**<sup>8</sup>For even if I boast somewhat further about our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I will not be put to shame, <sup>9</sup>for I do not wish to seem as if I would terrify you by my letters. <sup>10</sup>For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive and his speech contemptible." <sup>11</sup>Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when absent, such persons we are also in deed when present.**

**10:7 "You are looking"** In Greek the inflected form could be an imperative (cf. NRSV, NJB) or an indicative (cf. NASB, TEV, NIV). The NKJV and ASV translate it as a question.

The church at Corinth was analyzing and criticizing on a fleshly/worldly/physical level instead of a gospel focus.

■ **"If"** This is a first class conditional sentence. There were some in the church at Corinth who had deceived themselves (cf. 1 Cor. 14:37) as to their spiritual condition and standing (i.e., "is confident," perfect active indicative).

■ **"himself"** Paul uses this term, *eautou*, twice in this verse. These false teachers had deceived themselves. This is the hardest spiritual condition to reason with or to affect.

■ **"that just as he is Christ's so also are we"** The false teachers were claiming their own spiritual authority and standing, but were denying Paul's.

**10:8 "if"** This is a third class conditional sentence, which implies potential action (cf. 2 Cor. 11:1-12:13).

■ **"boast"** This term (i.e., *kauchaomai* and its other forms) is used so often in Paul's Corinthian letters.

1. *kauchaomai* (glory, boast, cf. 1 Cor. 1:29,31; 3:21; 4:7; 13:3; 2 Cor. 5:12; 7:14; 9:2; 10:8,13,15,16,17; 11:12,16,18,30; 12:1,5,6,9)
2. *kauchēma* (cf. 1 Cor. 5:6; 9:15,16; 2 Cor. 1:14; 5:12; 9:3)
3. *kauchēsis* (cf. 1 Cor. 15:31; 2 Cor. 1:12; 7:4,14; 8:24; 11:10,17)

See fuller note on use of the word at 2 Cor. 1:12 and Special Topic at 1 Cor. 5:6.

■ **"about our authority, which the Lord gave"** This refers to Paul's Damascus Road experience (cf. Acts 9:15,16; Rom. 1:5; Gal. 2:9).

■ **"for building you up and not for destroying you"** Paul repeats this phrase in 2 Cor. 13:10. This is similar to the call of Isaiah (cf. Isaiah 6) and Jeremiah (cf. Jeremiah 1), except they were called to do both! Paul uses the same verb (i.e., *kathairesis*), which he used in 2 Cor. 10:4 (twice) for destroying strongholds of human reasoning. Paul is called to destroy some things and ideas, but not the church itself. He is called to defend and protect the church (cf. 2 Cor. 10:9). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: EDIFY](#) at 1 Cor. 8:1.

■ **"I will not be put to shame"** Paul is going to defend himself because the false teachers had made him the issue. He defends himself to defend (1) the authority he had been given and (2) the gospel he preached.

This may reflect the OT promises of God (cf. Rom. 9:33 and 10:11, quoting Isa. 28:16), where those who trust in God will not be ashamed or disappointed. Paul knew in Whom he trusted!

Even if Paul had boasted too much (cf. NRSV, TEV) in his call and appointment, it was still true and God would defend him! Those who reject Paul's authority are condemned (cf. 1 Cor. 14:37-38).

**10:9** Paul's letters were to promote their repentance, not to bring condemnation (cf. 2 Cor. 7:5-13a). But for the false teachers it was a different story (cf. 2 Cor. 10:8,11; 13:10).

**10:10 "For they say"** "They say" follows MSS B, the Latin Vulgate, and the Peshitta (Syriac translation of

the fifth century). Most other Greek manuscripts have "he," which may refer to a ring leader of the false teachers (cf. 2 Cor. 10:7,11; 11:4).

▣ **"his personal presence is unimpressive"** A second century tradition of Paul's physical description comes from Thessalonica in part of a book entitled *Paul and Thekla*. It says that he was short, bald, bow-legged, had bushy eyebrows and protruding eyes. Paul was not a physically attractive man (cf. Gal. 4:14). Some of these physical characteristics may be related to his thorn in the flesh (cf. 2 Cor. 12:7), which I think was eye problems, probably related to his "road to Damascus" blinding.

It is possible that this phrase, like the next one, refers to Paul's public speaking skills, which were a major item of contention (cf. 1 Cor. 1:17). This phrase often was used of a "stage presence" (cf. Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth*, p. 35).

▣ **"and his speech contemptible"** This is a Perfect passive participle. This is a strong Greek term (cf. 1 Cor. 1:28; 6:4; 16:11; Rom. 14:3,10). Paul was not a polished public speaker (i.e., Greek rhetorical style, cf. 1 Cor. 1:17; 2 Cor. 11:6). Apollos was the eloquent, rhetorically trained preacher from Alexandria. However, Paul claims that though unskilled in rhetorical style (cf. 2 Cor. 11:6), his message and authority were from Christ.

**10:11** The false teacher(s) have accused Paul of having strong letters, but a weak personal presentation. Paul affirms that the strength which they affirmed in his letters would be equaled by the strength of his personal presence if he had to come personally and set things straight himself!

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 10:12-18**

**<sup>12</sup>For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding. <sup>13</sup>But we will not boast beyond *our* measure, but within the measure of the sphere which God apportioned to us as a measure, to reach even as far as you. <sup>14</sup>For we are not overextending ourselves, as if we did not reach to you, for we were the first to come even as far as you in the gospel of Christ; <sup>15</sup>not boasting beyond *our* measure, *that is*, in other men's labors, but with the hope that as your faith grows, we will be, within our sphere, enlarged even more by you, <sup>16</sup>so as to preach the gospel even to the regions beyond you, *and* not to boast in what has been accomplished in the sphere of another. <sup>17</sup>But he who boasts is to boast in the Lord. <sup>18</sup>For it is not he who commends himself that is approved, but he whom the Lord commends.**

**10:12 "but when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves"** Paul has alluded to human commendations in 2 Cor. 3:1 (cf. 2 Cor. 10:18); now he expands this to human comparisons. Obviously these false teachers were comparing themselves to Paul in such a way as to accentuate their position and depreciate his.

Paul knew from his study of the OT (cf. 1 Sam. 16:7; Pro. 21:2) how fruitless this was. He was probably also familiar with Jesus' teaching about people who justify themselves (cf. Luke 10:29; 16:15; 18:9,14).

There is a note of sarcasm in this verse as there is in 2 Cor. 10:1. Paul used this literary form often in 1 Corinthians.

There is an obvious word play between the two aorist active infinitives.

1. *egkrinai* (*en* and *krinō*), judge as belonging to the same category
2. *sugkrinai* (*sun* and *krinō*), judge by comparing

In codex Bezae (fifth century uncial MS) there is a phrase left out at the end of 2 Cor. 10:12 and the beginning of 2 Cor. 10:13. It seems that a scribe's eye moved from "ou" of 2 Cor. 10:12 to "ouk" of 2 Cor. 10:13 and left out the intervening words ("do not understand. But we will not"). See the second appendix on Textual Criticism. The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives the phrase's inclusion a "B" rating (almost certain).

- **"they are without understanding** This was quite a shocking statement.
  1. to Greek philosophers it would depreciate their claim to superior spiritual knowledge
  2. to Hebrew thinkers it would be an allusion to the animals.

**10:13** Paul is alluding to his divine call and mandate (i.e., his "road to Damascus" experience, cf. Acts 9; 22:3-16; 26:9-18) to be an Apostle to the Gentiles. He was not comparing or commending, but stating God's call.

God's call on him as special representative to the Gentiles even included the church at Corinth (cf. 2 Cor. 10:14-15).

- **"the sphere which God apportioned to us"** The NASB Study Bible (p. 1701) has a good comment on this phrase.

**"10:13 the sphere which God apportioned to us.** The picture Paul has in mind may be that of an athletic contest in which lanes are marked out for the different runners. In that case 'sphere' should be rendered 'lane' (also in 2 Cor. 10:15-16). In intruding themselves into Corinth, the false apostles had crossed into Paul's lane, which was the lane that God had marked out and that had brought him to the Corinthians as their genuine apostle. He has no intention of invading the territory marked out for others and claiming their work as his own, as these false teachers were doing. Others understand the Greek word in question to refer to an assigned sphere of authority."

**10:14 "For we are not overextending"** This is another "*huper*" compound, *huperekeinō*. See Special Topic: Paul's Use of *Huper* Compounds at 1 Cor. 2:1.

- **"we were the first to come even as far as you in the gospel of Christ"** Paul was the founder of the Corinthian church, yet the false teachers were trying to take credit (cf. 2 Cor. 10:18b).

**10:15 "not boasting beyond our measure. . . in other men's labors"** The false teachers were taking credit for the Corinthian church, which Paul established.

**10:16 "so as to preach the gospel even to the regions beyond you"** This seems to refer to Paul's desire to go to Rome and/or Spain (cf. Acts 19:21; Rom. 15:22ff). He wanted established churches to help him both with a contribution for Jerusalem and to enable him to travel to the western Mediterranean and establish more churches.

For "beyond," this is another "*huper*" compound, (*huperekeinē*), see Special Topic: Paul's Use of *Huper* Compounds at 1 Cor. 2:1.

**10:17 "he who boasts is to boast in the lord"** This is a quote from the Septuagint of Jer. 9:23-24. It is also quoted in 1 Cor. 1:31. All human boasting is folly. See Special Topic: Boasting at 2 Cor. 1:12.

**10:18** The real question is which faction, teacher, or theology does Jesus approve (cf. 1 Cor. 4:1-5).

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Explain the obvious break between chapters 9 and 10.
2. What were some of the charges of the false teachers against Paul?
3. Why does Paul use military terms to describe his struggle against the false teachers?
4. Were these false teachers sincere Christians who were just wrong on minor points of theology or

were they cult leaders who were trying to pervert men from the truth of the Gospel?

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# 2 CORINTHIANS 11

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Paul and the False Apostles	Concern for Their Faithfulness	Paul's Reply to Opponents	Paul and the False Apostles	Paul is Driven to Sound His Own Praises (11:1-12:18)
11:1-6	11:1-4 Paul and False Apostles 11:5-15	11:1-6	11:1-4 11:5-6	11:1-6
11:7-11		11:7-11	11:7-11	11:7-15
11:12-15		11:12-15	11:12-15	
Paul's Suffering As an Apostle	Reluctant Boasting		Paul's Suffering As an Apostle	
11:16-29	11:16-21 Suffering for Christ 11:22-33	11:16-21a 11:21b-29	11:16-21a 11:21b-29	11:16-21a 11:21b-29
11:30-33		11:30-33	11:30-33	11:30-33

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

#### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. 2 Corinthians 10-13 form a literary unit. In this section that is so different from the previous chapters in 2 Corinthians, Paul defends himself against the attacks of false teachers. They had made Paul himself the object of ridicule in their attempt to discredit his gospel.

B. Paul answers the charges of his critics in chapter 2 Cor. 11:4,8,12-15,18-20.

C. Paul uses irony and sarcasm to jog the memory of the Corinthian Christians concerning his ministry (cf. 2 Cor. 11:5, 7, 19, 20, 21).

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 11:1-6

**<sup>1</sup>I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness; but indeed you are bearing with me. <sup>2</sup>For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. <sup>3</sup>But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. <sup>4</sup>For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear *this* beautifully. <sup>5</sup>For I consider myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles. <sup>6</sup>But even if I am unskilled in speech, yet I am not so in knowledge; in fact, in every way we have made *this* evident to you in all things.**

**11:1 "I wish that you would bear with me"** This is an imperfect middle indicative. The middle voice matches the emphatic personal introduction to chapter 10. The Imperfect tense can mean (1) repeated action in past time or (2) the beginning of an action. Number two fits this context best. See fuller note on "bear" at 2 Cor. 11:4.

▣ **"in a little foolishness"** Paul has previously stated that physical comparison is foolishness, but the false teachers had used him as the object of ridicule. Therefore, he uses the Sophist's rhetorical style (i.e., boasting) against them (i.e., a sarcastic parody). He had to defend himself before this church for their own good. He felt silly in having to do this as verses 17 and 21 affirm.

▣ **"indeed you are bearing with me"** This is either a present middle indicative (NASB, NKJV, NJB) or a Present middle imperative (NRSV, TEV). There are three reasons stated in 2 Cor. 11:2, 4, 5 why they should listen. Each of these reasons is introduced in English by the word "for" (*gar*).

**11:2 "I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ"** Paul, as the founder of this church, is acting like a parent to betroth them to Christ (cf. Eph. 5:22-33; Rev. 19:9; 21:2,9; 22:17). The OT idea of God as husband is found in Isa. 54:5; 62:5; and Hosea 1-3; 11:1-4.

▣ **"I might present you as a pure virgin"** This is the OT terminology for a marriage ceremony. Paul repeats this same theme in Eph. 5:25-27. Paul is subtly rebuking the Corinthian Christians for even listening to the itinerant false teachers. In a sense those who supported them had become spiritually unfaithful (i.e., OT spiritual adultery).

**11:3 "as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness"** This refers to the temptation account found in Genesis 3 (cf. 1 Tim. 2:14). Remember the serpent led Eve away from YHWH in small steps leading to self-assertive independence!

The term deceived (*exapataō*) is used only by Paul in the NT (cf. Rom. 7:11; 16:18; 1 Cor. 3:18; 2 Cor. 11:3; 2 Thess. 2:3; 1 Tim. 2:14). The unintensified form, *apataō*, is used in the Septuagint of Gen. 3:13 of Eve. Paul uses it in Eph. 5:6 and 1 Tim. 2:14 (twice). Deception comes both from without and within. Believers must be constantly on guard.

The term craftiness (*panourgia*) is a compound from "all" (*pan*) and "work" (*ergon*). Paul has used it twice before in his Corinthian letters (cf. 1 Cor. 3:19; 2 Cor. 4:2). Paul understood the spiritual warfare which believers had to face (cf. Eph. 4:14). He states the results of evil on mankind clearly in Romans 1-3



and on believers in Romans 7; Eph. 6:10-19. Paul's theology begins with angelic and human rebellion.

See [SPECIAL TOPIC: SCHEMES](#) at 2 Cor. 2:11.

▣ **"your minds will be led astray"** The verb *phtheirō* is an aorist passive subjunctive. In a further allusion to Genesis 3 Paul used this term for "ruin" or "spoil" in a moral sense several times (cf. 2 Cor. 7:2; 11:3; 1 Cor. 3:17; 15:33; Eph. 4:22). See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 15:42. Believers can be tricked, manipulated, and defeated by evil!

▣ **"from the simplicity"** See note at 2 Cor. 1:12.

▣ **"and purity"** There is a Greek manuscript variant which adds "and purity." It is found in MSS P<sup>46</sup>,  $\kappa^*$ , B, and G (cf. NASB, NRSV, TEV, NIV). It is absent in MSS  $\kappa^c$ , D<sup>c</sup>, H, K, and P (cf. NKJV, NJB, REB). The MS D<sup>\*</sup> has the longer reading also, but the terms are in reverse order. Textual scholars are split on which is original. The inclusion of "purity" picks up on 2 Cor. 11:2 and is included in some very good and geographically diverse ancient manuscripts.

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"of devotion to Christ"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"that is in Christ"</b>
<b>NRSV, TEV,</b>	
<b>NJB, NIV</b>	<b>"devotion to Christ"</b>

The ablative preposition, *apo*, introduces three objects.

1. from simplicity
2. from purity
3. from "to Christ"

What is the referent in 2 Cor. 11:3? Several English translations supply "devotion," but it could refer to "in Christ," which is Paul's famous phrase of personal faith in Christ.

**11:4 "For if one comes"** This a first class conditional sentence, which is assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his literary purpose. "One" seems to refer to the chief false teacher alluded to in 2 Cor. 10:7,10.

▣ **"another Jesus whom we have not preached"** These false teachers were not disagreeing over some peripheral, minor matter, but over the person and work of Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 3:11). It is obvious in putting all the evidence together that these false teachers were a mixture of both the Judaizers as in the book of Galatians and the Hellenists (i.e., *Sophists*). These surrogates from Jerusalem had dropped the circumcision emphasis, probably because of the Jerusalem Council's findings in Acts 15, but they continued their Jewish legalism somehow combined with or refined by Hellenistic (i.e., *Sophists*) thinking.

It is possible that Paul is using the false teachers' charges against him. They may have accused him of "preaching another gospel."

Those of us who believe the Bible is the inspired word of God have several questions to answer.

1. Do we read the NT through the eyes of the OT or does the NT have interpretive preeminence?
2. Are the words of Paul (or any NT author) as inspired as the words of Jesus?
3. Does the presence of "some" diversity among NT authors allow modern interpreters some "wiggle room" on some issues? Do we allow this same thing among the early church interpreters (i.e., Greek and Latin Church Fathers; later church leaders [Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, etc.]?)? Or to put it another way, how does one understand (define, limit) orthodoxy?

▣ **"or you receive a different spirit which you have not received"** Some see this as a reference to the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal. 4:6; TEV), but it seems preferable to relate this to either (1) the "spirit of fear and slavery" (cf. Rom. 8:15; 2 Tim. 1:7) or (2) "the spirit of peace and joy" (cf. Rom. 14:17). For a fuller note on

"spirit" see 1 Cor. 2:11.

The term "different" is *heteros*, which means another of a different kind. Paul is contrasting the messages of the false teachers and himself (cf. Gal. 1:6). There is much similarity between the problems mentioned in Gal. 1:6-9 and here.

■ **"received. . .accepted"** The Greek verbs *lambanō* and *dechomai* are synonymous. Both basic meanings are to take hold of something. The two notes in Louw and Nida's *Greek-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, are helpful.

1. "to receive or accept an object or benefit for which the initiative rests with the giver, but the focus of attention in the transfer is upon the receiver" (p. 572).
2. footnote 31, "There may be some subtle distinction in meaning between *dechomai* and *lambanō* with the latter implying more active participation on the part of the one who receives the gift, but this cannot be determined from existing contexts" (p. 572).

For me as an evangelical Christian, these terms are crucial in an appropriate response to the gospel (cf. John 1:12). The promises of God, the works of Christ, and the wooing of the Spirit must be responded to both initially and continually. This forms the basis of the covenant concept (i.e., God initiates, but humans must respond).

*Lambanō* is recurrent in this context (cf. 2 Cor. 11:4,8,20,24; 12:16).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"you bear <i>this</i> beautifully"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"you may well put up with it"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"you submit to it readily enough"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"you gladly tolerate"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"and you put up with that only too willingly"</b>

This is either a present middle imperative or a present middle indicative. This is biting sarcasm directed at the Corinthian Christians' willingness to listen to these false teachers.

Paul uses this term, *anechomai*, several times in this chapter (cf. 2 Cor. 11:1,4,10,20). In 2 Cor. 11:1 it is used in the sense of "endure" (cf. 1 Cor. 4:12), but in 2 Cor. 11:4,19,20 it is used sarcastically in the sense of "tolerate."

**11:5 "For I consider"** In this literary unit Paul uses this verb, *logizomai*, often (cf. 2 Cor. 10:2,7,11; 11:5; 12:6). It may have been a catch-word or often-used term of the Sophist's false teachers.

■ **"not in the least inferior"** The verb in this phrase is a perfect active infinitive. At no time, past or present, did Paul think of himself as less than these supposed authoritative representatives from Jerusalem (cf. 2 Cor. 12:11). This perspective is also discussed in Gal. 1:11-2:14, where Paul also defends his apostleship.

<b>NASB, NKJV</b>	<b>"to the most eminent apostles"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"to these super-apostles"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"to these very special so-called apostles of yours"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"to the super-apostles"</b>

This sarcastic description is a combination of two Greek terms, *hyper* (i.e., over and above) and *lian* (i.e., great or exceedingly). This descriptive phrase is rare and Paul uses it only here and in 2 Cor. 12:11. Verse 5 is contextually and grammatically linked to 2 Cor. 11:4, which obviously refers to the false teachers (cf. 2 Cor. 11:13-15). Paul is using the term "apostles" sarcastically in its two senses: (1) the Twelve and (2) messengers sent from churches (cf. 2 Cor. 11:13). Apparently these false teachers had some connection with the church in Jerusalem (cf. 2 Cor. 11:22 shows by inference that they claimed a Jewish background; 12:1 shows that they claimed charismatic experiences).

■ **"most eminent"** (*hyperlian*) See Special Topic: Paul's Use of *Huper* Compounds at 1 Cor. 2:1.

**11:6 "But even if"** This is a first class conditional sentence. Paul admitted to them that Greek rhetoric was not his strength. His strength was the inspired content of his messages.

▣ **"I am unskilled in speech"** This term is used in the sense of "untrained" or "amateurish" (cf. Acts 4:13, where it is used of Peter and John or 1 Corinthians 14, where it is used of those who are unlearned in spiritual gifts). It seems to be related to Paul's confession that he was not skilled in rhetoric (cf. 2 Cor. 10:10; 1 Cor. 1:17).

This comment, apparently from the false teachers, shows that they honored rhetorical speaking. This implies a Hellenistic (i.e., Sophists) background. See Bruce W. Winter, *Philo and Paul Among the Sophists*.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 11:7-11**

**<sup>7</sup>Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you without charge? <sup>8</sup>I robbed other churches by taking wages from them to serve you; <sup>9</sup>and when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so. <sup>10</sup>As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be stopped in the regions of Achaia. <sup>11</sup>Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do!**

**11:7 "did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted"** Verse 7 is a question which expects a "no" answer. This is another example of Paul's sarcasm related to the continuing controversy of his not accepting monetary remuneration from the Corinthian church (cf. 1 Cor. 9:3-18).

The word "sin" (*hamartia*) is used in a non-moral sense of "did I make a mistake" or "misjudgment." Remember, context, context, context - determines word meaning. Be careful of pre-set theological definitions of words read into every occurrence!

▣ **"the gospel of God"** Notice the gospel of Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 2:12; 9:13; 10:14) is also the gospel of God!

**11:8 "I robbed other churches"** The Greeks and Romans were used to paying their itinerant teachers, but Paul knew that this would be the source of criticism by the false teachers and he refused to accept monetary help from this church (or any other church while he worked among them, cf. 1 Thess. 2:5-9; 2 Thess. 3:7-9). Paul did accept help from both Philippi and Thessalonica after he had left (cf. Phil. 4:15-18 and possibly 1 Thess. 3:6). Apparently it hurt this church's feelings (cf. 2 Cor. 11:11; 12:13,14; 1 Cor. 9:12,15,18).

▣ **"churches"** See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:2.

▣ **"to serve you"** See Special Topic: Servant Leadership at 1 Cor. 4:1.

**11:10 "As the truth of Christ is in me"** This is an idiomatic way of asserting truthfulness or Paul's sense of inspiration (cf. Rom. 9:1). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: "TRUTH" IN PAUL'S WRITINGS](#) at 2 Cor. 13:8.

▣ **"this boasting of mine will not be stopped in the regions of Achaia"** This is a strong Greek term which is used in the Septuagint for the damming of a river. Paul refused to take money from the Corinthian church and apparently he made this known publicly and often. For "boasting" see full note at 2 Cor. 1:12.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 11:12-15**

**<sup>12</sup>But what I am doing I will continue to do, so that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting. <sup>13</sup>For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as**

**apostles of Christ.** <sup>14</sup>No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. <sup>15</sup>Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds.

**11:12** Paul knew his opponents. He tried to remove every opportunity for their attacks. He limited his freedom and rights to protect and expand the gospel (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13).

**11:13 "For such men are false apostles"** These out-of-town religious leaders, possibly from Jerusalem, claimed authority. Paul calls them pseudo-apostles and pseudo-brothers (cf. 2 Cor. 11:26).

▣ **"deceitful workers"** This word is from the noun which meant "fishing bait." They tried to catch the Corinthian believers for their own purposes and to further their reputations.

▣ **"disguising themselves as apostles of Christ"** These were not sincere Christians who were misled. These were spiritually lost men (cf. 2 Cor. 11:14) attempting to divide the church of God (cf. 1 Cor. 3:10-15). They were wolves in sheep's clothing (cf. Matthew 7; Acts 20:29; 2 Pet. 2:1-22; Jude 1:3-16).

The term "disguising" (i.e., *metaschematizō*) is used in 2 Cor. 11:13,14,15. It speaks of the outward changing form of something or someone (cf. Phil. 3:21). These (i.e., false teachers and Satan) appear to be what they are not!

**11:14 "for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light"** This is an obvious truth, but is nowhere else in the Bible stated in these terms. This may be from rabbinical traditions about Genesis 3 (cf. DSS cave 1, *Manual of Discipline* 3:20,24). Satan's major trick is masquerading as truth (cf. Gen. 3). Evil always tries to mimic or counterfeit the good. False teachers always come from inside the church (cf. 2 Pet. 2; 1 John 2:18-19). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSONAL EVIL](#) at 1 Cor. 7:5.

**11:15 "if"** This is a first class conditional sentence. There were Satanically inspired false teachers within the church at Corinth. They are with us today!

▣ **"servants of righteousness"** Paul does not use "righteousness" often in the sense he uses it here. Here it has the connotation of "goodness" or "rightness" (cf. Matt. 6:1), but not in the theological sense of justification by faith (cf. Romans 4). See Special Topic: Righteousness at 1 Cor. 1:30. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: SERVANT LEADERSHIP](#) at 1 Cor. 4:1.

▣ **"whose end will be according to their deeds"** This seems to be an allusion to Pro. 24:12. It is also the basic truth of the Bible. See full note at 2 Cor. 5:10.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 11:16-21a**

<sup>16</sup>Again I say, let no one think me foolish; but if *you do*, receive me even as foolish, so that I also may boast a little. <sup>17</sup>What I am saying, I am not saying as the Lord would, but as in foolishness, in this confidence of boasting. <sup>18</sup>Since many boast according to the flesh, I will boast also. <sup>19</sup>For you, being so wise, tolerate the foolish gladly. <sup>20</sup>For you tolerate it if anyone enslaves you, anyone devours you, anyone takes advantage of you, anyone exalts himself, anyone hits you in the face. <sup>21</sup>To my shame I *must* say that we have been weak *by comparison*.

**11:16 "let no one think me foolish. . .so that I also may boast a little"** Paul was not comfortable with personal boasting (cf. 2 Cor. 11:1,17). The false teachers had forced him to use their methods (i.e., the style of chapters 10-13 reflects the characteristics of Hellenistic rhetorical forms).

For "foolish" see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 15:36. For "boast" see Special Topic: Boasting at 1 Cor. 5:6.

▣ **"if"** This is an incomplete first class conditional sentence (i.e., no verb). These Corinthian believers were

surprised at Paul's letter.

**11:17** Paul alluded to Jesus' life and attitude in 2 Cor. 10:1 (i.e., by the meekness and gentleness of Christ), but when it came to boasting or human comparisons, Paul must admit there is no precedent in Jesus.

**11:18 "Since many boast according to the flesh, I will boast also"** This is the major focus of chapters 10-13. The false teachers had attacked Paul and his gospel by comparing his heritage and spiritual giftedness with theirs (cf. 2 Cor. 11:8). Paul was distressed that the church had listened to them and had been swayed by their arguments. Therefore, he decided to get down on their level for the purpose of winning this church back to confidence in his leadership and his gospel.

**11:19-20** This is biting sarcasm directed to the Corinthian church. Everything the false teachers accused Paul of, they practiced and the church positively responded to them!

▣ **"tolerate"** See note at 2 Cor. 11:4.

**11:20 "if anyone enslaves you"** This starts a series of five first class conditional sentences. This verb (i.e., *katadouloō*) is only used here and in Gal. 2:4 where it refers to the Judaizers. The Judaizers asserted that one had to become a full Jew before one could become a Christian. How these false teachers relate to the Judaizers is uncertain. The exact rules or rituals which the false teachers at Corinth put forth as necessary for salvation are also uncertain.

▣ **"if anyone devours you"** Paul used this verb only twice, here and in Gal. 5:15, which also describes a church in conflict with false teachers.

**NASB, NRSV,**

**TEV** "takes advantage of you"

**NKJV** "takes from you"

**NJB** "keep you under his orders"

This is the common verb *lambanō*, but with a metaphorical extension of the literal sense of "to take hold of." Here it is to manipulate for personal advantage.

**NASB, NKJV** "exalts himself"

**NRSV** "puts on airs"

**TEV** "look down on you"

**NJB** "sets himself above you"

Paul used this same term in 2 Cor. 10:5 to describe the arrogance of the false teachers' arguments and speculations. This term is simply the word "to lift up" (cf. 1 Tim. 2:8). But, in 1 Corinthians it has negative connotations of human pride and arrogance.

▣ **"hits you in the face"** Paul's words drip with sarcasm (cf. 2 Cor. 11:21). He was so gentle and meek (cf. 2 Cor. 10:1) with them, but they rejected him; the false teachers were so selfish and manipulative, but they love them.

**11:21 "to my shame"** This is literally "according to dishonor." Paul felt that his meekness and gentleness had been misunderstood and taken advantage of by the false teachers. This may be another example of sarcasm.

▣ **"weak"** See Special Topic: Weakness at 2 Cor. 12:9.

**21b** But in whatever respect anyone *else* is bold-I speak in foolishness-I am just as bold myself. **22** Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. **23** Are they servants of Christ?-I speak as if insane-I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. **24** Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine *lashes*. **25** Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. **26** I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; **27** I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. **28** Apart from *such* external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. **29** Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?

**11:21b** Paul is ready to fight fire with fire. They want to compare credentials, so be it!

**11:22 "Are they Hebrews? So am I"** This is the first of four rhetorical questions. "Hebrews" idiomatically referred to the ability to speak Aramaic (cf. Acts 6:1), but with the implication of true racial Jews. This is another evidence that this group of false teachers had a Palestinian/Judaistic origin. This "so am I" (i.e., *kagō*) is repeated three times in 2 Cor. 11:22.

▣ **"Are they Israelites? So am I"** Apparently they were bragging that they were part of the OT covenant people of God (cf. Phil. 3:5; John 8:31-59).

**11:23 "Are they servants of Christ?"** Paul is not asserting here that they are Christians. He is simply asserting, for the sake of argument, that he has the same spiritual credentials that they are bragging about. They even claimed a spiritual superiority to Paul.

▣ **"I more so"** Paul had a series of comparisons with *en*.

1. in far more labors, 2 Cor. 11:23
2. in far more imprisonments, 2 Cor. 11:23
3. in stripes above measure, 2 Cor. 11:23
4. in danger of death often, 2 Cor. 11:23
  - a. beaten with thirty nine lashes (5 times), 2 Cor. 11:24
  - b. beaten with rods (3 times), 2 Cor. 11:25
  - c. stoned (once), 2 Cor. 11:25
  - d. shipwrecked (3 times), 2 Cor. 11:25

Some of these are recorded in Acts, but not all of them. In reality we know so little of the first century church. Paul had paid the price to speak the gospel!

**11:24 "I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes"** This refers to punishment administered by Synagogue courts (cf. Deut. 25:1-3). The strokes were probably given with a rod (cf. Exod. 21:20; Pro. 10:13; 19:29; 26:3) and given in public. This type of punishment was known and practiced in Assyria and Egypt. It was practiced in Israel (cf. Isa. 50:6; Jer. 20:2; 37:15).

The rabbis later codified that it had to be one less than forty strokes (i.e., the maximum number, cf. Josephus, *Antiq.* 4:8:21,23). They specified that so many hits be done on the back and on the front, left and right shoulders (cf. *Maccoth* 3:10ff).

**11:25 "beaten with rods"** This refers to a type of Roman judicial punishment (i.e., *verberatio*), probably administered by a city court (cf. Acts 16:22-40; 1 Cor. 4:21) publicly.

- **"once I was stoned"** In Acts 14:19 his attackers thought he was dead! This may be the incident.
- **"three times I was shipwrecked"** This shows how limited the history of Acts truly is. Paul's shipwreck recorded in Acts happened after this point in history. Acts is not a complete history, but a theological account of the gospel moving from Palestine to Rome, from Jews to Gentiles.

**11:26**

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"I have been on frequent journeys"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"in journeys often"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"on frequent journeys"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"in many travels"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"continually traveling"</b>

This starts another list of dative plurals or in an eight case system like A. T. Robertson's, this is labeled locative. There is no verb, participle, or infinitive in 2 Cor. 11:26,27,28. This describes Paul's service for Christ.

1. dangers from rivers
2. dangers from robbers
3. dangers from my countrymen (as he was in Corinth)
4. dangers from Gentiles
5. dangers in the city
6. dangers in the wilderness
7. dangers at sea
8. dangers among false brethren (as he was in Corinth)

**11:27 "I have been"** Paul starts another list using the dative/locative.

1. in labor
2. in hardship
3. in sleepless nights
4. in hunger
5. in thirst
6. in fastings many times (lit. "often without food")
7. in cold
8. in nakedness (lit. "in exposure")

All of us who claim to be servants of the gospel should quit whining!

**11:28** Another thing which caused daily pain for Paul was the psychological/spiritual worry for the health and effectiveness of the churches-possibly this was the worst pain of all!

**11:29 "Who is weak without my being weak"** Verse 29 has two rhetorical questions. When Paul sees churches and believers hurting, it hurts him and makes him furious at those who would cause little ones to stumble (cf. Matt. 18).

<b>NASB</b>	<b>"intense concern"</b>
<b>NKJV</b>	<b>"burn with indignation"</b>
<b>NRSV</b>	<b>"indignation"</b>
<b>TEV</b>	<b>"filled with distress"</b>
<b>NJB</b>	<b>"burn in agony"</b>

Paul uses this term, burn, in a specialized sense in his Corinthian letters. It is not negative or destructive (cf. Eph. 6:16), but a metaphor for intense desire (cf. 1 Cor. 7:9).

**NASB, TEV** **"is led into sin"**

NKJV, NRSV "made to stumble"  
NJB "made to fall"

This is the Greek term *skandalon*, which literally referred to a baited trap-stick (cf. Rom. 11:9). It is used in the sense of moral failure (here and 1 Cor. 8:13) or possibly to be seduced by the false theology of the "super apostles" (cf. 1 Cor. 1:23; Gal. 5:11).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 11:30-33**

**<sup>30</sup>If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness. <sup>31</sup>The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, He who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. <sup>32</sup>In Damascus the ethnarch under Aretas the king was guarding the city of the Damascenes in order to seize me, <sup>33</sup>and I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and so escaped his hands.**

**11:30 "If"** This is a first class conditional sentence.

▣ **"what pertains to my weakness"** Paul's trials and criticisms had caused him to realize that his strengths were from God and his weaknesses were an opportunity for God to receive the glory (cf. 2 Cor. 12:1-10).

**11:31 "God and Father of the Lord Jesus"** This verse is an oath. Paul uses God's name to assert the truthfulness of his statements quite often (cf. Rom. 1:9; 2 Cor. 1:18; 11:10,11; Gal. 1:20; 1 Tim. 2:7).

▣ **"forever"** This is literally "unto the ages" (cf. Rom. 1:25; 9:5; 11:36; 16:27). The same phrase, but singular, is found in 1 Cor. 8:13 and 2 Cor. 9:9. See Special Topic: This Age and the Age to Come at 1 Cor. 1:20.

**11:32-33 "In Damascus the ethnarch under Aretas"** Some say this is anticlimactic, but this was apparently the most embarrassing (i.e., weakest) moment of Paul's life. It could refer to another charge of the false teachers. King Aretas (i.e., *Harethath*) was king of the Nabatean empire from 9 b.c. to a.d. 40. He was the father-in-law of Herod Antipas. The term "Aretas" is like the term "Pharaoh," a title for all of the Nabatean kings who ruled in Petra. The "ethnarch" would have been Aretas' official representative in Damascus. The account in Acts 9:23-25 is somewhat different; possibly the false teachers used this incident to attack Paul's character.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why does Paul defend himself against these false teachers?
2. Does 2 Cor. 11:3 refer to falling from grace or seduction away from apostolic authority?
3. Why would Paul not accept money from the Corinthian Church?
4. Who were these false apostles?
5. Describe the theology of these false teachers?
6. Why was Paul's life of such brutal treatment a sign of his apostolic authority? (cf. 1 Cor. 4:9-13; 2 Cor. 4:8-12; 6:4)



# 2 CORINTHIANS 12

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Visions and Revelations	The Vision of Paradise	Further Boasting: Strength in Weakness	Paul's Vision and Revelations	Paul is Driven to Sound His Own Praises  (11:1-12:18)
12:1-10	12:1-10	12:1-10	12:1-6 12:7-10	12:1-6 12:7-10
Paul's Concern for the Corinthian Church	Signs of An Apostle		Paul's Concern for the Corinthians	
12:11-18	12:11-13  Love For the Church	12:11-13  Paul's Plans to Visit Corinth Again  (12:14-13:10)	12:11-13	12:11-13
	12:14-21	12:14-18  A Call For Self- Examination and Amendment  (12:19-13:10)	12:14-15 12:16-18	12:14-15 12:16-18  Paul's Fears and Anxieties  (12:19-13:10)
12:19-21		12:19-21	12:19-21	12:19-21

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### *FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

#### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Paul's special vision and his physical problems are both dealt with in the same context, possibly

both occurred 14 years previously in Tarsus (a.d. 42 or 43). This cannot refer to his conversion experience which happened some 20 years earlier, although I think his "thorn" was eye problems, which may have started with the encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus (cf. Acts 9:22,26).

B. Paul continues his biting sarcasm in 2 Cor. 12:11,13 and 15 as he did in 2 Cor. 11:4-5,7,19-21. I believe chapters 10-13 are written in a Hellenistic rhetoric style for the purpose of showing the arrogant Hellenistic-trained Jewish false teachers that he, too, knew and could use their preferred literary style.

## WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 12:1-10

<sup>1</sup>Boasting is necessary, though it is not profitable; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. <sup>2</sup>I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago-whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows -such a man was caught up to the third heaven. <sup>3</sup>And I know how such a man-whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows-<sup>4</sup>was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak. <sup>5</sup>On behalf of such a man I will boast; but on my own behalf I will not boast, except in regard to *my* weaknesses. <sup>6</sup>For if I do wish to boast I will not be foolish, for I will be speaking the truth; but I refrain *from this*, so that no one will credit me with more than he sees *in* me or hears from me. <sup>7</sup>Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me-to keep me from exalting myself! <sup>8</sup>Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. <sup>9</sup>And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. <sup>10</sup>Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

**12:1 "Boasting is necessary"** The Greek term *dei* means "necessity." The false teachers were attacking Paul. He defended himself to protect his message. The term "boasting," used so often in chapters 10-13 (cf. 2 Cor. 10:8,13,15,16,17; 11:12,16,18,30; 12:1,5,6,9, see full note at 2 Cor. 1:12 and Special Topic at 1 Cor. 5:6), characterized a type of rhetorical style popular in the first century. Paul showed the arrogant false teachers that he could play their game.

This sentence was confusing to the ancient scribes, who modified it in several ways.

1. some add "if" (MSS  $\kappa^2$ , H)
2. some changed *dei* (must) to *de* (but), (MSS  $\kappa$  and D)
3. the form in UBS<sup>4</sup> is supported by MSS P<sup>46</sup>, B, D<sup>2</sup>, F, G ("A" rating)

Numbers 2 and 3 do show how early the original Greek texts were modified by well-intentioned scribes.

NASB	"though it is not profitable"
NKJV	"doubtless not profitable"
NRSV	"nothing is to be gained by it"
TEV	"even though it doesn't do any good"
NJB	"not that it does any good"

If Paul's boasting is to no advantage, why do it? He does it in sarcasm for its effect, using the very terms and methodology of the false teachers (i.e., rhetorically trained Jewish believers of the Diaspora who were

somehow connected with the church in Jerusalem, similar to the Judaizers of Galatians and the Pharisaic element seen in the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15).

▣ **"visions and revelations"** There is probably no distinction between these two terms; both describe a type of direct revelation (cf. 1 Cor. 2:10; 11:23; Gal. 1:12; 2:2; Eph. 3:3). The false teachers were probably claiming special direct revelation. The term "revelation" is *apocalypse*, which means "an unveiling."

False teachers, then and now, are characterized by

1. sexual exploitation
2. financial exploitation
3. a claim to special and unique revelation

▣ **"of the Lord"** It may be a subjective genitive, "a revelation from the Lord" or an objective genitive, "about the Lord." The following context implies "from the Lord" (passive voices, 2 Cor. 12:2,4,7).

**12:2 "I know a man"** This is a rabbinical way of speaking of oneself. Paul seems to be reluctant even to mention the incident, but he does so because of his love for this church and the false teachers' claims of spiritual visions.

▣ **"in Christ"** This was Paul's favorite designation of being a Christian. Believers are identified with His life/death/resurrection (cf. Romans 6). The believer's goal is to be like Him (cf. Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; 1 Thess. 3:13; 4:3; 1 Pet. 1:15).

George Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, makes the interesting statement that

"the man in Christ is also in the Spirit. If the opposite of 'in Christ' is to be in Adam, the opposite of 'in the Spirit' is to be 'in the flesh.'"

Life in the Spirit means eschatological existence-life in the new age" (p. 483).

▣ **"fourteen years ago"** This was probably during Paul's unrecorded early ministry in Tarsus, just before Barnabas came to get him to help at Antioch (cf. Acts 11:25-26). Notice that special visions were not an everyday occurrence for Paul, but he had several of them (cf. Acts 9:4; 18:9; 23:11; 27:23).

▣ **"whether in the body, I do not know, or out of the body I do not know"** Paul himself was not even sure exactly what happened (the phrase is repeated twice in 2 Cor. 12:2 and 3). It was possibly like Ezekiel's experience in Ezekiel 8 or like John's experience in the book of Revelation (cf. Rev. 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10). Notice that the body is not excluded from heaven in Christianity as it was in Greek philosophy.

▣ **"caught up"** This same term is used of (1) Philip in Acts 8:30; (2) "the rapture" in 1 Thess. 4:17; and (3) the male child in Rev. 12:5. Its basic meaning is to seize as a carnivore does its prey. Paul was unexpectedly and quickly moved in body or mind to God's presence (cf. 2 Cor. 12:4).

▣ **"the third heaven"** See Special Topic following.

## **SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HEAVENS AND THE THIRD HEAVEN**

**12:3-4** These verses further describe the event stated in 2 Cor. 12:2.

**12:4 "Paradise"** This is a Persian loan word for "a nobleman's walled garden." The Greek word is used in the Septuagint for "the Garden of Eden" (cf. Gen. 2:8; 3:1; Ezek. 28:13; 31:18). The term is used in Luke 23:43 for the righteous part of Hades or Sheol. In the extra-canonical book *The Secrets of Enoch*, or *II Enoch*, chapter 8, it is used for the third heaven or God's presence. The third heaven and Paradise are both ways of referring to God's presence.

▣ **"heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak"** Humanity's curiosity is not to

be eased in all areas of truth. As Lazarus did not speak of his experience in the grave, Paul would not (i.e., too holy), could not (i.e., no adequate human vocabulary), share this experience. There is an obvious word play on "unspeakable": *arrētos*, "speech," and *hrētos* or possibly this was a technical idiom of the mystery religion's initiation rites. Possibly there simply was not human vocabulary adequate to express what he saw (cf. 1 Cor. 2:9).

**12:5** Paul is not boasting in personal accomplishments (see full note at 2 Cor. 1:12), but in God's revelation of Himself through both personal experiences and the truth of the gospel. It is Paul's inadequacies that allow God to be glorified in him (compare John 15:5 with Phil. 4:13).

▣ **"weakness"** See Special Topic at 2 Cor. 12:9.

**12:6 "if"** This is a third class conditional sentence, which means potential action.

▣ **"foolish"** See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 15:36.

▣ **"so that no one will credit me with more than he sees *in* me or hears from me"** This is dripping with sarcasm. These false teachers flaunted many past experiences and credentials, which the Corinthians only heard about. Paul says, "do not credit me with what I have not shown you, but with what I have done while among you. Look at my record!"

**12:7 "Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations"** This phrase can be grammatically related to "no one will credit me" of 2 Cor. 12:6 or "to keep me from exalting myself" of 2 Cor. 12:7. If *dio* is in the original text of 2 Cor. 12:7 (cf. MSS  $\kappa$ , A, B, F, G) then it probably goes with 2 Cor. 12:6, but *dio* is left out of several ancient Greek manuscripts (cf. MSS P<sup>46</sup>, D, and the Vulgate, Armenian, and Peshitta translations). The UBS<sup>4</sup> gives its inclusion a "C" rating (difficulty in deciding).

For "surpassing greatness" (*huperbolē*) see Special Topic: Paul's Use of *Huper* Compounds at 1 Cor. 2:1.

▣ **"to keep me from exalting myself"** This same word is used in 2 Thess. 2:4 to describe the prideful boasting of the "Man of Sin" or Antichrist. Paul is again contrasting himself with the false teachers. They did flaunt themselves by means of their Sophistic rhetorical style (which Paul is mimicking in chapters 10-13).

Paul believed that God (i.e., passive voice of "given") had given this "thorn in the flesh" for a purpose (i.e., *hina* clause). This may be the sense of Rom. 8:28 (i.e., some Greek manuscripts read "God causes all things"), but the good is Christlikeness so clearly expressed in Rom. 8:29 (i.e., conformed to the image of His Son). Satan is a servant!

▣ **"thorn in the flesh"** The term "thorn" can mean "stake" (i.e., literally "to be pointed"). In Classical Greek it is used in the sense of a sharpened stake while in the Septuagint it is used for a plant thorn (cf. Num. 33:55; Ezek. 28:24; Hos. 2:6). Some theories regarding Paul's thorn in the flesh are:

1. early Church Fathers, Luther and Calvin, say it was spiritual problems with his fallen nature (i.e., "in the flesh")
2. Chrysostom says it was a problem with persons (cf. Num. 33:55; Jdgs. 2:3)
3. some say it was epilepsy
4. Sir William Ramsay says it was malaria
5. I think it was ophthalmia, a common eye problem (compare Gal. 4:13-15 and 6:11) exacerbated or caused by the blindness on the Damascus road (cf. Acts 9, possibly an OT allusion in Jos. 23:13)

For "flesh" see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:26.

▣ **"a messenger of Satan"** God allows and uses the evil one (cf. Job 2:6; 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:20). The term "messenger" seems to refer to a demonic agent. The term "messenger" in both Hebrew and Greek can be translated "angel." If so, we see that believers can be hurt by the demonic, but notice it is for God's

purposes. God uses evil for His righteous purposes.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: SATAN

■ **"to torment me"** This is a present active subjunctives. The word literally means "to strike with fists." This problem was painful and recurrent.

■ **"to keep me from exalting myself"** This is a purpose (i.e., *hina*) clause. The spiritual claims of the false teachers accentuated their egotism. Paul's humbled him.

**12:8 "I implored the Lord"** Contextually this could refer to (1) YHWH or (2) Jesus (cf. John 14:13-14). Paul normally prays to the Father. Christians can pray to any one of the Divine Persons of the Trinity, although normally we pray to the Father, in the name of the Son, through the Spirit.

■ **"this"** It is possible that "this" refers to (1) this situation; (2) this persecution; (3) this messenger of Satan; or (4) this physical ailment.

■ **"three times"** Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane was repeated three times (cf. Matt. 26:42; Mark 14:39,41). Three-fold repetition denotes emphasis. This was not lack of trust, but shows that we can pray about whatever concerns us as often as we feel the need. This recurrent, painful problem taught Paul a great spiritual lesson (cf. 2 Cor. 12:9). I must say here that this account sheds light on the over-emphasis in our day on faith healing being conditioned on the amount of faith of the person needing healing. Obviously Paul had tremendous faith. Also, the unfortunate teaching that God wants every believer healed and delivered from every problem is addressed in this passage. The requests of both Jesus and Paul were not answered in the way they wanted. God uses problems and sickness in our lives for His purposes (cf. Rom. 8:17; 2 Cor. 1:5,7; Phil. 3:10; 1 Pet. 4:12-17). Our needs are God's opportunity to reveal Himself and His will to us!

**12:9 "He has said"** This is perfect tense, idiomatic for "He said finally."

■ **"My grace is sufficient for you"** The character and presence of God is all Paul needs. I think Paul may have been thinking of 1 Kgs. 8:27. This is one of the places in the OT where the phrase "heaven and the heaven of heavens" is used, which may be the source of Paul's "third heaven" in 2 Cor. 12:2. Solomon's prayer speaks of both the transcendence of God's "highest heaven" and His immanence in the Temple. Paul was not to dwell on the majesty of the third heaven, but on God's gracious nature and personal presence with him daily.

■ **"power is perfected"** This is a Present passive. God's power operates by different criteria than mankind's. God receives the glory when the human vessel is weak and incapable of meeting his/her needs. God's power is His unchanging character!

This phrase may have reminded Paul of 1 Cor. 2:5 or 2 Cor. 4:7 and is simply unrelated to the false teachers' emphasis on human performance or merit.

■ **"boast about my weakness"** See Special Topic below.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: WEAKNESS

■ **"that the power of Christ"** Notice it is God's power! It is Christ's power! Christ is God!

NASB, NRSV "may dwell in me"

NKJV, NJB "may rest upon me"

TEV "feel the protection. . .over me"

This is the Greek term *episkēnoō*, which is *epi* plus *skēnē* (tent, cf. 2 Cor. 5:1), therefore, metaphorical for overshadow or abide upon. This word is found only here in the NT. This same root is used of the virgin

birth of Jesus (cf. Luke 1:35) the transfiguration of Jesus (cf. Matt. 17:5), and of the Apostles' shadows falling on people and their being healed (cf. Acts 5:15).

Paul knew that the cloud during the wilderness wandering period (cf. Exod. 40:35) was called by the rabbis "the *shekinah* cloud of glory." *Shekinah* means "to dwell with permanently." Paul wanted God's personal presence, fully and completely revealed and embodied in Christ, with him. This is the goal of Christianity, not personal power, personal prestige, a special knowledge or experience (i.e., "To know Him came through weakness and suffering," cf. Phil. 3:10).

**12:10 "Therefore, I am well content with weakness"** Paul knows from personal experience (i.e., Damascus road) that good intentions and personal effort are not enough. We need grace (cf. 2 Cor. 12:9), not power. No human being will usurp the glory of God (cf. 1 Cor. 1:29; Eph. 2:9). God's grace, power, and glory are accentuated in yielded, inadequate, human vessels.

■ **"I am well content with weakness"** In the remainder of the verse Paul gives a brief summary of his ministry trials, which he has mentioned before in 2 Cor. 4:7-11; 6:3-10; 11:24-28. Paul knew fully the meaning of Jesus' words in Matt. 5:10-12!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 12:11-13**

**<sup>11</sup>I have become foolish; you yourselves compelled me. Actually I should have been commended by you, for in no respect was I inferior to the most eminent apostles, even though I am a nobody. <sup>12</sup>The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles. <sup>13</sup>For in what respect were you treated as inferior to the rest of the churches, except that I myself did not become a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong!**

**12:11 "I have become foolish"** This is a perfect active indicative. Some faction (i.e., 1 Corinthians 1-4) or some group of itinerant false teachers (i.e., 2 Cor. 10-13) have attacked Paul, his leadership, his authority, his style of speaking, and the gospel. So, Paul had to defend himself. He did this in several ways.

1. compared his life with theirs
2. used their style of rhetoric, but with humility
3. used sarcasm to make his points

See [SPECIAL TOPIC: TERMS FOR FOOLISH PEOPLE](#) at 1 Cor. 15:36.

■ **"I"** The emphatic "I" (i.e., *egō*) is used in 2 Cor. 12:11,13,15, and 16.

■ **"commended"** See full note at 2 Cor. 3:1.

■ **"in no respect was I inferior to the most eminent apostles"** See full note at 2 Cor. 11:5.

■ **"if"** This is a first class conditional sentence used for literary purposes to make his point, not reality. Paul was not inferior to them in any sense.

■ **"I am a nobody"** Paul knew and understood his position in grace alone (cf. 1 Cor. 15:9; Eph. 3:8; 1 Tim. 1:15). He also knew his position as a called, gifted Apostle (cf. Acts 8,22,26)!

**12:12 "by signs and wonders and miracles"** Paul's ministry was evidenced by the power of God (cf. 1 Cor. 2:4; 4:20; Rom. 15:19). However, it was not just in miracles, but in his attitude and actions toward this church which proved he was from God.

**12:13 "I myself did not become a burden to you"** Paul would not allow this factious church to help him. He did let the churches at Philippi (Phil. 4:15) and Thessalonica (1 Thess. 3:6), but only after he had left the

cities. It hurt the church at Corinth's feelings (cf. 2 Cor. 12:13a), but Paul would not budge because of the accusations of the false teachers (cf. 2 Cor. 11:8-20). However, Paul did support (as a principle) the church's financial assistance for ministers (cf. 1 Cor. 9:3-18).

■ **"churches"** See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 1:2.

■ **"Forgive me this wrong"** This is biting sarcasm.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 12:14-18**

**<sup>14</sup>Here for this third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you; for I do not seek what is yours, but you; for children are not responsible to save up for *their* parents, but parents for *their* children. <sup>15</sup>I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls. If I love you more, am I to be loved less? <sup>16</sup>But be that as it may, I did not burden you myself; nevertheless, crafty fellow that I am, I took you in by deceit. <sup>17</sup>Certainly I have not taken advantage of you through any of those whom I have sent to you, have I? <sup>18</sup>I urged Titus to go, and I sent the brother with him. Titus did not take any advantage of you, did he? Did we not conduct ourselves in the same spirit *and walk* in the same steps?**

**12:14**

**NASB, NRSV,**

**NJB** "here"

**NKJV** "now for"

**TEV** -omitted-

This is the Greek emphatic particle *idou*, used so often in the Gospels, usually translated "behold." It serves to call attention to the following statement. Paul uses it rarely (cf. Rom. 9:23 [OT quote]; 1 Cor. 15:51; 2 Cor. 5:17; 6:2 [OT quote],9; 7:11; 12:14; Gal. 1:20).

■ **"this third time"** The book of Acts only records two visits to Corinth (cf. Acts 18:1; 20:2-3; 2 Cor. 1:15; 13:1,2). However, Acts is not a complete or detailed history, but a theological document showing the spread of Christianity from people group to people group, from Palestine to Rome.

■ **"I will not be a burden"** This refers to financial compensation (cf. 2 Cor. 11:9; 12:13; 1 Cor. 9:12,18). Paul affirmed the right of ministers to receive compensation, but personally rejected it because (1) he was attacked over this issue by the false teachers (cf. 2 Cor. 12:14b) or (2) his own background as a rabbi excluded this.

■ **"but you"** Paul does not want their money, but their loyalty and good will.

■ **"children. . .parents"** Paul is using a family analogy. He considered himself their spiritual father (cf. 1 Cor. 4:14-15; Gal. 4:19).

**12:15 "spend"** This Greek word can be understood in two ways: (1) literally "to pay out money" (cf. Acts 21:24) or (2) figuratively "to spend entirely" or "pay everything or anything" (cf. Mark 5:26). Paul was ready to give all his assets and/or himself for the cause of Christ among the Corinthian believers.

Obviously Paul is using word plays on money. He did not want them spending money on him, but he would spend himself for them.

■ **"for your souls"** "Souls" (i.e., *psychē*) is used in the sense of persons in Paul's writings as is "spirit" (cf. *pneuma*, cf. Phil. 1:27).

This is not an ontological dichotomy in mankind, but a dual relationship to both this planet and to God. The Hebrew word *nephesh* (BDB 659) is used of both mankind and the animals in Genesis, while "spirit"

(*ruah*, BDB 924) is used uniquely of mankind. This is not a proof-text on the nature of mankind as a three-part (trichotomous) being. Mankind is primarily represented in the Bible as a unity (cf. Gen. 2:7). For a good summary of the theories of mankind as trichotomous, dichotomous, or a unity, see Millard J. Erickson's *Christian Theology* (second edition) pp. 538-557 and Frank Stagg's *Polarities of Man's Existence in Biblical Perspective*.

- **"if"** This is a first class conditional sentence, which is assumed to be true from the writer's perspective or for his literary purposes.
- **"more"** This related group of terms characterizes Paul's emotional and extravagant literary style in 2 Corinthians . See full note at 2 Cor. 2:7.
- **"am I to be loved less"** The more Paul gave to them, the more they treated him with less respect and love. This was an intolerable situation.

**12:16 "nevertheless, crafty fellow that I am, I took you in by deceit"** This may relate to the contribution for the Jerusalem church in chapters 8-9. The false teachers possibly accused him of sending others to collect money for himself (cf. 2 Cor. 12:17-18).

Paul's comment here is biting sarcasm!

**12:18 "Titus"** It is surprising that Titus is never mentioned in the book of Acts (possibly he was Luke's brother). He was one of Paul's most trusted and faithful helpers. (See Special Topic at 2 Cor. 2:13). Apparently Titus also did not receive any money from this church, following Paul's example.

- **"the brother with him"** This is probably the same one as in 2 Cor. 8:18. Some think it was Luke (i.e., Origen). This taking along the representatives from the churches was Paul's way to de-arm the accusations related to this contribution to the Jerusalem Church.

- Verses 17 and 18 have a series of four questions. The grammatical form of the first two expect a "no" answer, while the last two expect a "yes" answer. The purpose of the questions is to show that neither Paul nor Titus had taken advantage of them in any way, as some had charged.

- **"in the same spirit"** This refers to the redeemed human spirit of Titus (i.e., locative case), not the Holy Spirit (instrumental case). Paul uses "spirit" to refer to himself often (cf. 2 Cor. 2:13; 7:13; 1 Cor. 2:11; 5:4; 16:18; Rom. 1:9; 8:16; Phil. 4:23). See note at 2 Cor. 7:13b.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 12:19-21**

**<sup>19</sup>All this time you have been thinking that we are defending ourselves to you. *Actually*, it is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ; and all for your upbuilding, beloved.**

**<sup>20</sup>For I am afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you to be not what I wish and may be found by you to be not what you wish; that perhaps *there will be* strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances; <sup>21</sup>I am afraid that when I come again my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned in the past and not repented of the impurity, immorality and sensuality which they have practiced.**

**12:19 "All this time"** Paul is referring to his current letter (i.e., 2 Corinthians ).

- **"you have been thinking that we are defending ourselves to you"** This is a sarcastic remark. Paul knew this church well. They had an inflated estimation of their own worth and freedom.

- **"it is in the sight of God"** Paul used this very phrase in 2 Cor. 2:17, where he takes an oath of truthfulness before God.



■ **"all for your upbuilding"** Paul mentions his authority using this very term in 2 Cor. 10:8. He defended himself to defend and protect this misguided church. His actions were for them, not for himself. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: EDIFY](#) at 1 Cor. 8:1.

■ **"beloved"** Paul addresses this church with forthrightness, yet great love. This was a term of endearment (cf. 1 Cor. 10:14; 15:58; 2 Cor. 7:1; 12:19).

**12:20** This accurately reflects the 1 Corinthian description of this church toward each other and towards Paul.

■ **"strife"** See full note at 1 Cor. 2:11.

This term and the next are singular (cf. MSS P<sup>46</sup>, κ, A), but the other terms in the list are plural.

■ **"jealousy"** In this context it refers to a party or factious spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 3:3). See note at 2 Cor. 9:2.

■ **"angry tempers"** This refers to an outburst of rage (cf. Gal. 5:20; Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8).

■ **"disputes"** This term (i.e., *eritheia*) originally meant "to spin for hire." It came to be used for an aristocratic arrogance against those who had to work for a living. This attitude fits the factional rivalry of 1 Corinthians, especially chapter 11. This term is used often by Paul (cf. Rom. 2:8; Gal. 5:20; Phil. 1:17; 2:3; and also see James' use in James 3:14,16).

■ **"slanders"** This refers to speaking evil of another person, to defame them (cf. Rom. 1:30; 2 Cor. 12:20; James 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:1,12; 3:16). This activity is used to describe the activity of Satan.

■ **"gossip"** This is the term "whisper," which refers to tale-bearing behind someone's back in private.

■ **"arrogance"** The Greek term *phusioō* originally meant to inflate or puff up something (i.e., Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, p. 105 and Vincent, *Word Studies*, p. 766, from *phusa* - bellows). It came to be used in Christian literature (possibly coined by Paul) metaphorically for pride or arrogance. This was a major spiritual problem for the church at Corinth. Paul uses this word in 1 Cor. 4:6,18,19; 5:2;; 8:1; 13:4; and in a list of sins in 2 Cor. 12:20. It is only used outside the Corinthian letters in the NT in Col. 2:18, where it refers to gnostic visions of special knowledge.

NASB	"disturbances"
NKJV	"tumults"
NRSV, TEV	"disorder"
NJB	"disorders"

See note at 1 Cor. 14:33. This was a factious church. This term is also used in James 3:16.

There are several lists of vices in Paul's writings (cf. Rom. 1:29-31; 1 Cor. 5:11; 6:9; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 4:31; 5:34; Col. 3:5-9). In many ways they parallel the vice lists of the Stoics. Christianity demands an ethical response. Eternal life has observable, moral characteristics.

**12:21** Paul worried that if this church did not repent he would be forced to exercise his Apostolic authority when he came back (cf. 2 Cor. 13:2). Some of the factions (i.e., 1 Corinthians) and false teachers (i.e., 2 Corinthians ) were apparently leading godless lives of self indulgence.

NASB, TEV,	
NJB	"humiliate"
NKJV, NRSV	
NIV	"humble"

Paul uses this root term in several senses in his Corinthian letters (taken from Harold K Moulton, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, p. 397).

1. *tapeinos*

- a. low in situation, depressed (2 Cor. 7:6)
- b. to love meekly or without excess (2 Cor. 10:1)

2. *tapeinoō*

- a. (Middle voice) to live in humble condition (2 Cor. 11:7)
- b. to be humble with respect to hopes and expectations; to be depressed with disappointment (2 Cor. 12:21)

■ **"mourn"** See note at 1 Cor. 5:2.

■ **"those who have sinned in the past"** This whole phrase translates one article and participle used only here and in 2 Cor. 13:2. It is a perfect active participle of the Greek preposition *pro* (i.e., before) and *hamartanō* (i.e., to sin). The combined sense is those who have sinned and continue to sin. The concept of "past" is not included, but an addition of the translators. Time is only included in the indicative mood.

■ **"repented"** This verse obviously refers to Christians who continue to sin. Repentance is crucial, not only initially (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 2:38,41; 3:16,19; 20:21), but continuously (cf. 1 John 1:9). Repentance for a believer restores fellowship, not salvation! Repentance is an attitude toward God and self more than a specific set of spiritual acts or steps. See full note at 2 Cor. 7:8-11

■ **"the impurity, immorality and sensuality"** We must remember the godless, lustful culture out of which these new believers from Corinth came. They had grown up with sexual excess and debauchery in the name of the gods. However, notice that this verse also mentions the means by which Christians deal with sin in their lives—repentance (cf. 1 John 1:9; Ps. 19:12-14). Faith and repentance are both initial and ongoing spiritual experiences in the Christian's life.

This list may reflect the actions of the false teachers who emphasized Greek rhetorical style, which may imply that they had also been exposed to Gnosticism, which emphasized knowledge, but depreciated ethical standards. All of these terms are listed in Paul's sins of the flesh in Gal. 5:19. Justification must not/cannot be separated from sanctification!

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why does Paul mention his special revelation and then not tell us about it?
2. Why is weakness a key to usability?
3. Does God use evil to accomplish His purpose?
4. Why was Paul so touch about receiving money from this church? (cf. 2 Cor. 12:20-21).

# 2 CORINTHIANS 13

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

UBS <sup>4</sup>	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Final Warnings and Greetings	Coming with Authority	A Call for Self-examination and Amendment  (12:19-13:10)	Final Warnings and Greetings	Paul's Fears and Anxieties  (12:19-13:10)
13:1-4	13:1-6	13:1-4	13:1-4	13:1-4
13:5-10	Paul Prefers Gentiles  13:7-10  Greeting and Benediction	13:5-10   Conclusion	13:5-10	13:5-10   Conclusion
13:11-12	13:11-14	13:11-12	13:11  13:12a  13:12b	13:11  13:12
13:13		13:13	13:13	13:13

### READING CYCLE THREE (from "[A Guide to Good Bible Reading](#)")

#### FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

#### WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

##### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 13:1-4

<sup>1</sup>This is the third time I am coming to you. Every fact is to be confirmed by the testimony of two or three witnesses. <sup>2</sup>I have previously said when present the second time, and though now absent I say in advance to those who have sinned in the past and to all the rest *as well*, that if I come again I will not spare *anyone*, <sup>3</sup>since you are seeking for proof of the Christ who speaks in me, and who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you. <sup>4</sup>For indeed He was crucified

**because of weakness, yet He lives because of the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, yet we will live with Him because of the power of God *directed* toward you.**

**13:1 "This is the third time I am coming to you"** This gives textual credence to the theory of Paul's painful visit to Corinth between the writing of 1 and 2 Corinthians (cf. 2 Cor. 12:14). This visit is not recorded in the book of Acts.

- **"every fact"** This begins a quote from Deut. 19:15 (cf. Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; Matt. 18:16; 1 Tim. 5:19), which deals with court procedures. To what does it refer in this chapter? There are two possibilities.
  1. It refers to the church's evaluation of Paul. He had been there twice and shared with them. They were responsible and would be held accountable as hearers of the truth.
  2. It refers to church discipline related to a group within the church.
    - a. the factious groups of 1 Cor. 1-4 (cf. 2 Cor. 12:20)
    - b. an immoral group (cf. 2 Cor. 12:21)
    - c. the "super apostles" or false teachers with connections to Jerusalem and Judaism (chapters 10-13, especially 11:13-15)

NASB	"is to be confirmed"
NKJV	"shall be established"
NRSV	"must be sustained"
TEV	"must be upheld"
NJB	"is required"

The form of this verb is a future passive indicative (cf. NKJV), but Barbara and Timothy Friberg, *Analytical Greek New Testament*, p. 573, say it is functioning as an aorist passive imperative (cf. NRSV, NJB). See Special Topic: Stand (*Histēmi*) at 1 Cor. 15:1.

**13:2 "those who have sinned in the past and all the rest as well"** This seems to relate to two groups. The first "who have sinned in the past" (perfect active participle), must refer to those believers at Corinth who heard Paul twice, but still rebelled against his leadership. This would be the factious groups of 1 Corinthians 1-4 or an immoral group (cf. 2 Cor. 12:20-21; 1 Corinthians 5).

The phrase "and all the rest" seems to relate to those who were not present both times, possibly the false apostles from Jerusalem and their supporters, which are the focus of chapters 10-13. However, both groups/all groups are put on notice that Paul wants them to deal with the problems, but if they do not, he will!

■ **"if"** This is a third class conditional sentence, but it is used in the sense of "when" (cf. John 16:7 and 1 John 3:2).

■ **"I will not spare anyone"** Paul uses this term in a positive sense in 1 Cor. 7:23 and 2 Cor. 1:23, but in a judicial sense both here and in 2 Cor. 12:6 (cf. 2 Cor. 10:11).

**13:3 "proof"** This concept of testing is recurrent in this context. There is a sustained word play between the connotations of two Greek terms, *dokimazō* and *peirazō*.

1. v. 3, proof - *dokimē* (cf. 2 Cor. 2:9; 8:2; 9:13; 13:3)
2. v. 5, test - *peirazō* (cf. 2 Cor. 13:5)
3. v. 5, examine - *dokimazō* (cf. 2 Cor. 8:8,22; 13:5)
4. v. 5, fail the test - *adokimos*
5. v. 6, do not fail the test - *adokimos*
6. v. 7, approve - *dokimos* (cf. 2 Cor. 10:18)
7. v. 7, unapprove - *adokimos*

For the full word study see Special Topic at 1 Cor. 3:13.

■ **"of the Christ who speaks in me"** Some at Corinth were challenging Paul's authority. They were "testing" Paul! In 2 Cor. 13:5 Paul will "test" them! Christ's presence in Paul had been confirmed (cf. 2 Cor. 12:12).

■ **"is not weak"** Weakness is God's way to victory as illustrated in Jesus' life (cf. 2 Cor. 13:4) and Paul's life (cf. 2 Cor. 10:1,11; 12:9; 13:9). No human being will glory before God for spiritual accomplishments that are a direct result of who God is and not who we are. It is God's resources which accomplish spiritual results! Believers must allow His power to flow through their need and helplessness. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: WEAKNESS](#) at 2 Cor. 12:9.

Verses 3-4 are the summary antithesis of the rhetorically arrogant false teachers. They claimed a superiority from

1. racial lineage
2. personal charismatic experience
3. superior Sophistic, rhetorical training
4. personal comparisons

■ **"toward you. . .in you"** This plural "you" shows that Paul is referring to a congregational experience, not personal experience (cf. 2 Cor. 13:5). Possibly the TEV translation, "among you," catches the flavor.

**13:4 "crucified"** Paul uses several terms to describe Jesus' death:

1. death (cf. Rom. 5:6ff; 8:34; 14:15; 1 Cor. 8:11; 15:3; 2 Cor. 5:15; Gal. 2:21; 1 Thess. 4:14; 5:10)
2. blood (cf. Rom. 3:25; 5:9; Eph. 1:7; 2:13; Col. 1:20)
3. cross (cf. 1 Cor. 1:17-18; Gal. 5:11; 6:12,14; Eph. 2:16; Phil. 2:8; Col. 1:20; 2:14)
4. crucifixion (cf. 1 Cor. 1:23; 2:2; 2 Cor. 13:14; Gal. 3:1)

■ **"yet He lives because of the power of God"** It is phrases like this that caused so many Christological controversies in the early church. Is not Jesus God also? Does the human Jesus live by the power of a separate deity (i.e., YHWH)? One cannot build a systematic understanding on one verse or selected verses, but must try to unify all of the theological concepts into an integrated whole. See Special Topic: Monotheism at 1 Cor. 8:4.

Usually the terminology of this verse is used to affirm that God the Father, as an act of approval, raised the Son (cf. Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30,33,34,37; 17:31; Rom. 1:4; 6:4,9; 8:11; 10:9; 1 Cor. 6:14; 2 Cor. 4:14; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12; 1 Thess. 1:10). However, there are other inspired texts that affirm that (1) the Spirit raised the Son (cf. Rom. 8:11) or (2) the Son raised Himself (cf. John 2:19-22; 10:17-18).

■ **"we also are weak in Him, yet we will live with Him"** Paul's understanding of Christianity was an identification of the believers in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. As He lived a humble, gentle, and misunderstood life, so will we; as He died in service to others, so should we; as He was raised, so are we (i.e., new life now) and will be (i.e., resurrection body at the Second Coming).

This identification theology is so evident in Romans 6. Paul wrote Romans while he was dealing with Corinth. Paul's systematic understanding of Christianity (i.e., Romans) was fleshed out while he was working with this dysfunctional church.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 13:5-10**

**<sup>5</sup>Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you-unless indeed you fail the test? <sup>6</sup>But I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test. <sup>7</sup>Now we pray to God that you do no wrong; not that we ourselves may appear approved, but that you may do what is right, even though we may appear unapproved. <sup>8</sup>For we can do nothing against the truth, but *only* for the truth. <sup>9</sup>For we rejoice when we ourselves are weak but you are strong; this we also pray for, that you be made complete. <sup>10</sup>For this reason I am writing these things while absent, so that**

**when present I need not use severity, in accordance with the authority which the Lord gave me for building up and not for tearing down.**

**13:5 "Test yourselves"** This is a present active imperative. This is the word *peirazō*, which means "to test with a view toward destruction." See full note at 1 Cor. 3:13. They had tested Paul; now they must be tested themselves!

■ **"if"** This is a first class conditional sentence, which is assumed to be true. Paul is not doubting their faith, but challenging them to wake up!

■ **"the faith"** The Greek term "faith" (*pistis*) is translated into English by three terms: faith, believe, or trust. See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 2:4. Faith is used in three senses in the NT: (1) as personal acceptance of Jesus as the Christ of God; (2) as faithfully living for Him; and (3) as a body of truths about Him (cf. 2 Cor. 13:3; Gal. 1:23; 3:23-25). Mature Christianity involves all three senses.

■ **"examine yourselves"** Paul repeats his command (i.e., another present active imperative), but uses the other term (i.e., *dokimazō*) for testing, which implies to test with a view toward approval. See Special Topic at 1 Cor. 3:13.

■ **"recognize"** This is the Greek term *epignōskō* (i.e., present active indicative), which usually denotes experiential full knowledge.

■ **"Jesus Christ is in you"** As 2 Cor. 13:4 focused on the corporate aspect, this phrase (using the same preposition and plural pronoun) may refer to a more individual aspect. Christ is surely among His people, but also in each of His people! The ministries of Jesus and the Spirit are so closely linked that often the Spirit is called the Spirit of Christ (cf. Rom. 8:9; 1 Pet. 1:11). Jesus is even said to indwell believers (cf. John 14:23; Rom. 8:10; Col. 1:27. Also notice Matt. 28:20). See [SPECIAL TOPIC: JESUS AND THE SPIRIT](#) at 2 Cor. 3:17.

■ **"unless indeed you fail the test"** This phrase is parallel to "if you are in the faith" in 2 Cor. 13:5. Paul has asserted in several ways (i.e., first class conditional sentence in 2 Cor. 13:5 and the use of *dokimazō*) that he believes his readers are believers, but not all of them. There is a contingent of false teachers who do not know Christ (see [SPECIAL TOPIC: APOSTASY \(APHISTĒMI\)](#) at 1 Cor. 6:9). This clause relates to them.

This clause does not relate to sinful believers because Paul addresses them in 2 Cor. 12:20-21. They need to repent, but the false teachers need Christ (cf Matthew 7).

Paul used this very same term in 1 Cor. 9:27 as the reason why he struggled to keep himself under God's control. Paul did not want to be "disqualified" or rejected. Believers are challenged to check up on themselves (cf. Phil. 2:12).

**13:6** Paul is asserting that he and his helpers have passed the test (i.e., not counterfeits, *adokimos*, cf. 2 Cor. 13:7), especially in relation to the church at Corinth. If they have the indwelling Christ, then Paul's ministry was effective.

**13:7** In a sense a strong, orthodox Corinthian church would affirm Paul's leadership and Apostolic credentials. He is more concerned that they do what is right and appropriate because of God and the gospel, not just to show Paul's credentials or affirm his leadership (cf. 2 Cor. 13:9).

■ **"approved. . .unapproved"** Paul continues this word play on *dokimos* and *adokimos*.

**13:8** The truth in this context refers to the gospel as a person (i.e., Jesus the Messiah), as a message (i.e., the gospel about Jesus), and as a lifestyle (i.e., emulation of Jesus' life).

## SPECIAL TOPIC: "TRUTH" IN PAUL'S WRITINGS

**13:9 "we rejoice when we ourselves are weak but you are strong"** This is Paul's paradox. He knows that spiritual power is released through human weakness (cf. 2 Cor. 12:10; 13:4). Therefore, he wants to remain weak. However, for the Corinthian church to be strong, she too, must become weak. This is so opposite of the way people evaluate life. The false teachers have asserted strength through education, lineage, experience, but Paul asserts strength through Christ's example (cf. 2 Cor. 13:4).

▣ **"that you be made complete"** The noun form of this term is found only here in the NT. The verb means "to knit together." Paul used the verb form in 1 Cor. 1:10, which calls on the Corinthian church to end its factious divisions. Now at the end of 2 Corinthians he returns to this mandate (i.e., unity which will result in spiritual adequacies).

Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, vol. 1, p. 680, asserts that *artios* (i.e., complete, adequate, fully equipped for the assigned task), with all its different prepositional compounds (i.e., *epi* and *kata*), are all synonyms (cf. Luke 6:40; 2 Cor. 13:9,11; Eph. 4:12; 2 Tim. 3:17).

Paul wants a functioning, unified, loving church in Corinth (cf. 2 Cor. 13:11). For this to occur there must be forgiveness, reconciliation, and church discipline (cf. Gal. 6:1).

**13:10** Paul did not want to make another painful visit to Corinth (cf. 2 Cor. 2:3-4). He did not want to come wrapped in his Apostolic authority, but in parental love. However, the response of the church determined how he must act.

▣ **"with the authority which the Lord gave me"** This exact phrase appears in 2 Cor. 10:8. This Apostolic authority, whether in personal presence or from afar (cf. 1 Cor. 5:4), has Christ's authority (cf. 2 Cor. 12:19; 13:3). This authority was given to Paul in the Damascus road encounter (cf. Acts 9,22,26).

▣ **"building up"** See Special Topic: Edify at 1 Cor. 8:1.

### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 13:11-13**

**<sup>11</sup>Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. <sup>12</sup>Greet one another with a holy kiss. <sup>13</sup>All the saints greet you.**

**13:11 "Finally"** Literally this is "for the rest" (cf. Gal. 6:17). This is a characteristic concluding phrase for Paul (cf. Eph. 6:10; Phil. 3:1; 4:8; 2 Thess. 3:1). It usually marks a transition to a closing point.

▣ **"brethren"** What a beautiful and comforting way to close this difficult letter to a problem church. It also functions as a literary device to signal the transition to a new subject.

▣ There is a series of five present imperatives.

1. "rejoice" (present active imperative). Paul often uses this term in 2 Corinthians (cf. 2 Cor. 2:3; 6:10; 7:7,9,13,16; 13:9,11). This term can mean "good bye" (cf. Phil. 3:1; 4:4), but this does not fit a series of imperatives.
2. "be made complete" (present passive imperative). This speaks of unity and service (cf. v 9).
3. "be comforted" (present passive imperative). Paul uses this term often in 2 Corinthians (cf. 2 Cor. 1:4,6; 2:7,8; 5:20; 6:1; 7:6,7,13; 8:6; 9:5; 10:1; 12:8,18; 13:11).
4. "be like-minded" (present active imperative). This Greek term has many connotations (cf. Louw and Nida, vol. 2, p. 259), but in this context it is parallel to "be made complete." This refers to unity for the sake of the gospel. This is not asserting that believers must agree about every issue, but that they must disagree in love and that the gospel should always have priority over personal opinions or preferences!
5. "live in peace" (present active imperative). This surely reflects 1 Corinthians 1-4 and 2 Corinthians

10-13. It is uncertain how these problems relate, but both caused disunity and contention. Paul commands peace, not by compromise, but by Christlikeness. The God of peace (cf. 2 Cor. 13:11) will help us in our weakness!

▣ **"the God of love and peace"** What a wonderful descriptive title for YHWH. YHWH is often connected with "peace" (cf. Rom. 15:33; 16:20; 1 Cor. 14:33; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 13:20). He is called the "Lord of peace" in 2 Thess. 3:16. Love and peace are both mentioned in Eph. 6:23.

Believers must emulate these characteristics in their relationships with one another.

**13:12 "Greet"** This can be translated "bid farewell" (cf. Acts 20:1; 21:6). It conveys an attitude of acceptance and cooperation. The opposite attitude is expressed in Matt. 5:47.

Just a comment about the numbering of these last two verses. Some English translations combine 2 Cor. 13:12-13 (TEV, NJB, RSV, NRSV), while others break it into two verses (KJV, NKJV, NASB, NIV).

▣ **"holy kiss"** This custom (i.e., between family members and friends) was later stopped because of pagan misunderstanding (i.e., erotic kissing). In the early church the men kissed the men and the women kissed the women (i.e., following the custom of the synagogue, cf. Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 1 Thess. 5:26). See note at 1 Cor. 16:20.

This is an imperative. Does this mean that Christians must greet each other in this specific manner? Here is a good example of how culture and future situations must affect interpretation. The form is not the issue, but the attitude. Believers are a family.

**13:13 "All the saints"** This phrase refers not only to Paul and his missionary team, but "all the saints" (i.e., all of Paul's other churches). There was a tension between Corinth and these other churches. There was an air of superiority about this church. Paul addressed this issue by mentioning several times the standards he taught in all the churches (cf. 1 Cor. 4:17; 7:17; 11:16,34; 14:33). Corinth must be a part of the family, not a privileged, elite member. See [SPECIAL TOPIC: SAINTS](#) at 1 Cor. 1:2.

In their current crisis, all of the congregations started by Paul sent their greetings, which implies fellowship, concern, cooperation, prayer, and acceptance.

#### **NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 13:14**

**<sup>14</sup>The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.**

**13:14** Paul always closes his letters in a prayer or benediction, but this one is unique. It combines three aspects of God's character with the three persons of the Trinity. It is also unusual that Jesus is mentioned first. For the full notes on "Trinity" see the Special Topic at 1 Cor. 2:10.

The three aspects of God: grace, love, and fellowship, are for "all" believers at Corinth. This is a crucial part of the prayer. Paul wants to restore unity among believers yet recognize and reject false believers.

Paul used a scribe to write his letters, but probably took the pen himself to write the last prayer personally (cf. 2 Thess. 3:17). Paul loved this church!

▣ **"the fellowship of the Holy Spirit"** See Special Topics at 1 Cor. 1:9 and 12:11.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How do believers test themselves?
2. Why does Paul speak so often in chapters 11-13 of his weakness?



3. How is assurance related to perseverance?
4. How can God be one and three at the same time?

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# BRIEF DEFINITIONS OF GREEK GRAMMATICAL TERMS

Koine Greek, often called Hellenistic Greek, was the common language of the Mediterranean world beginning with Alexander the Great's (336-323 b.c..) conquest and lasting about eight hundred years (300 b.c.-a.d. 500). It was not just a simplified, classical Greek, but in many ways a newer form of Greek that became the second language of the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean world.

The Greek of the New Testament was unique in some ways because its users, except Luke and the author of Hebrews, probably used Aramaic as their primary language. Therefore, their writing was influenced by the idioms and structural forms of Aramaic. Also, they read and quoted the Septuagint (Greek translation of the OT) which was also written in Koine Greek. But the Septuagint was also written by Jewish scholars whose mother tongue was not Greek.

This serves as a reminder that we cannot push the New Testament into a tight grammatical structure. It is unique and yet has much in common with (1) the Septuagint; (2) Jewish writings such as those of Josephus; and (3) the papyri found in Egypt. How then do we approach a grammatical analysis of the New Testament?

The grammatical features of Koine Greek and New Testament Koine Greek are fluid. In many ways it was a time of simplification of grammar. Context will be our major guide. Words only have meaning in a larger context, therefore, grammatical structure can only be understood in light of (1) a particular author's style; and (2) a particular context. No conclusive definitions of Greek forms and structures are possible.

Koine Greek was primarily a verbal language. Often the key to interpretation is the type and form of the verbals. In most main clauses the verb will occur first, showing its preeminence. In analyzing the Greek verb three pieces of information must be noted: (1) the basic emphasis of the tense, voice and mood (accidence or morphology); (2) the basic meaning of the particular verb (lexicography); and (3) the flow of the context (syntax).

## I. TENSE

A. Tense or aspect involves the relationship of the verbs to completed action or incomplete action. This is often called "perfective" and "imperfective."

1. Perfective tenses focus on the occurrence of an action. No further information is given except that something happened! Its start, continuation or culmination is not addressed.
2. Imperfective tenses focus on the continuing process of an action. It can be described in terms of linear action, durative action, progressive action, etc.

B. Tenses can be categorized by how the author sees the action as progressing

1. It occurred = aorist
2. It occurred and the results abide = perfect
3. It was occurring in the past and the results were abiding, but not now = pluperfect
4. It is occurring = present
5. It was occurring = imperfect
6. It will occur = future

A concrete example of how these tenses help in interpretation would be the term "save." It was used in several different tenses to show both its process and culmination:

1. aorist - "saved" (cf. Rom. 8:24)
2. perfect - "have been saved and the result continues" (cf. Eph. 2:5,8)
3. present - "being saved" (cf. I Cor. 1:18; 15:2)
4. future - "shall be saved" (cf. Rom. 5:9, 10; 10:9)

C. In focusing on verb tenses, interpreters look for the reason the original author chose to express

himself in a certain tense. The standard "no frills" tense was the aorist. It was the regular "unspecific," "unmarked," or "unflagged" verb form. It can be used in a wide variety of ways which the context must specify. It simply was stating that something occurred. The past time aspect is only intended in the indicative mood. If any other tense was used, something more specific was being emphasized. But what?

1. perfect tense. This speaks of a completed action with abiding results. In some ways it was a combination of the aorist and present tenses. Usually the focus is on the abiding results or the completion of an act (example: Eph. 2:5 & 8, "you have been and continue to be saved").
2. pluperfect tense. This was like the perfect except the abiding results have ceased. Example: John 18:16 "Peter was standing at the door outside."
3. present tense. This speaks of an incomplete or imperfect action. The focus is usually on the continuation of the event. Example: I John 3:6 & 9, "Everyone abiding in Him does not continue sinning." "Everyone having been begotten of God does not continue to commit sin."
4. imperfect tense. In this tense the relationship to the present tense is analogous to the relationship between the perfect and the pluperfect. The imperfect speaks of incomplete action that was occurring but has now ceased or the beginning of an action in the past. Example: Matt. 3:5, "then all Jerusalem were continuing to go out to him" or "then all Jerusalem began to go out to him."
5. future tense. This speaks of an action that was usually projected into a future time frame. It focused on the potential for an occurrence rather than an actual occurrence. It often speaks of the certainty of the event. Example: Matt. 5:4-9, "Blessed are . . . they will . . ."

## II. VOICE

- A. Voice describes the relationship between the action of the verb and its subject.
- B. Active voice was the normal, expected, unemphasized way to assert that the subject was performing the action of the verb.
- C. The passive voice means that the subject was receiving the action of the verb produced by an outside agent. The outside agent producing the action was indicated in the Greek NT by the following prepositions and cases:
  1. a personal direct agent by *hupo* with the ablative case (cf. Matt. 1:22; Acts 22:30).
  2. a personal intermediate agent by *dia* with the ablative case (cf. Matt. 1:22).
  3. an impersonal agent usually by *en* with the instrumental case.
  4. sometimes either a personal or impersonal agent by the instrumental case alone.
- D. The middle voice means that the subject produces the action of the verb and is also directly involved in the action of the verb. It is often called the voice of heightened personal interest. This construction emphasized the subject of the clause or sentence in some way. This construction is not found in English. It has a wide possibility of meanings and translations in Greek. Some examples of the form are:
  1. reflexive - the direct action of the subject on itself. Example: Matt. 27:5 "hanged himself."
  2. intensive - the subject produces the action for itself. Example: II Cor. 11:14 "Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light."
  3. reciprocal - the interplay of two subjects. Example: Matt. 26:4 "they counseled with one another."

## III. MOOD (or "MODE")

- A. There are four moods in Koine Greek. They indicate the relation of the verb to reality, at least within the author's own mind. The moods are divided into two broad categories: that which indicated reality (indicative) and that which indicated potentiality (subjunctive, imperative and optative).
- B. The indicative mood was the normal mood for expressing action that had occurred or was occurring, at least in the author's mind. It was the only Greek mood that expressed a definite time, and even here this aspect was secondary.
- C. The subjunctive mood expressed probable future action. Something had not yet happened, but the

chances were likely that it would. It had much in common with the future indicative. The difference was that the subjunctive expresses some degree of doubt. In English this is often expressed by the terms "could," "would," "may," or "might."

- D. The optative mood expressed a wish which was theoretically possible. It was considered one step further from reality than the subjunctive. The optative expressed possibility under certain conditions. The optative was rare in the New Testament. Its most frequent usage is Paul's famous phrase, "May it never be" (KJV, "God forbid"), used fifteen times (cf. Rom. 3:4, 6, 31; 6:2, 15; 7:7, 13; 9:14; 11:1, 11; I Cor. 6:15; Gal. 2:17; 3:21; 6:14). Other examples are found in Luke 1:38, 20:16, Acts 8:20, and I Thess. 3:11.
- E. The imperative mood emphasized a command which was possible, but the emphasis was on the intent of the speaker. It asserted only volitional possibility and was conditioned on the choices of another. There was a special use of the imperative in prayers and 3rd person requests. These commands were found only in the present and aorist tenses in the NT.
- F. Some grammars categorize participles as another type of mood. They are very common in the Greek NT, usually defined as verbal adjectives. They are translated in conjunction with the main verb to which they relate. A wide variety was possible in translating participles. It is best to consult several English translations. *The Bible in Twenty Six Translations* published by Baker is a great help here.
- G. The aorist active indicative was the normal or "unmarked" way to record an occurrence. Any other tense, voice or mood had some specific interpretive significance that the original author wanted to communicate.

IV. For the person not familiar with Greek the following study aids will provide the needed information:

- A. Friberg, Barbara and Timothy. *Analytical Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988.
- B. Marshall, Alfred. *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976.
- C. Mounce, William D. *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993.
- D. Summers, Ray. *Essentials of New Testament Greek*. Nashville: Broadman, 1950.
- E. Academically accredited Koine Greek correspondence courses are available through Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, IL.

## V. NOUNS

- A. Syntactically, nouns are classified by case. Case was that inflected form of a noun that showed its relationship to the verb and other parts of the sentence. In Koine Greek many of the case functions were indicated by prepositions. Since the case form was able to identify several different relationships, the prepositions developed to give clearer separation to these possible functions.
- B. Greek cases are categorized in the following eight ways:
  1. The nominative case was used for naming and it usually was the subject of the sentence or clause. It was also used for predicate nouns and adjectives with the linking verbs "to be" or "become."
  2. The genitive case was used for description and usually assigned an attribute or quality to the word to which it was related. It answered the question, "What kind?" It was often expressed by the use of the English preposition "of."
  3. The ablative case used the same inflected form as the genitive, but it was used to describe separation. It usually denoted separation from a point in time, space, source, origin or degree. It was often expressed by the use of the English preposition "from."
  4. The dative case was used to describe personal interest. This could denote a positive or negative aspect. Often this was the indirect object. It was often expressed by the English preposition "to."
  5. The locative case was the same inflected form as the dative, but it described position or location in space, time or logical limits. It was often expressed by the English prepositions "in, on, at, among, during, by, upon, and beside."

6. The instrumental case was the same inflected form as the dative and locative cases. It expressed means or association. It was often expressed by the English prepositions, "by" or "with."
7. The accusative case was used to describe the conclusion of an action. It expressed limitation. Its main use was the direct object. It answered the question, "How far?" or "To what extent?"
8. The vocative case was used for direct address.

## VI. CONJUNCTIONS AND CONNECTORS

A. Greek is a very precise language because it has so many connectives. They connect thoughts (clauses, sentences, and paragraphs). They are so common that their absence (asyndeton) is often exegetically significant. As a matter of fact, these conjunctions and connectors show the direction of the author's thought. They often are crucial in determining what exactly he is trying to communicate.

B. Here is a list of some of the conjunctions and connectors and their meanings (this information has been gleaned mostly from H. E. Dana and Julius K. Mantey's *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*).

### 1. Time connectors

- a. *epei, epeidē, hopote, hōs, hote, hotan* (subj.) - "when"
- b. *heōs* - "while"
- c. *hotan, epan* (subj.) - "whenever"
- d. *heōs, achri, mechri* (subj.) - "until"
- e. *priv* (infin.) - "before"
- f. *hōs* - "since," "when," "as"

### 2. Logical connectors

#### a. Purpose

- (1) *hina* (subj.), *hopōs* (subj.), *hōs* - "in order that," "that"
- (2) *hōste* (articular accusative infinitive) - "that"
- (3) *pros* (articular accusative infinitive) or *eis* (articular accusative infinitive) - "that"

#### b. Result (there is a close association between the grammatical forms of purpose and result)

- (1) *hōste* (infinitive, this is the most common) - "in order that," "thus"
- (2) *hiva* (subj.) - "so that"
- (3) *ara* - "so"

#### c. Causal or reason

- (1) *gar* (cause/effect or reason/conclusion) - "for," "because"
- (2) *dioti, hotiy* - "because"
- (3) *epei, epeidē, hōs* - "since"
- (4) *dia* (with accusative) and (with articular infin.) - "because"

#### d. Inferential

- (1) *ara, poinun, hōste* - "therefore"
- (2) *dio* (strongest inferential conjunction) - "on which account," "wherefore," "therefore"
- (3) *oun* - "therefore," "so," "then," "consequently"
- (4) *toinoun* - "accordingly"

#### e. Adversative or contrast

- (1) *alla* (strong adversative) - "but," "except"
- (2) *de* - "but," "however," "yet," "on the other hand"
- (3) *kai* - "but"
- (4) *mentoi, oun* - "however"
- (5) *plēn* - "never-the-less" (mostly in Luke)
- (6) *oun* - "however"

#### f. Comparison

- (1) *hōs, kathōs* (introduce comparative clauses)
- (2) *kata* (in compounds, *katho, kathoti, kathōsper, kathaper*)

- (3) *hosos* (in Hebrews)
- (4) *ē* - "than"
- g. Continuative or series
  - (1) *de* - "and," "now"
  - (2) *kai* - "and"
  - (3) *tei* - "and"
  - (4) *hina, oun* - "that"
  - (5) *oun* - "then" (in John)

### 3. Emphatic usages

- a. *alla* - "certainty," "yea," "in fact"
- b. *ara* - "indeed," "certainly," "really"
- c. *gar* - "but really," "certainly," "indeed"
- d. *de* - "indeed"
- e. *ean* - "even"
- f. *kai* - "even," "indeed," "really"
- g. *mentoi* - "indeed"
- h. *oun* - "really," "by all means"

## VII. CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

- A. A conditional sentence is one that contains one or more conditional clauses. This grammatical structure aids interpretation because it provides the conditions, reasons or causes why the action of the main verb does or does not occur. There were four types of conditional sentences. They move from that which was assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his purpose to that which was only a wish.
- B. The first class conditional sentence expressed action or being which was assumed to be true from the writer's perspective or for his purposes even though it was expressed with an "if." In several contexts it could be translated "since" (cf. Matt. 4:3; Rom. 8:31). However, this does not mean to imply that all first classes are true to reality. Often they were used to make a point in an argument or to highlight a fallacy (cf. Matt. 12:27).
- C. The second class conditional sentence is often called "contrary to fact." It states something that was untrue to reality to make a point. Examples:
  - 1. "If He were really a prophet which He is not, He would know who and of what character the woman is who is clinging to Him, but He does not" (Luke 7:39)
  - 2. "If you really believed Moses, which you do not, you would believe me, which you do not" (John 5:46)
  - 3. "If I were still trying to be pleasing to men, which I am not, I would not be a slave of Christ at all, which I am" (Gal. 1:10)
- D. The third class speaks of possible future action. It often assumes the probability of that action. It usually implies a contingency. The action of the main verb is contingent on the action in the "if" clause. Examples from I John: 1:6-10; 2:4,6,9,15,20,21,24,29; 3:21; 4:20; 5:14,16.
- E. The fourth class is the farthest removed from possibility. It is rare in the NT. As a matter of fact, there is no complete fourth class conditional sentence in which both parts of the condition fit the definition. An example of a partial fourth class is the opening clause in I Pet. 3:14. An example of a partial fourth class in the concluding clause is Acts 8:31.

## VIII. PROHIBITIONS

- A. The present imperative with *mē* particle often (but not exclusively) has the emphasis of stopping an act already in process. Some examples: "stop storing up your riches on earth. . ." (Matt. 6:19); "stop worrying about your life. . ." (Matt. 6:25); "stop offering to sin the parts of your bodies as instruments of wrongdoing. . ." (Rom. 6:13); "you must stop offending the Holy Spirit of God. . ." (Eph. 4:30); and "stop getting drunk on wine. . ." (5:18).

- B. The aorist subjunctive with *mē* particle has the emphasis of "do not even begin or start an act." Some examples: "Do not even begin to suppose that. . ." (Matt. 5:17); "never start to worry. . ." (Matt. 6:31); "you must never be ashamed. . ." (II Tim. 1:8).
- C. The double negative with the subjunctive mood is a very emphatic negation. "Never, no never" or "not under any circumstance." Some examples: "he will never, no never experience death" (John 8:51); "I will never, no, never. . ." (I Cor. 8:13).

## IX. THE ARTICLE

- A. In Koine Greek the definite article "the" had a use similar to English. Its basic function was that of "a pointer," a way to draw attention to a word, name or phrase. The use varies from author to author in the New Testament. The definite article could also function
  - 1. as a contrasting device like a demonstrative pronoun;
  - 2. as a sign to refer to a previously introduced subject or person;
  - 3. as a way to identify the subject in a sentence with a linking verb. Examples: "God is Spirit" (John 4:24); "God is light" (I John 1:5); "God is love" (4:8,16).
- B. Koine Greek did not have an indefinite article like the English "a" or "an." The absence of the definite article could mean
  - 1. a focus on the characteristics or quality of something
  - 2. a focus on the category of something
- C. The NT authors varied widely as to how the article was employed.

## X. WAYS OF SHOWING EMPHASIS IN THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

- A. The techniques for showing emphasis vary from author to author in the New Testament. The most consistent and formal writers were Luke and the author of Hebrews.
- B. We have stated earlier that the aorist active indicative was standard and unmarked for emphasis, but any other tense, voice, or mood had interpretive significance. This is not to imply that the aorist active indicative was not often used in a significant grammatical sense. (Example: Rom. 6:10 [twice]).
- C. Word order in Koine Greek
  - 1. Koine Greek was an inflected language which was not dependent, like English, on word order. Therefore, the author could vary the normal expected order to show
    - a. what the author wanted to emphasize to the reader
    - b. what the author thought would be surprising to the reader
    - c. what the author felt deeply about
  - 2. The normal word order in Greek is still an unsettled issue. However, the supposed normal order is:
    - a. for linking verbs
      - (1) verb
      - (2) subject
      - (3) complement
    - b. for transitive verbs
      - (1) verb
      - (2) subject
      - (3) object
      - (4) indirect object
      - (5) prepositional phrase
    - c. for noun phrases
      - (1) noun
      - (2) modifier
      - (3) prepositional phrase
  - 3. Word order can be an extremely important exegetical point. Examples:
    - a. "right hand they gave to me and Barnabas of fellowship." The phrase "right hand of

- fellowship" is split and fronted to show its significance (Gal. 2:9).
- b. "with Christ" was placed first. His death was central (Gal. 2:20).
  - c. "It was bit by bit and in many different ways" (Heb. 1:1) was placed first. It was how God revealed Himself that was being contrasted, not the fact of revelation.
- D. Usually some degree of emphasis was shown by
1. The repetition of the pronoun which was already present in the verb's inflected form. Example: "I, myself, will surely be with you. . ." (Matt. 28:20).
  2. The absence of an expected conjunction, or other connecting device between words, phrases, clauses or sentences. This is called an asyndeton ("not bound"). The connecting device was expected, so its absence would draw attention. Examples:
    - a. The Beatitudes, Matt. 5:3ff (emphasized the list)
    - b. John 14:1 (new topic)
    - c. Romans 9:1 (new section)
    - d. II Cor. 12:20 (emphasize the list)
  3. The repetition of words or phrases present in a given context. Examples: "to the praise of His glory" (Eph. 1:6, 12 & 14). This phrase was used to show the work of each person of the Trinity.
  4. The use of an idiom or word (sound) play between terms
    - a. euphemisms - substitute words for taboo subjects, like "sleep" for death (John 11:11-14) or "feet" for male genitalia (Ruth 3:7-8; I Sam. 24:3).
    - b. circumlocutions - substitute words for God's name, like "Kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 3:2) or "a voice from heaven" (Matt. 3:17).
    - c. figures of speech
      - (1) impossible exaggerations (Matt. 3:9; 5:29-30; 19:24)
      - (2) mild over statements (Matt. 3:5; Acts 2:36)
      - (3) personifications (I Cor. 15:55)
      - (4) irony (Gal. 5:12)
      - (5) poetic passages (Phil. 2:6-11)
      - (6) sound plays between words
        - (a) "church"
          - (i) "church" (Eph. 3:21)
          - (ii) "calling" (Eph. 4:1,4)
          - (iii)"called" (Eph. 4:1,4)
        - (b) "free"
          - (i) "free woman" (Gal. 4:31)
          - (ii)"freedom" (Gal. 5:1)
          - (iii)"free" (Gal. 5:1)
    - d. idiomatic language - language which is usually cultural and language specific:
      - (1) figurative use of "food" (John 4:31-34)
      - (2) figurative use of "Temple" (John 2:19; Matt. 26:61)
      - (3) Hebrew idiom of compassion, "hate" (Gen. 29:31; Deut. 21:15; Luke 14:36; John 12:25; Rom. 9:13)
      - (4) "All" versus "many." Compare Isa. 53:6 ("all") with 53:11 & 12 ("many"). The terms are synonymous as Rom. 5:18 and 19 show.
  5. The use of a full linguistic phrase instead of a single word. Example: "The Lord Jesus Christ."
  6. The special use of *autos*
    - a. when with the article (attributive position) it was translated "same."
    - b. when without the article (predicate position) it was translated as an intensive reflexive pronoun-"himself," "herself," or "itself."
- E. The non-Greek reading Bible student can identify emphasis in several ways:
1. The use of an analytical lexicon and interlinear Greek/English text.
  2. The comparison of English translations, particularly from the differing theories of translations. Example: comparing a "word-for-word" translation (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, RSV, NRSV)



with a "dynamic equivalent" (Williams, NIV, NEB, REB, JB, NJB, TEV). A good help here would be *The Bible in Twenty-Six Translations* published by Baker.

3. The use of *The Emphasized Bible* by Joseph Bryant Rotherham (Kregel, 1994).

4. The use of a very literal translation

a. *The American Standard Version* of 1901

b. *Young's Literal Translation of the Bible* by Robert Young (Guardian Press, 1976).

The study of grammar is tedious but necessary for proper interpretation. These brief definitions, comments and examples are meant to encourage and equip non-Greek reading persons to use the grammatical notes provided in this volume. Surely these definitions are oversimplified. They should not be used in a dogmatic, inflexible manner, but as stepping stones toward a greater understanding of New Testament syntax. Hopefully these definitions will also enable readers to understand the comments of other study aids such as technical commentaries on the New Testament.

We must be able to verify our interpretation based on items of information found in the texts of the Bible. Grammar is one of the most helpful of these items; other items would include historical setting, literary context, contemporary word usage, and parallel passages.

# TEXTUAL CRITICISM

This subject will be dealt with in such a way as to explain the textual notes found in this commentary. The following outline will be utilized

- I. The textual sources of our English Bible
  - A. Old Testament
  - B. New Testament
- II. Brief explanation of the problems and theories of "lower criticism" also called "textual criticism."
- III. Suggested sources for further reading

## I. The textual sources of our English Bible

### A. Old Testament

1. Masoretic text (MT) - The Hebrew consonantal text was set by Rabbi Aquiba in a.d. 100. The vowel points, accents, marginal notes, punctuation and apparatus points started being added in the sixth century a.d. and were finished in the ninth century a.d. It was done by a family of Jewish scholars known as the Masoretes. The textual form they used was the same as the one in the Mishnah, Talmud, Targums, Peshitta, and Vulgate.
2. Septuagint (LXX) - Tradition says the Septuagint was produced by 70 Jewish scholars in 70 days for the Alexandria library under the sponsorship of King Ptolemy II (285-246 b.c.) The translation was supposedly requested by a Jewish leader living in Alexandria. This tradition comes from "Letter of Aristeas." The LXX frequently was based on a differing Hebrew textual tradition from the text of Rabbi Aquiba (MT).
3. Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) - The Dead Sea Scrolls were written in the Roman b.c. period (200 b.c. to a.d. 70) by a sect of Jewish separatists called the "Essenes." The Hebrew manuscripts, found in several sites around the Dead Sea, show a somewhat different Hebrew textual family behind both the MT and the LXX.
4. Some specific examples of how the comparison of these texts have helped interpreters understand the Old Testament
  - a. The LXX has helped translators and scholars understand the MT
    - (1) the LXX of Isa. 52:14, "As many shall be amazed at him."
    - (2) the MT of Isa. 52:14, "Just as many were astonished over you."
    - (3) in Isa. 52:15 the pronoun distinction of the LXX is confirmed
      - (a) LXX, "so will many nations marvel at him"
      - (b) MT, "so he sprinkles many nations"
  - b. The DSS have helped translators and scholars understand the MT
    - (1) the DSS of Isa. 21:8, "then the seer cried, Upon a watchtower I stand. . ."
    - (2) the MT of Isa. 21:8, "and I cried a lion! My Lord, I always stand on the watch tower by day. . ."
  - c. Both the LXX and DSS have helped clarify Isa. 53:11
    - (1) LXX & DSS, "after the travail of his soul he will see light, he will be satisfied"
    - (2) MT, "he shall see. . .of the travail of his soul, He shall be satisfied"

### B. New Testament

1. Over 5,300 manuscripts of all or parts of the Greek New Testament are extant. About 85 are written on papyri and 268 are manuscripts written in all capital letters (uncials). Later, about the ninth century a.d., a running script (minuscule) was developed. The Greek manuscripts in written form number about 2,700. We also have about 2,100 copies of lists of Scripture texts used in worship that we call lectionaries.
2. About 85 Greek manuscripts containing parts of the New Testament written on papyrus are

housed in museums. Some are dated from the second century a.d., but most are from the third and fourth centuries a.d. None of these MSS contain the whole New Testament. Just because these are the oldest copies of the New Testament does not automatically mean they have fewer variants. Many of these were copied rapidly for a local use. Care was not exercised in the process. Therefore, they contain many variants.

3. Codex Sinaiticus, known by the Hebrew letter  $\aleph$  (*aleph*) or (01), found at St. Catherine's monastery on Mt. Sinai by Tischendorf. It dates from the fourth century a.d. and contains both the LXX of the OT and the Greek NT. It is of "the Alexandrian Text" type.
4. Codex Alexandrinus, known as "A" or (02), a fifth century Greek manuscript which was found in Alexandria, Egypt.
5. Codex Vaticanus, known as "B" or (03), found in the Vatican's library in Rome and dates from the middle of the fourth century a.d. It contains both LXX of the Old Testament and Greek New Testament. It is of "the Alexandrian Text" type.
6. Codex Ephraemi, known as "C" or (04), a fifth century Greek manuscript which was partially destroyed.
7. Codex Bezae, known as "D" or (05), a fifth or sixth century Greek manuscript. It is the chief representative of what is called "The Western Text." It contains many additions and was the main Greek witness for the King James translation.
8. The NT MSS can be grouped into three, possibly four, families that share certain characteristics.
  - a. Alexandrian text from Egypt
    - (1) P<sup>75</sup>, P<sup>66</sup> (about a.d. 200), which record the Gospels
    - (2) P<sup>46</sup> (about a.d. 225), which records Paul's letters
    - (3) P<sup>72</sup> (about a.d. 225-250), which records Peter and Jude
    - (4) Codex B, called Vaticanus (about a.d. 325), which includes the whole OT and NT
    - (5) Origen quotes from this text type
    - (6) other MSS which show this text type are  $\aleph$ , C, L, W, 33
  - b. Western text from North Africa
    - (1) quotes from North African church fathers, Tertullian, Cyprian, and the Old Latin translation
    - (2) quotes from Irenaeus
    - (3) quotes from Tatian and Old Syriac translation
    - (4) Codex D "Bezae" follow this text type
  - c. Eastern Byzantine text from Constantinople
    - (1) this text type is reflected in over 80% of the 5,300 MSS
    - (2) quoted by Antioch of Syria's church fathers, Cappadoceans, Chrysostom, and Therodoret
    - (3) Codex A, in the Gospels only
    - (4) Codex E (eighth century) for full NT
  - d. the fourth possible type is "Caesarean" from Palestine
    - (1) it is primarily seen only in Mark
    - (2) some witnesses to it are P<sup>45</sup> and W

## II. The problems and theories of "lower criticism" or "textual criticism."

### A. How the variants occurred

1. inadvertent or accidental (vast majority of occurrences)
  - a. slip of the eye in hand copying which reads the second instance of two similar words and thereby omits all of the words in between (homoioteleuton)
    - (1) slip of the eye in omitting a double letter word or phrase (haplography)
    - (2) slip of the mind in repeating a phrase or line of a Greek text (dittography)
  - b. slip of the ear in copying by oral dictation where a misspelling occurs (itacism). Often the

misspelling implies or spells a similar-sounding Greek word.

- c. the earliest Greek texts had no chapter or verse divisions, little or no punctuation and no division between words. It is possible to divide the letters in different places forming different words.

## 2. intentional

- a. changes were made to improve the grammatical form of the text copied
- b. changes were made to bring the text into conformity with other biblical texts (harmonization of parallels)
- c. changes were made by combining two or more variant readings into one long combined text (conflation)
- d. changes were made to correct a perceived problem in the text (cf. I Cor. 11:27 and I John 5:7-8)
- e. some additional information as to the historical setting or proper interpretation of the text was placed in the margin by one scribe but placed into the text by a second scribe (cf. John 5:4)

## B. The basic tenets of textual criticism (logical guidelines for determining the original reading of a text when variants exist)

1. the most awkward or grammatically unusual text is probably the original
2. the shortest text is probably the original
3. the older text is given more weight because of its historical proximity to the original, everything else being equal
4. MSS that are geographically diverse usually have the original reading
5. doctrinally weaker texts, especially those relating to major theological discussions of the period of manuscript changes, like the Trinity in I John 5:7-8, are to be preferred.
6. the text that can best explain the origin of the other variants
7. two quotes that help show the balance in these troubling variants

- a. J. Harold Greenlee's book, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, p. 68:

"No Christian doctrine hangs upon a debatable text; and the student of the NT must beware of wanting his text to be more orthodox or doctrinally stronger than is the inspired original."

- b. W. A. Criswell told Greg Garrison of *The Birmingham News* that he (Criswell) doesn't believe every word in the Bible is inspired, "at least not every word that has been given to the modern public by centuries of translators." Criswell said: "I very much am a believer in the textual criticism. As such, I think, the last half of the 16th chapter of Mark is heresy: it's not inspired, it's just concocted. . . .When you compare those manuscripts way back yonder, there was no such thing as that conclusion of the Book of Mark. Somebody added it..."

The patriarch of the SBC inerrantists also claimed that "interpolation" is also evident in John 5, the account of Jesus at the pool of Bethesda. And he discusses the two different accounts of the suicide of Judas (cf. Matt. 27 and Acts 1): "It's just a different view of the suicide," Criswell said. "If it is in the Bible, there is an explanation for it. And the two accounts of the suicide of Judas are in the Bible." Criswell added, "Textual criticism is a wonderful science in itself. It is not ephemeral, it's not impertinent. It's dynamic and central..."

## III. Manuscript problems (textual criticism)

### A. Suggested sources for further reading

1. *Biblical Criticism: Historical, Literary and Textual*, by R.H. Harrison
2. *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration* by Bruce M. Metzger
3. *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, by J. H Greenlee

# GLOSSARY

**Adoptionism.** This was one of the early views of Jesus' relation to deity. It basically asserted that Jesus was a normal human in every way and was adopted in a special sense by God at his baptism (cf. Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11) or at His resurrection (cf. Rom. 1:4). Jesus lived such an exemplary life that God, at some point, (baptism, resurrection) adopted Him as His "son" (cf. Rom. 1:4; Phi. 2:9). This was an early church and eighth century minority view. Instead of God becoming a man (the Incarnation) it reverses this and now man becomes God!

It is difficult to verbalize how Jesus, God the Son, pre-existent deity, was rewarded or extolled for an exemplary life. If He was already God, how could He be rewarded? If He had pre-existent divine glory how could He be honored more? Although it is hard for us to comprehend, the Father somehow honored Jesus in a special sense for His perfect fulfillment of the Father's will.

**Alexandrian School.** This method of biblical interpretation was developed in Alexandria, Egypt in the second century a.d. It uses the basic interpretive principles of Philo, who was a follower of Plato. It is often called the allegorical method. It held sway in the church until the time of the Reformation. Its most able proponents were Origen and Augustine. See Moises Silva, *Has The Church Misread The Bible?* (Academic, 1987)

**Alexandrinus.** This fifth-century Greek manuscript from Alexandria, Egypt includes the Old Testament, Apocrypha, and most of the New Testament. It is one of our major witnesses to the entire Greek New Testament (except parts of Matthew, John, and II Corinthians). When this manuscript, which is designated "A," and the manuscript designated "B" (Vaticanus) agree on a reading, it is considered to be original by most scholars in most instances.

**Allegory.** This is a type of Biblical interpretation which originally developed within Alexandrian Judaism. It was popularized by Philo of Alexandria. Its basic thrust is the desire to make the Scripture relevant to one's culture or philosophical system by ignoring the Bible's historical setting and/or literary context. It seeks a hidden or spiritual meaning behind every text of Scripture. It must be admitted that Jesus, in Matthew 13, and Paul, in Galatians 4, used allegory to communicate truth. This, however, was in the form of typology, not strictly allegory.

**Analytical lexicon.** This is a type of research tool which allows one to identify every Greek form in the New Testament. It is a compilation, in Greek alphabetical order, of forms and basic definitions. In combination with an interlinear translation, it allows non-Greek reading believers to analyze New Testament Greek grammatical and syntactic forms.

**Analogy of Scripture.** This is the phrase used to describe the view that all of the Bible is inspired by God and is, therefore, not contradictory but complementary. This presuppositional affirmation is the basis for the use of parallel passages in interpreting a biblical text.

**Ambiguity.** This refers to the uncertainty that results in a written document when there are two or more possible meanings or when two or more things are being referred to at the same time. It is possible that John uses purposeful ambiguity (double entendres).

**Anthropomorphic.** Meaning "having characteristics associated with human beings," this term is used to describe our religious language about God. It comes from the Greek term for mankind. It means that we speak about God as if He were a man. God is described in physical, sociological, and psychological terms which relate to human beings (cf. Gen. 3:8; I Kgs. 22:19-23). This, of course, is only an analogy. However, there are no categories or terms other than human ones for us to use.

Therefore, our knowledge of God, though true, is limited.

**Antiochian School.** This method of biblical interpretation was developed in Antioch, Syria in the third century a.d. as a reaction to the allegorical method of Alexandria, Egypt. Its basic thrust was to focus on the historical meaning of the Bible. It interpreted the Bible as normal, human literature. This school became involved in the controversy over whether Christ had two natures (Nestorianism) or one nature (fully God and fully man). It was labeled heretical by the Roman Catholic Church and relocated to Persia but the school had little significance. Its basic hermeneutical principles later became interpretive principles of the Classical Protestant Reformers (Luther and Calvin).

**Antithetical.** This is one of three descriptive terms used to denote the relationship between lines of Hebrew poetry. It relates to lines of poetry which are opposite in meaning (cf. Pro. 10:1, 15:1).

**Apocalyptic literature.** This was predominantly, possibly even uniquely, a Jewish genre. It was a cryptic type of writing used in times of invasion and occupation of the Jews by foreign world powers. It assumes that a personal, redemptive God created and controls world events, and that Israel is of special interest and care to Him. This literature promises ultimate victory through God's special effort.

It is highly symbolic and fanciful with many cryptic terms. It often expressed truth in colors, numbers, visions, dreams, angelic mediation, secret code words and often a sharp dualism between good and evil.

Some examples of this genre are (1) in the OT, Ezekiel (chapters 36-48), Daniel (chapters 7-12), Zechariah; and (2) in the NT, Matthew 24; Mark 13; II Thessalonians 2 and Revelation.

**Apologist (Apologetics).** This is from the Greek root for "legal defense." This is a specific discipline within theology which seeks to give evidence and rational arguments for the Christian faith.

**A priori.** This is basically synonymous with the term "presupposition." It involves reasoning from previously accepted definitions, principles or positions which are assumed to be true. It is that which is accepted without examination or analysis.

**Arianism.** Arius was a presbyter in the church at Alexandria Egypt in the third and early fourth century. He affirmed that Jesus was pre-existent but not divine (not of the same essence as the Father), possibly following Proverbs 8:22-31. He was challenged by the bishop of Alexandria, who started (a.d. 318) a controversy which lasted many years. Arianism became the official creed of the Eastern Church. The Council of Nicaea in a.d. 325 condemned Arius and asserted the full equality and deity of the Son.

**Aristotle.** He was one of the philosophers of ancient Greece, a pupil of Plato and teacher of Alexander the Great. His influence, even today, reaches into many areas of modern studies. This is because he emphasized knowledge through observation and classification. This is one of the tenets of the scientific method.

**Autographs.** This is the name given to the original writings of the Bible. These original, handwritten manuscripts have all been lost. Only copies of copies remain. This is the source of many of the textual variants in the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts and ancient versions.

**Bezae.** This is a Greek and Latin manuscript of the sixth century a.d. It is designated by "D." It contains the Gospels and Acts and some of the General Epistles. It is characterized by numerous scribal additions. It forms the basis for the "Textus Receptus," the major Greek manuscript tradition behind the King James Version.

**Bias.** This is the term used to describe a strong predisposition toward an object or point of view. It is the mindset in which impartiality is impossible regarding a particular object or point of view. It is a prejudiced position.

**Biblical Authority.** This term is used in a very specialized sense. It is defined as understanding what the original author said to his day and applying this truth to our day. Biblical authority is usually defined as viewing the Bible itself as our only authoritative guide. However, in light of current, improper interpretations, I have limited the concept to the Bible as interpreted by the tenets of the historical-grammatical method.

**Canon.** This is a term used to describe writings which are believed to be uniquely inspired. It is used regarding both the Old and New Testament Scriptures.

**Christocentric.** This is a term used to describe the centrality of Jesus. I use it in connection with the concept that Jesus is Lord of all the Bible. The Old Testament points toward Him and He is its fulfillment and goal (cf. Matt. 5:17-48).

**Commentary.** This is a specialized type of research book. It gives the general background of a Biblical book. It then tries to explain the meaning of each section of the book. Some focus on application, while others deal with the text in a more technical way. These books are helpful, but should be used after one has done his own preliminary study. The commentator's interpretations should never be accepted uncritically. Comparing several commentaries from different theological perspectives is usually helpful.

**Concordance.** This is a type of research tool for Bible study. It lists every occurrence of every word in the Old and New Testaments. It helps in several ways: (1) determining the Hebrew or Greek word which lies behind any particular English word; (2) comparing passages where the same Hebrew or Greek word was used; (3) showing where two different Hebrew or Greek terms are translated by the same English word; (4) showing the frequency of the use of certain words in certain books or authors; (5) helping one find a passage in the Bible (cf. Walter Clark's *Howto Use New Testament Greek Study Aids*, pp. 54-55).

**Dead Sea Scrolls.** This refers to a series of ancient texts written in Hebrew and Aramaic which were found near the Dead Sea in 1947. They were the religious libraries of sectarian Judaism of the first century. The pressure of Roman occupation and the zealot wars of the 60's caused them to conceal the scrolls in hermetically sealed pottery jars in caves or holes. They have helped us understand the historical setting of first century Palestine and have confirmed the Masoretic Text as being very accurate, at least as far back as the early b.c. era. They are designated by the abbreviation "DSS."

**Deductive.** This method of logic or reasoning moves from general principles to specific applications by means of reason. It is opposite from inductive reasoning, which reflects the scientific method by moving from observed specifics to general conclusions (theories).

**Dialectical.** This is the method of reasoning whereby that which seems contradictory or paradoxical is held together in a tension, seeking a unified answer which includes both sides of the paradox. Many biblical doctrines have dialectical pairs, predestination-free will; security-perseverance; faith-works; decision-discipleship; Christian freedom-Christian responsibility.

**Diaspora.** This is the technical Greek term used by Palestinian Jews to describe other Jews who live outside the geographical boundaries of the Promised Land.

**Dynamic equivalent.** This is a theory of Bible translation. Bible translation can be viewed as a continuum from "word to word" correspondence, where an English word must be supplied for every Hebrew or Greek word, to a "paraphrase" where only the thought is translated with less regard to the original wording or phrasing. In between these two theories is "the dynamic equivalent" which attempts to take the original text seriously, but translates it in modern grammatical forms and idioms. A really good discussion of these various theories of translations is found in Fee and Stuart's *Howto Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, p. 35 and in Robert Bratcher's Introduction to the TEV.

**Eclectic.** This term is used in connection with textual criticism. It refers to the practice of choosing readings from different Greek manuscripts in order to arrive at a text which is supposed to be close to the original autographs. It rejects the view that any one family of Greek manuscripts captures the originals.

**Eisegesis.** This is the opposite of exegesis. If exegesis is a "leading out" of the original author's intent, this term implies a "leading in" of a foreign idea or opinion.

**Etymology.** This is an aspect of word study that tries to ascertain the original meaning of a word. From this root meaning, specialized usages are more easily identified. In interpretation, etymology is not the main focus, rather the contemporary meaning and usage of a word.

**Exegesis.** This is the technical term for the practice of interpreting a specific passage. It means "to lead out" (of the text) implying that our purpose is to understand the original author's intent in light of historical setting, literary context, syntax and contemporary word meaning.

**Genre.** This is a French term that denotes different types of literature. The thrust of the term is the division of literary forms into categories which share common characteristics: historical narrative, poetry, proverb, apocalyptic and legislation.

**Gnosticism.** Most of our knowledge of this heresy comes from the Gnostic writings of the second century. However, the incipient ideas were present in the first century (and before).

Some stated tenets of Valentian and Cerinthian Gnosticism of the second century are: (1) matter and spirit were co-eternal (an ontological dualism). Matter is evil, spirit is good. God, who is spirit, cannot be directly involved with molding evil matter; (2) there are emanations (*eons* or angelic levels) between God and matter. The last or lowest one was YHWH of the OT, who formed the universe (*kosmos*); (3) Jesus was an emanation like YHWH but higher on the scale, closer to the true God. Some put Him as the highest but still less than God and certainly not incarnate Deity (cf. John 1:14). Since matter is evil, Jesus could not have a human body and still be Divine. He was a spiritual phantom (cf. I John 1:1-3; 4:1-6); and (4) salvation was obtained through faith in Jesus plus special knowledge, which is only known by special persons. Knowledge (passwords) was needed to pass through heavenly spheres. Jewish legalism was also required to reach God.

The Gnostic false teachers advocated two opposite ethical systems: (1) for some, lifestyle was totally unrelated to salvation. For them, salvation and spirituality were encapsulated into secret knowledge (passwords) through the angelic spheres (*eons*); or (2) for others, lifestyle was crucial to salvation. They emphasized an ascetic lifestyle as evidence of true spirituality.

**Hermeneutics.** This is the technical term for the principles which guide exegesis. It is both a set of specific guidelines and an art/gift. Biblical, or sacred, hermeneutics is usually divided into two categories: general principles and special principles. These relate to the different types of literature found in the Bible. Each different type (genre) has its own unique guidelines but also shares some common assumptions and procedures of interpretation.

**Higher Criticism.** This is the procedure of biblical interpretation which focuses on the historical setting and literary structure of a particular biblical book.

**Idiom.** This word is used for the phrases found in different cultures which have specialized meaning not connected to the usual meaning of the individual terms. Some modern examples are: "that was awfully good," or "you just kill me." The Bible also contains these types of phrases.

**Illumination.** This is the name given to the concept that God has spoken to mankind. The full concept is usually expressed by three terms: (1) revelation-God has acted in human history; (2) inspiration-He has given the proper interpretation of His acts and their meaning to certain chosen men to record for



mankind; and (3) illumination-He has given His Spirit to help mankind understand His self-disclosure.

**Inductive.** This is a method of logic or reasoning which moves from the particulars to the whole. It is the empirical method of modern science. This is basically the approach of Aristotle.

**Interlinear.** This is a type of research tool which allows those who do not read a biblical language to be able to analyze its meaning and structure. It places the English translation on a word for word level immediately under the original biblical language. This tool, combined with an "analytical lexicon," will give the forms and basic definitions of Hebrew and Greek.

**Inspiration.** This is the concept that God has spoken to mankind by guiding the biblical authors to accurately and clearly record His revelation. The full concept is usually expressed by three terms: (1) revelation-God has acted in human history; (2) inspiration-He has given the proper interpretation of His acts and their meaning to certain chosen men to record for mankind; and (3) illumination-He has given His Spirit to help mankind understand His self-disclosure

**Language of description.** This is used in connection with the idioms in which the Old Testament is written. It speaks of our world in terms of the way things appear to the five senses. It is not a scientific description, nor was it meant to be.

**Legalism.** This attitude is characterized by an over-emphasis on rules or ritual. It tends to rely on the human performance of regulations as a means of acceptance by God. It tends to depreciate relationship and elevates performance, both of which are important aspects of the covenantal relationship between a holy God and sinful humanity.

**Literal.** This is another name for the textually-focused and historical method of hermeneutics from Antioch. It means that interpretation involves the normal and obvious meaning of human language, although it still recognizes the presence of figurative language.

**Literary genre.** This refers to the distinct forms that human communication can take, such as poetry or historical narrative. Each type of literature has its own special hermeneutical procedures in addition to the general principles for all written literature.

**Literary unit.** This refers to the major thought divisions of a biblical book. It can be made up of a few verses, paragraphs or chapters. It is a self-contained unit with a central subject.

**Lower criticism.** See "textual criticism."

**Manuscript.** This term relates to the different copies of the Greek New Testament. Usually they are divided into the different types by (1) material on which they are written (papyrus, leather), or (2) the form of the writing itself (all capitals or running script). It is abbreviated by "MS" (singular) or "MSS" (plural).

**Masoretic Text.** This refers to the ninth century a.d. Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament produced by generations of Jewish scholars which contain vowel points and other textual notes. It forms the basic text for our English Old Testament. Its text has been historically confirmed by the Hebrew MSS, especially Isaiah, known from the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is abbreviated by "MT."

**Metonymy.** This is a figure of speech in which the name of one thing is used to represent something else associated with it. As an example, "the kettle is boiling" actually means "the water within the kettle is boiling."

**Muratorian Fragments.** This is a list of the canonical books of the New Testament. It was written in Rome before a.d. 200. It gives the same twenty-seven books as the Protestant NT. This clearly shows the local churches in different parts of the Roman Empire had "practically" set the canon before the major

church councils of the fourth century.

**Natural revelation.** This is one category of God's self-disclosure to man. It involves the natural order (Rom. 1:19-20) and the moral consciousness (Rom. 2:14-15). It is spoken of in Ps. 19:1-6 and Rom. 1-2. It is distinct from special revelation, which is God's specific self-disclosure in the Bible and supremely in Jesus of Nazareth.

This theological category is being re-emphasized by the "old earth" movement among Christian scientists (e.g. the writings of Hugh Ross). They use this category to assert that all truth is God's truth. Nature is an open door to knowledge about God; it is different from special revelation (the Bible). It allows modern science the freedom to research the natural order. In my opinion it is a wonderful new opportunity to witness to the modern scientific western world.

**Nestorianism.** Nestorius was the patriarch of Constantinople in the fifth century. He was trained in Antioch of Syria and affirmed that Jesus had two natures, one fully human and one fully divine. This view deviated from the orthodox one nature view of Alexandria. Nestorius' main concern was the title "mother of God," given to Mary. Nestorius was opposed by Cyril of Alexandria and, by implication, his own Antiochian training. Antioch was the headquarters of the historical-grammatical-textual approach to biblical interpretation, while Alexandria was the headquarters of the four-fold (allegorical) school of interpretation. Nestorius was ultimately removed from office and exiled.

**Original author.** This refers to the actual authors/writers of Scripture.

**Papyri.** This is a type of writing material from Egypt. It is made from river reeds. It is the material upon which our oldest copies of the Greek New Testament are written.

**Parallel passages.** They are part of the concept that all of the Bible is God-given and, therefore, is its own best interpreter and balancer of paradoxical truths. This is also helpful when one is attempting to interpret an unclear or ambiguous passage. They also help one find the clearest passage on a given subject as well as all other Scriptural aspects of a given subject.

**Paraphrase.** This is the name of a theory of Bible translation. Bible translation can be viewed as a continuum from "word to word" correspondence, where an English word must be supplied for every Hebrew or Greek word to a "paraphrase" where only the thought is translated with less regard to the original wording or phrasing. In between these two theories is "the dynamic equivalent" which attempts to take serious the original text, but translates it in modern grammatical forms and idioms. A really good discussion of these various theories of translations is found in Fee and Stuart's *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, p. 35.

**Paragraph.** This is the basic interpretive literary unit in prose. It contains one central thought and its development. If we stay with its major thrust we will not major on minors or miss the original author's intent.

**Parochialism.** This relates to biases which are locked into a local theological/cultural setting. It does not recognize the transcultural nature of biblical truth or its application.

**Paradox.** This refers to those truths which seem to be contradictory, yet both are true, although in tension with each other. They frame truth by presenting it from opposite sides. Much biblical truth is presented in paradoxical (or dialectical) pairs. Biblical truths are not isolated stars, but are constellations made up of the pattern of stars.

**Plato.** He was one of the philosophers of ancient Greece. His philosophy greatly influenced the early church through the scholars of Alexandria, Egypt, and later, Augustine. He posited that everything on earth was illusionary and a mere copy of a spiritual archetype. Theologians later equated Plato's "forms/ideas" with the spiritual realm.

**Presupposition.** This refers to our preconceived understanding of a matter. Often we form opinions or judgments about issues before we approach the Scriptures themselves. This predisposition is also known as a bias, an *a priori* position, an assumption or a preunderstanding.

**Proof-texting.** This is the practice of interpreting Scripture by quoting a verse without regard for its immediate context or larger context in its literary unit. This removes the verses from the original author's intent and usually involves the attempt to prove a personal opinion while asserting biblical authority.

**Rabbinical Judaism.** This stage of the life of the Jewish people began in Babylonian Exile (586-538 b.c.). As the influence of the Priests and the Temple was removed, local synagogues became the focus of Jewish life. These local centers of Jewish culture, fellowship, worship and Bible study became the focus of the national religious life. In Jesus' day this "religion of the scribes" was parallel to that of the priests. At the fall of Jerusalem in a.d. 70, the scribal form, dominated by the Pharisees, controlled the direction of Jewish religious life. It is characterized by a practical, legalistic interpretation of the Torah as explained in the oral tradition (Talmud).

**Revelation.** This is the name given to the concept that God has spoken to mankind. The full concept is usually expressed by three terms: (1) revelation-God has acted in human history; (2) inspiration-He has given the proper interpretation of His acts and their meaning to certain chosen men to record for mankind; and (3) illumination-He has given His Spirit to help mankind understand His self-disclosure.

**Semantic field.** This refers to the total range of meanings associated with a word. It is basically the different connotations a word has in different contexts.

**Septuagint.** This is the name given to the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. Tradition says that it was written in seventy days by seventy Jewish scholars for the library of Alexandria, Egypt. The traditional date is around 250 **b.c.** (in reality it possibly took over one hundred years to complete). This translation is significant because (1) it gives us an ancient text to compare with the Masoretic Hebrew text; (2) it shows us the state of Jewish interpretation in the third and second century b.c.; (3) it gives us the Jewish Messianic understanding before the rejection of Jesus. Its abbreviation is "LXX."

**Sinaiticus.** This is a Greek manuscript of the fourth century a.d. It was found by the German scholar, Tischendorf, at St. Catherine's monastery on Jebel Musa, the traditional site of Mt. Sinai. This manuscript is designated by the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet called "*aleph*" [א]. It contains both the Old and the entire New Testaments. It is one of our most ancient uncial MSS.

**Spiritualizing.** This term is synonymous with allegorizing in the sense that it removes the historical and literary context of a passage and interprets it on the basis of other criteria.

**Synonymous.** This refers to terms with exact or very similar meanings (although in reality no two words have a complete semantic overlap). They are so closely related that they can replace each other in a sentence without loss of meaning. It is also used to designate one of the three forms of Hebrew poetic parallelism. In this sense it refers to two lines of poetry that express the same truth (cf. Ps. 103:3).

**Syntax.** This is a Greek term which refers to the structure of a sentence. It relates to the ways parts of a sentence are put together to make a complete thought.

**Synthetical.** This is one of the three terms that relates to types of Hebrew poetry. This term speaks of lines of poetry which build on one another in a cumulative sense, sometimes called "climatic" (cf. Ps. 19:7-9).

**Systematic theology.** This is a stage of interpretation which tries to relate the truths of the Bible in a unified and rational manner. It is a logical, rather than mere historical, presentation of Christian

theology by categories (God, man, sin, salvation, etc.).

**Talmud.** This is the title for the codification of the Jewish Oral Tradition. The Jews believe it was given orally by God to Moses on Mt. Sinai. In reality it appears to be the collective wisdom of the Jewish teachers through the years. There are two different written versions of the Talmud: the Babylonian and the shorter, unfinished Palestinian.

**Textual criticism.** This is the study of the manuscripts of the Bible. Textual criticism is necessary because no originals exist and the copies differ from each other. It attempts to explain the variations and arrive (as close as possible) to the original wording of the autographs of the Old and New Testaments. It is often called "lower criticism."

**Textus Receptus.** This designation developed into Elzevir's edition of the Greek NT in 1633 a.d. Basically it is a form of the Greek NT that was produced from a few late Greek manuscripts and Latin versions of Erasmus (1510-1535), Stephanus (1546-1559) and Elzevir (1624-1678). In *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, p. 27, A. T. Robertson says "the Byzantine text is practically the Textus Receptus." The Byzantine text is the least valuable of the three families of early Greek manuscripts (Western, Alexandrian and Byzantine). It contains the accumulation errors of centuries of hand-copied texts. However, A.T. Robertson also says "the Textus Receptus has preserved for us a substantially accurate text" (p. 21). This Greek manuscript tradition (especially Erasmus' third edition of 1522) forms the basis of the King James Version of a.d. 1611.

**Torah.** This is the Hebrew term for "teaching." It came to be the official title for the writings of Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy). It is, for the Jews, the most authoritative division of the Hebrew canon.

**Typological.** This is a specialized type of interpretation. Usually it involves New Testament truth found in Old Testament passages by means of an analogical symbol. This category of hermeneutics was a major element of the Alexandrian method. Because of the abuse of this type of interpretation, one should limit its use to specific examples recorded in the New Testament.

**Vaticanus.** This is the Greek manuscript of the fourth century a.d. It was found in the Vatican's library. It originally contained all the Old Testament, Apocrypha and New Testament. However, some parts were lost (Genesis, Psalms, Hebrews, the Pastorals, Philemon and Revelation). It is a very helpful manuscript in determining the original wording of the autographs. It is designated by a capital "B."

**Vulgate.** This is the name of Jerome's Latin translation of the Bible. It became the basic or "common" translation for the Roman Catholic Church. It was done in the a.d. 380's.

**Wisdom literature.** This was a genre of literature common in the ancient near east (and modern world). It basically was an attempt to instruct a new generation on guidelines for successful living through poetry, proverb, or essay. It was addressed more to the individual than to corporate society. It did not use allusions to history but was based on life experiences and observation. In the Bible, Job through Song of Songs assumed the presence and worship of YHWH, but this religious world view is not explicit in every human experience every time.

As a genre it stated general truths. However, this genre cannot be used in every specific situation. These are general statements that do not always apply to every individual situation.

These sages dared to ask the hard questions of life. Often they challenged traditional religious views (Job and Ecclesiastes). They form a balance and tension to the easy answers about life's tragedies.

**World picture and worldview.** These are companion terms. They are both philosophical concepts related to creation. The term "world picture" refers to "the how" of creation while "worldview" relates to "the Who." These terms are relevant to the interpretation that Genesis 1-2 deals primarily with the

Who, not the how, of creation.

**YHWH.** This is the Covenant name for God in the Old Testament. It is defined in Exod. 3:14. It is the causative form of the Hebrew term "to be." The Jews were afraid to pronounce the name, lest they take it in vain; therefore, they substituted the Hebrew term *Adonai*, "lord." This is how this covenant name is translated in English.

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# DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

I do not particularly care for statements of faith or creeds. I prefer to affirm the Bible itself. However, I realize that a statement of faith will provide those who are unfamiliar with me a way to evaluate my doctrinal perspective. In our day of so much theological error and deception, the following brief summary of my theology is offered.

1. The Bible, both the Old and New Testament, is the inspired, infallible, authoritative, eternal Word of God. It is the self-revelation of God recorded by men under supernatural leadership. It is our only source of clear truth about God and His purposes. It is also the only source of faith and practice for His church.
2. There is only one eternal, creator, redeemer God. He is the creator of all things, visible and invisible. He has revealed Himself as loving and caring although He is also fair and just. He has revealed Himself in three distinct persons: Father, Son and Spirit, truly separate and yet the same in essence.
3. God is actively in control of His world. There is both an eternal plan for His creation that is unalterable and an individually focused one that allows human free will. Nothing happens without God's knowledge and permission, yet He allows individual choices both among angels and humans. Jesus is the Father's Elect Man and all are potentially elect in Him. God's foreknowledge of events does not reduce humans to a determined pre-written script. All of us are responsible for our thoughts and deeds.
4. Mankind, though created in God's image and free from sin, chose to rebel against God. Although tempted by a supernatural agent, Adam and Eve were responsible for their willful self-centeredness. Their rebellion has affected humanity and creation. We are all in need of God's mercy and grace both for our corporate condition in Adam and our individual volitional rebellion.
5. God has provided a means of forgiveness and restoration for fallen humanity. Jesus Christ, God's unique son, became a man, lived a sinless life and by means of his substitutionary death, paid the penalty for mankind's sin. He is the only way to restoration and fellowship with God. There is no other means of salvation except through faith in His finished work.
6. Each of us must personally receive God's offer of forgiveness and restoration in Jesus. This is accomplished by means of volitional trust in God's promises through Jesus and a willful turning from known sin.
7. All of us are fully forgiven and restored based upon our trust in Christ and repentance from sin. However, the evidence for this new relationship is seen in a changed, and changing, life. The goal of God for humanity is not only heaven someday, but Christlikeness now. Those who are truly redeemed, though occasionally sinning, will continue in faith and repentance throughout their lives.
8. The Holy Spirit is "the other Jesus." He is present in the world to lead the lost to Christ and develop Christlikeness in the saved. The gifts of the Spirit are given at salvation. They are the life and ministry of Jesus divided among His body, the Church. The gifts which are basically the attitudes and motives of Jesus need to be motivated by the fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit is active in our day as He was in the biblical times.
9. The Father has made the resurrected Jesus Christ the Judge of all things. He will return to earth to judge all mankind. Those who have trusted Jesus and whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will receive their eternal glorified bodies at His return. They will be with Him forever. However, those who have refused to respond to God's truth will be separated eternally from the joys of fellowship with the Triune God. They will be condemned along with the Devil and his angels.

This is surely not complete or thorough but I hope it will give you the theological flavor of my heart. I like the statement:

"In essentials—unity, In peripherals—freedom, In all things—love.