

The Bible Notebook

I CORINTHIANS

Practical Principles

for

The Local Church

Volume II

By

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VI. Discussion Concerning Public Worship - 11:2 - 14:40

A. The Veiling of Women - 11:2-16

11:1 - BE IMITATORS OF ME. *“Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.”* This verse continues the theme of the latter part of chapter 10. As Paul is an imitator of Christ, the Corinthian saints are urged to imitate his example. The Holy Spirit inspired Paul to hold himself up as an example, and there could be no better model because he was possibly the single greatest imitator of Christ the church has ever known. What a contrast with the attitude (even if expressed humorously), “Don't do as I do, do as I say.” Ministers of the Gospel must take seriously their role as an example of the Christ-life today. The importance of an exemplary Christian life has been highlighted by well publicized moral and ethical lapses in America (Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggart).

11:2 - I PRAISE YOU. *“Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you.”* Here Paul moves on to a new subject. They had apparently conveyed to Paul, probably by letter, their devotion to him and their commitment to his teachings. He praises them for their commitment in general, but he will go on to point out specific areas in which they had not been obedient.

It is wise to pass on a word of praise where it is deserved. Praise must not be superficial or hypocritical. There are very few things that are more contemptible than insincere praise, but there are few things more beneficial - and motivational - than sincere praise. People like to be appreciated and the wise leader must remember that “Like apples of gold in settings of silver Is a word spoken in right circumstances” (Pro. 25:11).

THE TRADITIONS. The word translated traditions (*paradosis*) is an old word for something handed on from one person, or from one generation, to another oral traditions. The thing handed on may be bad (Matt 15: 2 f) and contrary to the will of God (Mark 7:8f), or it may be good as here. There is a constant conflict between the new and the old in science, law, medicine, theology. Some hold onto the old whether good or bad. "New truth must rest upon old truth and is in harmony with it" (ATR).

11:3 - BUT I WANT YOU TO UNDERSTAND. *“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.”* Having praised them for their commitment to him and his teachings in a general sense, he now turns to specific areas of disobedience.

It is very important for God's people to understand the things of God - principles, laws, doctrines. Here we find that it is essential that we understand the relationship between God the Father and God the Son. The relationship between the husband and the wife is patterned after

the relationship between the Father and the Son.

Paul does not simply want us to do certain things for the reason some parents give their children - "Because I say so!" When I was a college and seminary student I worked for the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS), under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). In the vernacular, we "measured cotton," but in reality we plotted cotton fields on aerial phonograph. Because I had grown up on a farm and continued helping my father when I had an opportunity, I understood the significance of what we were doing. I was able to make a practical application of the Geometry I had learned in high school. Of course, I had applied to some extent on the farm before I began my work with the ASCS, but the more I applied the principles, the better I understood them - and not coincidentally, the more I understood them the better I applied them, because I gained confidence in what I was doing.

One Spring I pre-measured cotton. Farmers who operated large farms did not want to plant too much and then have to plow it up, so they paid to have their fields pre-measured. This usually meant that after measuring the permanent fields I would have to measure off a part of another large field and stake it so that the farmer knew how much of that field to plant. In order to do this I was trained in the use of a planimeter, an instrument used to accurately measure fields of all shapes and sizes. When I began using the planimeter, I also began to understand many of the rules I had been following for several years. For example, I came to understand the importance of clear numbers designating fields, and especially the importance of clear, thin lines. The width of a pencil mark could make a difference of an acre or two in a large field. Following the outside of the pencil mark would give a greater measurement than following the inside of it. Since we were dealing with the farmer's living, and often his disposition, it was important to follow the rules. If understanding the things of time is important, understanding the things of eternity is essential.

CHRIST IS THE HEAD OF EVERY MAN. The word "head" is used 11 times in 11:3-13, The context determines whether the use is spiritual (vv. 3, 4b, 5b) or physical (vv. 4a, 5a, 5c, 6, 7, 10, 13). Modern feminism, especially in its more militant form, has declared the Bible to be a sexist book. Those radical feminists have had a strong impact on our society for several decades through their influence on education, legislation, and even the church. Because of their influence there has been a cry for a gender free Bible translation, based on claims that the Bible takes a low view of women. In reality, the Bible takes a very high view of women. By declaring that in Christ there are no distinctions of sex, race, or social standing (Gal. 3:28), the New Testament raises women from the degraded position they had known in ancient times (especially in the Middle East). Women enjoyed a more noble position in Judaism than among the pagans, which accounts for the Gentile women Paul found in synagogues on his missionary journeys.

Some of the Corinthian women, however, had taken advantage of this new freedom and discarded the customary dress and behavior of women in Greek culture. In Corinth, only the prostitutes went without veils, so for a woman not to wear a veil was a sign of loose morals or low character. We must remember that in Corinth a large number of young women served as temple prostitutes. It was absolutely essential that the women in the church at Corinth not dress

or behave in any way that would imply to the people of the city that their morals were no higher than those of the temple prostitutes.

There is an urgent need to draw the lines of distinction between the church and the world today. If teenaged girls and young women dress like tramps, talk like tramps, and frequent trashy places the lost people do not see a clear distinction between the church and the world. Sadly, many men and women who are members of the church seemed to prefer to manifest worldliness rather than holiness.

Jesus Christ is not only the head of husbands, but of the entire church, his body, male and female (Eph. 5:22-24). Wives as well as husbands are responsible to Him, and must submit to Him and to one another. Here, however, Paul emphasizes particularly that Christ is the head of every man. The husband has a special responsibility before God not only for himself, but also for his wife and children. He must love his wife as Christ loved the church (Eph. 5:23, 25)

MAN IS THE HEAD OF A WOMAN. This is no new doctrine for the Jews - it is based on Gen. 3:16. Here Paul makes it the basis for the wearing of a covering. The modern woman, and the guilt-ridden man, must not panic when they read this. Follow the argument throughout this section, remembering that God is the Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer of men and women. Jesus died for both men and women and He loves them the same. In fact, in Heaven there will be no distinction between men and women. But at the same time, God is sovereign and His word is authoritative in all things. If one receives Jesus as Savior he, or she, receives Him as Lord and the Lordship of Christ must take precedence over temporal tensions between men and women. See also, 1 Timothy 2:11, 12; 1 Peter 3:1, 5, 6.

GOD IS THE HEAD OF CHRIST. In the prologue to the Gospel According to John we are taught that God the Father and God the Son are one, coexistent, and coeternal, yet in all things Christ submitted to the will of the Father. This is a great mystery of the Trinity. The Son's voluntary submission to the will of the Father is a pattern for believers.

11:4 - SOMETHING ON HIS HEAD. *“Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying disgraces his head.”* Literally, Robertson writes, this means having a veil down from the head [ATR]. In Paul's day humility was manifested in different ways for men and women. The men prayed with their heads uncovered to show reverence for God. Women, on the other hand, covered their heads to demonstrate modesty. Immodesty implied immorality. *“The important factor in either case was humility. In public prayer people need to demonstrate humility before God”* [DSB]. In that day, when a man prayed publicly or exercised the gift of prophecy by declaring a revelation from God (cf. 12:10), he did so with his head uncovered so that he would not dishonor himself and his spiritual head, Christ (v. 3).

11:5 - BUT EVERY WOMAN . *“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.”* Men showed reverence by having their head uncovered, women by having

their's covered.

Apparently some of the women were violating this custom. Paul's reasons for these guidelines were based on theology (headship, v. 3), the order in creation (vv. 7-9), and the presence of angels in the meeting (v. 10). We may view this against the backdrop of custom in first century Corinth, but Paul's stated reasons are theological. How may we make an application today? If it was strictly a matter of theology, would we not still be bound by those rules today?

PRAYING OR PROPHECYING. Wait a minute! Women were preaching and praying aloud in services? Apparently so. But in the light of what he says in 14:34-35, it is obvious that Paul does not approved of those activities by the women - at least in Corinth. He simply acknowledges at this point that these practices were going on - and that they were going on in an unacceptable manner.

There are a number of examples of women who participated publicly in the worship services or had positions of leadership in the church, including Anna the prophetess; Priscilla, who worked along with Paul and her husband Aquila and instructed Apollos (Acts 18:26); Phoebe (Rom. 16:1, 2); and the daughters of Philip (Acts 21:9). Paul has more to say about the conduct of women in the public meetings in 14:34, 35 and 1 Timothy 2:11, 12. There were influential women in New Testament churches and some were leaders, but there does not seem to be a pattern here for women to serve as pastors.

WHOSE HEAD IS SHAVED. In the Roman world of Paul's day slave prostitutes and women being punished for adultery wore their head shaven. For the women in Paul's day to worship (pray aloud or speak in a service) with her head uncovered was as disgraceful as having here head shaved.

Let us sum up what Paul has written here. He insists that women who pray or prophesy in the church do so with covered heads. The rationale is as follows:

- (1) The covered head was the symbol of a woman's submission to her own husband.
- (2) To fail to acknowledge publicly this headship was a disgrace of the same magnitude as having a shorn head, which in antiquity was the symbol of a shameless, dishonored woman (v. 6). "In the presence of ministering angels, who were attendant upon gatherings of the church, women were to demonstrate their submission to their respective husbands by wearing "authority," which was symbolized by a head-covering (v. 10)" [BSB].
- (3) This practice was based upon the prior creation of man, who then is in the image of God in terms of authority. On the other hand, the woman was created for the man (v. 8).

The passage reflects no antagonism toward women. This text, and indeed the entire corpus of Scripture, affirms the essential equality of men and women. Subordination on the woman's part is of a functional nature in her divinely assigned role. Her example in this functional submission is none other than Christ

Himself (v. 4). Paul is making every attempt to protect the status of women in their relationship to their own husbands as God intended [BSB].

11:6 - LET HER HAVE HER HAIR CUT OFF. *“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.”* Some of the women were violating this principle in the church at Corinth.

It seems that the Corinthian slogan, “everything is permissible,” had been applied to meetings of the church as well, and the Corinthian women had expressed that principle by throwing off their distinguishing dress. More importantly they seem to have rejected the concept of subordination within the church (and perhaps in society) and with it any cultural symbol (e.g., a head-covering) which might have been attached to it. According to Paul, for a woman to throw off the covering was an act not of liberation but of degradation. She might as well shave her head, a sign of disgrace [BKC].

This denotes a single act by a woman, not the practice of wearing short hair. This does not dictate that a woman must either wear her hair long, or have her head shaved (disgracefully). There is no prohibition here against a woman wearing her hair short.

IF IT IS DISGRACEFUL. This is the condition of the first class, assumed to be true. It was disgraceful for a woman to have her head shaved, because it would identify her as an immoral woman. If wearing some of the modern swim wear might call a Christian woman’s morals into question, should she not make it a point to dress modestly? Or has the word “disgraceful” been dropped from the modern dictionary?

LET HER COVER HER HEAD. If it was disgraceful for the woman to worship with her head uncovered - and it was - then let her cover her head.

11:7 - A MAN OUGHT NOT TO HAVE HIS COVERED. *“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.”* What exactly is Paul talking about here? He is not saying that a man should not wear a hat, cap, or turban at any time, only in public worship. On what basis does he make such a statement? We do not have to speculate: “since he is the image and glory of God.” Man was created in the image or likeness of God (see the Genesis account). As such, he is a small, finite reflection of God’s infinite glory (Gen. 1:26, 27; James 3:9). “Jesus Christ, the Son of man, was the perfect man, man as God created him to be. Thus he was also the perfect likeness of God; he revealed God’s glory not through a dim and imperfect reflection, but as the very Word, God’s own self-revelation (John 1:14; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3)” [NCWB].

THE WOMAN IS THE GLORY OF MAN. Man was formed out of the dust of the earth by God, Who breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Woman was formed from the man, and

this priority of the male (verse 2) gives a certain superiority to the male. “On the other hand, it is equally logical to argue that woman is the crown and climax of creation” [ATR]. Paul is not saying that the woman was to be the image of man - both male and female were created in the image of God. However, as Paul goes on to say, the woman was formed out of the man; thus, although created directly by God, she derived existence and glory from God through man. Thus, “If a married woman abandoned this complementary role, she also abandoned her glory, and for Paul an uncovered woman’s head gave symbolic expression to that spirit” [BKC].

11: 8 - MAN DOES NOT ORIGINATE. “*For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man.*” Woman came from man's body and was made for the sake of man (Gen. 2:22), and not the other way around. The point Paul is making is that if a married woman abandoned, or rejected “this complementary role, she also abandoned her glory, and for Paul an uncovered woman’s head gave symbolic expression to that spirit” [BKC].

11:9 - MAN WAS NOT CREATED FOR... “*For indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake.*” The record of Genesis gives the man as the origin of the woman and the reason for the creation of woman. This does not mean that Eve was simply an afterthought on God’s part; rather, woman was an integral part of God’s original plan for the creation which he pronounced “very good.” However, God did create Adam first, and

Genesis emphasizes his incompleteness, his need for someone suited to his needs, a companion, by saying that it was not good for him to be alone (Gen. 2:18); woman was created to supply this lack. Although both man and woman were created equally in God’s image, to glorify God and have dominion over the earth, woman was created under the headship of man. In the Greek culture, a woman’s head covering was a sign of her submission to her husband’s authority [NCWB].

I know a lot of people have a problem with this at this time. Chauvinistic expositors may use this passage to “put women in their place.” The great danger is that feminists, and those influenced by them (both men and women) may be inclined to evaluate the Holy Scripture by their own standards, biases, and prejudices. I have often maintained that the is not what people cannot understand about the Bible that bothers them most - it is what they do understand. They read something they do not like or cannot understand and say, “Surely it does not mean that!” They read their preconceived idea into it, changing the meaning and application, or they simply reject it. Either is dangerous.

I visited a church in New Orleans once when I learned that R. G. Lee was preaching in revival services there. When Becky and I entered we saw a giant banner stretched above the choir loft which declared: “God said it, I believe it, and that settles it.” Like many such sayings, mottoes, and proverbs, there is an element of truth in it but it is fundamentally flawed. The simple truth is, when God says it, it is settled! Period. Whether I believe it or not. When God speaks eternal truth is transmitted or communicated. My believing it, or rejecting it for that matter, can neither add to it or subtract from it. The only question is, am I going to subscribe to divine truth and benefit from it.

At the beginning of my ministry I was often burdened for a young wife whose husband had abandoned her and their children for another woman. This woman, and they were not always young, had given him “the best years of her life,” working to putting him through school, bearing and raising their children. Now he was trained, experienced, and successful. But when he left she could not “make ends meet,” because she was not trained to do anything that would produce a sufficient income to save her home and meet the needs of her children. I made up my mind that if I ever had a daughter she would be encouraged to get a degree, pursue a career, or in some way prepare herself so that if her husband died, became disabled, or abandoned her she could get a good job and take care of her needs. That simply makes sense.

Little did I expect what would happen with the sixties culture. Young women were going to college in record numbers, scoring higher than their male counterpart in many fields, and working harder when they entered the work force. Some became militant feminists who would demand and work for social change. Many of these changes were long overdue, but some were ungodly: Affirmative action did not simply right a wrong, it often did no more than reverse the discrimination. Many of these women were leaders in the fight to legalize abortion - “Nobody should tell a woman what to do with her body.” Liberal politicians, educators, and social activists used guilt - the driving force behind liberalism - not just to bring about long overdue equality, but to force role changes.

The Promise Keepers’ diagnosis that feminists have sissified men. Critics claim that some of the things they advocated would tend to feminize men. Children need to see a feminine mother and a masculine father in order to develop normally.

One day it dawned on me that when families were breaking up it was often the young woman who has walked out of her husband, and even her babies, with no more reason than, “I want to be free,” or “I have to find myself.” Whereas it was never easy to talk with a husband who had abandoned his wife, the young woman who abandoned her husband and children could be much harder.

My wife has taught school for thirty years and my older son deals with juvenile problems all day every day as an assistant district attorney. Both of them witness daily the devastating consequences of the social changes we have witnessed in America in since 1962. We are paying a high price for rejecting God’s order and His principles.

11:10 - THEREFORE. *“Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.”* He has made a point and now he will draw a conclusion - or build on the foundation he has constructed. But it is not simply Paul’s point. This is the Word of God and we should read it in context - do not stop with the “therefore” without reading the “however” which follows in verse 11. The word “ought” implies moral obligation. Moral obligation therefore rests on women in the matter of dress that does not rest on the man. Let us not panic at this point. We may be forced, however, to choose between the “this saith the word of the Lord” on this subject and the “thus saith the word of radical feminism.”

SYMBOL OF AUTHORITY. What does he mean by “*a symbol of* authority on her head, because of the angels?” First, “a symbol” is italicized, which means that those words are not in the original but added for a smoother translation. The point the Scripture is making is that the veil or covering the women of that day wore was the sign of man's authority over the woman. We must be careful to avoid either of two errors. First we must not assume that the woman is of less value before God than the man. The second is the assumption that we are not to take this seriously. Times have changed and circumstances have changed, but the Word of God never changes. Isaiah wrote, “The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever” (Is. 40:8).

The veil (covering) on the woman's head was the symbol of the authority that the man with the uncovered head has over her. The idea seems to be more a sign of subjection (I Tim. 2:10) than of authority.

BECAUSE OF THE ANGELS. This astonishing phrase has led to all kinds of conjecture, most of which may be dismissed. Here Paul offers the third reason women should cover their head with a veil. The first reason was the divine order (God, Christ, man, woman, vv. 3-6). The second reason insubordination of women in the church was not allowed was creation (vv. 7-9). The third reason was “because of angels” who were spectators of the church (4:9; Eph. 3:10; 1 Tim. 5:21; cf. Ps. 103:20-21).

For a woman to exercise her freedom to participate in the church without the head covering, the **sign of her authority** (*exousia*, a liberating term; cf. 1 Cor. 7:37; 8:9; 9:4-6, 12, 18), would be to bring the wisdom of God (Eph. 3:10) into disrepute. Other (but less acceptable) explanations have been suggested for the words **because of the** “angels”: (a) evil angels lusted after the women in the Corinthian congregation; (b) angels are messengers, that is, pastors; (c) good angels learn from women; (d) good angels are an example of subordination; (e) good angels would be tempted by a woman's insubordination [BKC].

Robertson was right: “It is not preachers that Paul has in mind, nor evil angels who could be tempted (Genesis 6:1f.), but angels present in worship (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:9; Psalms 138:1) who would be shocked at the conduct of the women since the angels themselves veil their faces before Jehovah (Isa 6:2) [ATR]. Paul accentuates in this passage “the awesome responsibility of worship and the need for submission to the authority and presence of God. The veiled woman indicates such humble posture. The angels who veil themselves before God with wings (Isa 6:2; Eze 1:11) are symbols of submission in God's presence” [DSB].

11:11 - HOWEVER, IN THE LORD. *However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman.* What the Scripture says in the previous verse, or verses, is true. “However”- and this is a big “however” - there is another very important aspect that should not be left out. In marriage each sex is incomplete without the other. “In the Lord,”

means in the sphere of the Lord, or in the spiritual realm - where Paul finds the solution of all problems. That is also where we should find our answers - and we must obey God whether it fits our preconceived ideas or not.

This does not teach that the single adult is condemned as incomplete. After all, Paul was a single adult. Many single adults have made great contributions to the Kingdom of God, Paul being the best example of all. Lottie Moon is one of the outstanding examples for modern believers. Each Christmas, Southern Baptists give over one hundred million dollars to foreign missions through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions. This godly woman remained single and devoted her life to the spread of the Gospel among a pagan people.

The basis for the fulfillment of the man in the woman and the woman in the man is probably based upon Gen. 2:20b-2:25. The ideal relationship within a marriage is one in which each partner finds fulfillment in the other. Neither male nor female can claim priority over the other.

11:12 - ALL THINGS ORIGINATE FROM CHRIST. *“For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God.”* Men and women are interdependent, and women could not be inferior to men since they give birth to both males and females. Man and woman live in a relationship of mutual interdependence, but that relationship, as important as it is, is not the primary relationship in life. A personal relationship with the Creator/Redeemer takes precedence over all human relationships. God is the ultimate source and He is the ultimate authority. Since everything has come from Him (see John 1:1ff), we Him our ultimate allegiance. We will be held accountable for that allegiance.

Paul was quick to warn that men must not abuse their authority by showing contempt to women or by displaying a domineering spirit toward women. He reminded them that men and women are dependent upon one another, and that both depend on God (Rom. 11:36; 2 Cor. 5:18). Together they fulfill God’s plan for the church, the bride of Christ [NCWB].

We must be very careful here to avoid putting words into Paul’s mouth that go beyond the scope of God’s will and purpose. Men and women, far from being independent of each other (in a marriage relationship), are in fact in mutual interdependence, each complementing the other, bring glory to God (see 10:31). Neither should be independent of the other, and neither should think themselves superior to the other. For the woman, subordination does not mean inferiority, and no man should think of himself as superior. Eve came from Adam, and each man born in the world comes from a woman’s womb (11:12). God created them both for each other (Gen. 1:27; 2:18) - and for Himself.

Sadly, throughout history there have been men who thought of themselves as superior to men, and just sadly, there are many women today who seem bent on getting evil for all the

centuries of injustice and discrimination. All thoughts, words, deeds, and relationships are filtered through one world view (philosophy) or another. For the Christian, that means that all things are tested and proved by Scripture, through the ministry of the indwelling Holy Spirit, the divine Author of all Scripture.

The relationship set forth in Scripture is God's will for His People - people created by Him and for Him. It is a sin for either to reject His order, and those who disobey Him will suffer the consequences. But it goes beyond that. Sin has its consequences, and those who reject God's purpose in the relationship between husbands and wives dishonor Him and place their children and the generations that follow them in jeopardy.

Modern liberalism in any of its expressions, religions, political, or social is fueled by two things: guilt and punishment. There is an attitude that certain people are victim of circumstances beyond their control; some one is responsible for their circumstances; those responsible must be punished (read that, taxed, penalized by affirmative action, etc.); the scales must be balanced - and they must be balanced by those liberals who assign the guilt and assess the penalties. They are the great equalizers. Minorities and women have been victimized by white European males, and they must pay for it. Thomas Sowell refers to that attitude as "The Vision of the Anointed" (I recommend his book by the same title).

The question remains, what has all that to do with the subject at hand? Liberals have blasted men for decades, and with the help of the liberals in the media, liberals in Congress, and with the help of liberals who have occupied the White House at times, they have hawked both "education" and legislation calculated to level the playing field. Many men seem so guilt-ridden that they have willingly given up their role in the home - granted, a lot of sorry, godless men have never assumed their proper role in the home. What we have seen is the feminization of many men - they may "work out," they may "live with gusto," and boast of their maleness, but they thinking is not totally masculine. Feminists have become more and more aggressive and assertive and many men have become more passive and subordinate. I have even heard the point made on the basis of who made the best grade in college.

God has a plan for men and women, and if we want to be spiritually healthy and happy we must submit to His authority and yield to His design for the home. According to Scripture, God has determined that the man is to be the spiritual head of the home. My wife accepts this, and because she accepts this I can assume the position as the spiritual head of our home. But what if she rejected God's plan? What could I do about it? Could I force the issue? Absolutely not! This relationship is based on a voluntary submission, not an abusive subjugation. If we reject God's plan we will pay a price for it. First, we will not experience the fullness of God's blessings if we refuse to obey Him. Second, we send a false signal to our children when we fail to live responsibly before God and before them. It would be interesting to chart the increase the rise in homosexuality in America along with the de-feminization of many women and the de-masculinization of many men.

There is no doubt that modern sociologists and psychologists can argue the point and supply data supporting their position. Many would be influenced by their reasoning, but this is not a matter of reason. It is a matter of obedience. If we are children of God we must place more value in the “Thus saith the Word of God” than the “Thus reasoneth the mind of man.” When we see the “big picture” there is no doubt in my mind that we will agree that God’s way is best for us.

11:13 - JUDGE FOR YOURSELVES. *“Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?”* These believers had written asking Paul about this and in his response he has stated the principles involved, and now he says, “Judge for ourselves.” When we understand God’s Word we can judge many things for ourselves. Paul had based his previous reasoning for maintaining the head covering as a woman’s expression of her subordination on arguments rooted in special revelation (Scripture). Here he turned to natural revelation - God reveals Himself through His Word, within our heart, and before our eyes (see Rom. 1). This is Paul’s fourth reason given in support of his recommendation that the women worship with their heads covered.

IS IT PROPER. Paul appeals here to the sense of propriety among the Corinthians. In addition to the created ordinances, public propriety or social convention calls for respect. It was a matter of propriety.

11:14 - NATURE ITSELF. *..“Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him.”* Paul reinforces his appeal to propriety (custom) by the appeal to nature in a question that expects an affirmative answer. This is a difficult word to define. Here it means native sense of propriety. We must remember the Corinthian background as we read this. This argument is an appeal to what “nature itself” can be seen to “teach” and recalls the Stoic ideal of “living agreeable with nature.”

Throughout history mankind has instinctively distinguished between the sexes in various ways, one of which was length of hair. “Long” is of course a relative term. When I was a teenager most of my friends wore a flattop, but I never had a desire for a flattop. The closest I ever came is when upperclassmen cut off all my hair my first day at Mississippi College as a part of freshman initiation. My hair has never been much longer than I wear it now, but in the fifties I wore “long hair” for a teenaged boy. Most girls, as I recall, wore their hair longer than they do today - they also wore hats and gloves. There are Christian denominations today that stress the importance of women wearing long hair - which means longer than other women.

IF A MAN HAS LONG HAIR. Long hair in a man would have made him seem effeminate. A man customarily wore his hair short, except for Nazarites, who grew their hair long as a sign of their consecration to God (Num. 6:5). The word “long” is a relative term. Many men today wear “long” hair who are not effeminate, but traditionally, long hair has been associated with women and shorter hair with men. A man should never hide his masculinity, nor a woman her femininity. God created them male and female and He obviously, based on Scripture, expects

men to look like men and women to look like women.

11:15 - IF A WOMAN HAS LONG HAIR. *"But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering."* "Long hair" was a woman's glory because it gave visible expression to the differentiation of the sexes. This was Paul's point in noting that long hair was given to her as a covering. The word for covering" is not the same word as that used in verses 5-6. The point here is that as the hair represents the proper covering in the natural realm, so the veil is the proper covering in the religious [RSB].

Natural revelation confirmed the propriety of women wearing the physical covering. She has a natural covering, and should follow the custom of wearing a physical covering in a public meeting. Some Bible students, however, say that the Greek *anti*, rendered "as" (i.e., "for" or "in anticipation of") should be translated in its more normal sense of "instead of." According to that view, a woman's hair was given instead of a physical covering, for it in itself *is* a covering. In this view women should pray with long hair, not short hair. This view, however, does not explain the woman's act of covering or uncovering her head, mentioned in 1 Corinthians 11:5-6 [BKC].

11:16 - IF ONE IS INCLINED TO BE CONTENTIOUS. *"But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God."* Paul's final argument is an appeal to the general Christian practice. This was his last word to anyone who was disposed to be contentious about this subject or to deny the validity of his previous arguments. What he has said should be sufficient for any reasonable person, but there are always some who had rather be contentious than reasonable. If they are not going to listen to reason, he can only point to the practice in other churches to see if that will convince them.

PRACTICE. The KJV renders it "custom." The reference is of course to custom of women speaking in a public service unveiled. "The testimonies of Tertullian and Chrysostom show that these injunctions of Paul prevailed in the churches. In the sculptures of the catacombs the women have a close-fitting head-dress, while the men have the hair short" [VINCENT]. In the other churches with which Paul was familiar, there was no custom of women worshiping without some form of a covering. Paul wrote local churches and used experiences of other local churches to instruct or encourage them. Local churches in the New Testament were autonomous bodies, but they were all dependent upon God and as a part of the body of Christ, they seemed to cooperate with and benefit from other churches. There was much one church could learn from another.

Paul thus closed his argument by appealing to the universal custom of the churches. "While custom does not determine correct doctrine (since doctrine has been authoritatively revealed in Scripture), custom is a helpful guide in practical questions of what is proper or appropriate. This phrase, then, supports the conclusion that the specific instructions regarding veils, etc., depend on cultural expectations and would not always apply [NCWB]. Paul's teaching, however, is based on underlying principles which, as long as they are consistent with revealed truth, should be observed.

B. The Lord's Supper (11:17 - 34)

11:17 - BUT IN THIS INSTRUCTION. *“But in giving this instruction, I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse.”* By “this instruction” he probably has in mind the preceding instruction about the head-dress, and possibly the transition to what follows - the Lord Supper.

I DO NOT PRAISE YOU. Paul now qualifies his praise mentioned in 11:2, where he commends them for having, for the most part, followed his teachings. The first exception to his praise had been the distracting behavior of women at their public services; now he turns to the improper way in which they were handling of the love feasts and the Lord’s Supper. In this epistle, the Lord not only corrects the Corinthians in the proper attitude toward the Lord’ Supper, but sets forth instructions for all believers of all ages.

Out of the oral teaching which Paul received from Jesus (v 23), probably through Peter, John, or James (see Ac 15:2; Gal 1:18-19), Paul gave the fullest, and probably the earliest account we have of the Last Supper. He condemned the abuse of the Lord's Supper by the Corinthians and, thereby, gave us more insight about the proper observance of the Supper than any other New Testament writer [DSB].

In this passage a number of points are delineated .

- (1). When they came together as a church to observe the Lord’s Supper, but had divisions among them, their eating the bread and drinking the fruit of the vine did not constitute a true observance of the Lord's Supper.
- (2). They had to be unified in the Lord to observe the Lord's Supper properly - they had to be in fellowship with God and with one another.
- (3). Radical extremes were common as some members forged ahead with their eating and drinking without waiting for anyone else. Some members left the meal hungry and while others became intoxicated. This does not mean that they were depending upon the Lord’s Supper for their meal, but that they were eating an agape (love) meal in connection with their observance of the Lord's Supper. Paul condemns both their gluttony and their insensitivity to needs and interests of others.
- (4). Paul associated connected the eating of the unleavened bread and the drinking of the cup (the fruit of the vine) with proclaiming “the Lord's death until he comes.” Every observance of the Supper points back to the death of Christ and ahead to the Second Coming of Christ.

(5). Paul warned of severe judgment against those who eat the bread (representing the Lord's body) and drink "the cup" (representing the blood of the Lord) "in an unworthy manner." Those who do either are sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. "The consequences were serious. Because of this outrageous abuse of the Lord's Supper many of the Corinthians were weak and sick, and some had died. This exhortation calls us to serious and thoughtful observance of the Lord's Supper, being sensitive to the needs of other people and especially concentrating upon the Lord's atoning death on Calvary and His coming again in glory" [DSB].

11:18 - WHEN YOU COME TOGETHER. "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." The phrase, "In the first place," would seem to a "second place," but none follows. This is the primary reason for Paul's condemnation and the only one given. "When you come together as a church" (NAS) is a better rendering than the Authorized Version's "When ye come together in the church" because the word for "church" (*ekklesia*, assembly) denotes not the building but the assembly of the people of God, gathered in fellowship with one another for the purpose of worshiping the Lord. "Oneness is the common goal. Confession, forgiveness, and acceptance must be practiced for the church to be what Jesus intended. Differences of opinion are normal among God's people. Each member must seek God's will in the issues the church faces. Ugly disharmony is not normal. It reveals that the wrong attitude prevails and that God does not approve" [DSB].

DIVISIONS. A. T. Robertson's comments on "divisions" (*schismata*) are interesting:

Accusative of general reference with the infinitive *huparchein* in indirect discourse. Old word for cleft, rent, from *schizoō*. Example in papyri for splinter of wood. Not yet formal cleavages into two or more organizations, but partisan divisions that showed in the love-feasts and at the Lord's Supper.

A church split in which two or more groups form new (churches) does not happen overnight, but is precipitated from conflicts which are often slight at first but escalate to the point of open public conflict and then the split occurs. A testimony to the tension leading up to the split is often seen in the name of the new congregation: Fellowship, New Friendship, Unity, Harmony. Divisions in a congregation can lead to disaster, but even when they do not lead to a split in which half the people pull out to form a new church, the division often spans generations. There is no describing the hurt and pain some of the members experience, and that pain is often caused by people whose influence is ephemeral (short-lived) at best. These people get involved in a church, detect a division and insert themselves and exacerbate (worsen) the problem, often forcing issues that lead the split.

The Lord is not honored by divisions in His church. Members of the body of Christ cannot worship and serve together in such a way as to advance the Kingdom of God and grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord (2 Peter 3:18) when there are divisions. Attitudes and the tension associated with the controversy dictate against the essential nature and character of a true church. When there are divisions in the local church Sanctification is arrested in the lives of

most of those involved in the controversy - that is, unless some involved are innocent of the sins common in such controversy.

Divisions are much more easily created than resolved in a local church. In fact, some of the most dramatic and long-lasting controversies began in the most amusing manner. "Fifty years ago his granddaddy's dog chased my granddaddy's cow into a barb-wire fence..." (I did not make that one up). Resolution and healing may take years, but God can heal those divisions in one meeting. What is required in many cases is an individual who confesses his, or her, sin in fostering or nurturing the division.

The tragedy here is that they were divided over the very things that should have united them - the agape-feast and the Lord's Supper. Schisms and the accompanying sins of the spirit associated with them negate any benefit the observance of the Lord's Supper might afford the worshiper. Imagine the paradox of divisions at an agape feast!

What was the origin of the controversy in the church at Corinth? While we know that there were numerous divisions (the Paul faction, the Peter faction, the Apollos faction, and the "Christ" faction, 1:10-4:21) Paul indicates here that there was another element. One additional factor contributing to those divisions is economic differences in the church (see 11:21).

11:19 - THERE MUST ALSO BE. ..*"For there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you."* Is he saying that since moral conditions are so bad among you, there must be factions (chapters 1-6)? Or is he saying that the schisms among them, if left to run their course, would naturally lead to factions or parties in the church? The Greek word may be translated "factions" or "heresies," designating party division, factions, sects. "At the time of this writing the word "heresy" had not yet acquired its technical sense of indicating doctrinal error. Knowing that divisiveness existed among the Corinthians, Paul affirmed that there **must be** also factions among them. Paul may have been echoing Jesus' prediction (Matt. 24:10, 12) that sin would lead to such quarrels" NCWB].

It may help to stress that heresy connotes a theoretical schism, and a schism denotes a practical heresy. A heresy works like a magnet attracting the weak, shallow, and the unstable, as well as those who may be intelligent in other areas but are unsound in doctrine. Examples abound: Christian Science, Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, and various New Age sects, religions, and cults.

SO THAT THOSE WHO ARE APPROVED. This is the point, and we must not miss it. When the light of truth is shined on error it is exposed for what it is. Heresy is not good, and neither are factions, but, a faction develops it can serve the good purpose of distinguishing those who are faithful from those who are not. God can take advantage of such factions to accomplish His purpose, as heresies are exposed and judged, while those who are faithful are approved and blessed. See 1 John 2:19.

Those who are faithful to the Lord must remain faithful to Him, refusing to be goaded into sinning in dealing with those who oppose them. It will be good when we are attempting to

preserve unity among the believers to follow Augustine's rule: "In doubtful questions, liberty; in essentials, unity; in all things, charity."

11:20 - IT IS NOT TO EAT. *"Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper."* It is possible that here the term refers both to the agape feast (a feast to celebrate the godly love which true believers have for one another and for the Lord) and the Lord's Supper. The agape feast was a sort of church supper, or fellowship meal held in connection with the observance of the Lord's Supper. The selfish, ungodly attitude of some of the Corinthians in their indulgence at the agape feast made it impossible to eat the Lord's Supper in an acceptable manner. Those guilty of the sin for which they are condemned here were certainly disqualified from the observance of the Lord's Supper - whether they took the elements or not.

How had these people corrupted the holy ordinance? According to early reports, from the earliest days of the church, Christians had observed the Lord's Supper in connection with a "love feast" or meal together, for which each person brought his own food (Acts 2:46; Jude 12). "Instead of a time of joyful fellowship, this had come to cause more harm than good, since the rich greedily ate and drank too much, while the poor were shamed and went hungry (11:22). The disorder and selfishness made it impossible to properly celebrate the Lord's Supper with a sense of its spiritual meaning" [NCWB].

Apparently some of the wealthier members were not sharing their food but greedily consumed it before the poor showed up (v. 21). If the purposes of the love feast were not being realized, it was better to eat at home (v. 22).

11:21 - FOR IN YOUR EATING. *"For in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk."* Some of the wealthier people were not sharing their food with the poor. They probably did not want to eat with them or to share their food with them. Instead, they either rushed ahead, greedily eating their meal before the underprivileged members arrived; or worse, they consumed their meal in the presence of the poor without sharing. It was such conduct that led to the complete separation between the Love-feast and the Lord's Supper. A lack of and understanding of the difference between the agape feast and the ordinance of the Lord's Supper has confused many down through the history of the church.

ANOTHER IS DRUNK. It is shocking, but it was obviously happening at the agape feasts. Then the same people would proceed to take the Lord's Supper, the well-stuffed, and often drunken rich joining the hungry poor for what was supposed to be a supper dedicated to the remembrance of the broken body and shed blood of Jesus Christ. In essence, the Gentiles among the condemned group here were celebrating the death of Jesus Christ the way they had formerly celebrated in pagan temples.

The Lord's Supper should have been the remembrance of "a preeminently selfless act, Christ's death on behalf of others. Instead the Corinthians had turned the memorial of selflessness into an experience of selfishness and had made a rite of unity a riotous disunity"

[BKC]. While one member went hungry because he could not afford an adequate meal, others ate and drank to excess.

Division of goods, not division in rival parties, characterizes disciples. We share with the needy. The church in Corinth was divided into groups of privileged and underprivileged. When they met to eat their potluck feasts, some had more than was needed; others had little to eat and were humiliated because they had nothing. The factions and lack of concern for one another revealed their discipleship was lacking even as they prepared for the sacred worship experience of the Lord's Supper. Paul had no praise for them. Their love for one another should have caused them to share [DSB].

11:22 -DO YOU DESPISE THE CHURCH OF GOD? *“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.”* Paul is not approving gluttony and drunkenness at home, “but only expressing horror at their sacrilege of the church of God” [ATR]. These wealthy members could have held banquets in their own private homes if they were going to overindulge in food and drink. Drunkenness and gluttony would have been a sin if practiced at home, but these people would not have compounded the sin by offending other (weaker, poorer) members.

These church members must have been surprised at the severity of Paul's exclamation at this point. Their response must surely have been, “No! We do not despise the Church of God; we love His church. We support the church with our tithes and offerings, we teach classes, we sing hymns and lead in public prayer. If the doors are open we are there. How dare he accuse us of despising the church?” I have witnessed church members actively work to drive a wedge between members of a local church - even to the point of trying to turn family members against close relatives. Sometimes they do this openly, but often it is in secret. Cowardly, unscrupulous people love to do their worst in secret, behind someone's back. But if you had asked those people if they despised the church they would have been horrified by the thought.

It would be interesting to list some of the sins of which these people might have been guilty. They did not consider the feelings of the less fortunate and they were not concerned about their testimony. It is obviously a sin to *“shame those who have nothing.”* This probably does not mean those who have no houses, but those who have nothing to eat. Paganism may not have been burdened for the poor, but God loved them. The congregation in the early church was made up largely of the poor, whom “God has chosen” (James 2:5). By despising the poor (James 2:6) and making the assemblies disruptive, they showed that they did indeed despise the church. They were also disgracing the church in the eyes of unbelievers.

Eating and drinking while assembled as the people of God - fellowship meals, Cokes and cookies at Bible School, and “dinner on the grounds” - are not prohibited. However, anything that violates or threatens the fellowship of the body is condemned. Furthermore, eating and drinking, as in the agape feast, should be excluded as a part of the worship service.

SHALL I PRAISE YOU? There were areas in which Paul did commend the believers at Corinth - but not in this! Those who offended the poor and corrupted the holy ordinance of the Lord's Supper would receive no praise from Paul. Since his letter is the product of the mind of God, it is safe to say that they received no praise from the Savior, Whose body and blood they professed to remember in the eating of the bread and drinking of the cup.

What they shall we conclude from this verse? To summarize, Paul is saying that if the Corinthian saints wanted to hold private parties they could have them in their homes. "The meeting of the church was no place for a sectarian spirit of any sort, especially since the Lord's Supper was intended to commemorate just the opposite spirit. To act in a spirit of selfish disregard for the needs of a brother was to **despise the church of God**, composed not of lifeless stones but of living people who could be grievously hurt" [BKC]. If these believers in Corinthian thought their libertarian acts merited any praise they were deceiving themselves. It was just the opposite!

11:23 - FOR I RECEIVED FROM THE LORD. *"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."* This is a direct claim to revelation from the Lord Jesus Christ on the origin of the Lord's Supper. Luke's account is almost identical to the one here (Luke 22:17--20). It has been suggested that he could have read I Corinthians before he wrote the Gospel. Regardless of that, since the Holy Spirit is the divine Author of both accounts, the similarity is to be expected. We must now connect this with the previous discussion. Some of these believers had corrupted the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. Paul had condemned this behavior, and now he proceeds to remind the Corinthians of what they knew but had denied by their actions. "Whether this teaching came to Paul directly (by a vision; cf. Gal. 1:12) or indirectly (by men; 1 Cor. 15:1), it came with the Lord's authority. The bread represented the incarnate body of Christ unselfishly assumed (Phil. 2:6-7) and unselfishly given on the cross for the benefit of others (2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:8), that kept needing to be remembered (cf. 1 Cor. 4:8-13)" [BKC].

The Jews remembered their deliverance from Egypt in the annual Passover festival (see Exodus 12:24-27). It was no accident that Jesus died at Passover time - He is the new Passover Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7) through whom believers are delivered from bondage to sin and Satan. Jesus, while He was eating the Passover meal with His Apostles (just before He died, Matt. 26:19-30), instituted the Lord's Supper as a memorial of His death (vv. 24, 25).

When He said, "This is My body," as He held the bread, the disciples understood the symbolism because they could see His physical body present before them. The Oriental considers eating together a sign of the bond among those present, and the Lord's Supper points to the bond among the various people present (10:17) and between each participant and the Lord (10:16, 20, 21). The actions in the Supper are eloquent. The Lord, as it were, hands His people the broken bread, saying by this action, "Look! My body was given for you; I died for you." As the Christian takes the bread and eats it, making it part of himself, he says by this

action, "Yes, Lord! You died for me, and I am again showing my response to Your death. I am relying upon You to save me. I renew my vow of obedience to You. I love You." The enacted dialogue with the fruit of the vine is similar. The Christian should make sure that there is no unconfessed sin within him before he comes to the Lord's Supper (v. 28) [BSB].

The Lord's Supper is one of two ordinances Jesus gave His church (along with baptism), both of which call to our remembrances the price Jesus paid for our salvation. Baptism is a wonderful symbol of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (see Romans 6:3-6). The Lord's Supper is to be taken regularly by believers in remembrance of Jesus, the elements representing His body and His blood. It is an ordinance for repentant sinners who have put their faith in Christ. It is a holy ordinance and worshipers must participate in deep reverence, ever conscious of the presence of Christ at His table, "and not despising others who are present; for they, too, are His body (v. 29). The Lord's Supper is shared "till He comes" (v. 26); it looks forward to the Lamb's Supper (cf. Rev. 19:7-9)" [BSB].

The Lord's Supper was given as a symbol. Some interpreters see more in the symbol than is directly revealed in the Scripture. Years ago, I sat in a Systematic Theology class and listening to a professor discuss the purpose of the Lord's Supper, with special emphasis on fellowship among the worshipers. For a number of years following the Supreme Court ruling which ended forced segregation, a lot of teachers spent a lot of their time dealing with racial issues. Much of it was appropriate, but there were times when some of them tried to force racial issues on passages at the risk of sound interpretation. For example, some professors like to use outreach to the Samaritans to illustrate how the Gospel overcame racial barriers. It is a fact that the Gospel overcomes racial barriers. It is not a fact that the conversion of Samaritans illustrated the overcoming of racial barriers because both the Jews and the Samaritans were Semitic. In this case the Gospel overcame religious barriers (errors).

Following the Systematic Theology class, a few of the liberal students entered Dr. Roy Beaman's Archaeology class, and immediately asked him questions about what we had discussed in the previous class. They very obviously sought to engage him in an argument, but he "nipped it in the bud, as Barney Fyfe would say. He simply asked them to turn to Luke 22 and read it. He asked one question: "What does the Scripture say?" They read, "This do in remembrance of me." Dr. Beaman said, "That, Sir, is the purpose in the Lord's Supper."

There are many lessons, however, that may be learned from this Scripture about the Lord's Supper.

- (1) It is a memorial to remind us of a basic Christianity truth - the atonement of Christ (vv. 24, 25).
- (2) It is a fellowship of Christ's body, though not the primary purpose (v. 18).
- (3) It is a feast in which the believer examines his own relationship with Christ (v. 28).

(4) It is a feast of thanksgiving for salvation (v. 24).

(5) It is a witness to death of Jesus Christ (v. 26).

(6) It is a feast of hope (v. 26).

TOOK BREAD. Paul wrote, "...The Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread." None of His disciples, especially the Apostles, would ever forget that night. Nor would they forget what must have been a highlight of their three years with Christ in the school of Christian doctrines. They had eaten the unleavened bread at Passover many times, but from that moment on it would have a new meaning to them.

11:24 - THIS IS MY BODY. *"When he had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me."* The Jewish form of thanksgiving for bread was "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who bringeth forth bread from the earth." Jesus may have prayed this familiar prayer, or He may have prayed extemporaneously. The bread represents Christ's body, as the "cup" (v. 25) represents His blood. As a matter of record, the body of Jesus was not broken - His body was pierced but no bones were broken (John 19:36). The bread was broken, but not the body of Jesus.

Paul, in recording what happened at the Last Supper, shows that in contrast to the gluttony and drunkenness practiced by some at Corinth, Jesus quietly broke the bread and distributed it among the disciples. "This is my body," Jesus had said, "which is broken for you." "Since Christ was physically present with his disciples, he could not have meant that the bread actually was his body, but rather a symbol. As bread is to physical health, so Christ's body is to the spiritual health of the believer. "For" means literally "in behalf of" [NCWB].

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME. Until Jesus returns (Luke 22) the unleavened bread taken in the observance of the Lord's supper will be a memorial to His body which was sacrificed for our sins upon the Cross. Robert C. Shannon, (*1000 Windows*, Cincinnati, Ohio: Standard Publishing Company, 1997) wrote:

The legend of the Holy Grail is familiar; the search for the chalice from the upper room, the very cup with which the Lord's Supper was first instituted. If we had that cup would it enhance our observance of Communion? Not at all. We do have something from that first supper in that upper room. That something does enhance our observance of Communion. We have the presence of Jesus Christ who said, "I drink it anew [with you] in the kingdom of God" (Mark 14:25) [BI].

11:25 - HE TOOK THE CUP. *"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."*

“In the same way” denotes the reverence with which Jesus broke and distributed the bread in the observed of the Last Supper - which was in contrast to the copious and voracious manner in which certain members at Corinth indulged in the wine. It is interesting that Paul writes that Jesus “took the cup after supper,” which leads one commentator to observe that “the communion celebration followed the Passover supper, the Corinthians should have separated common meals from the Lord’s Supper” [NCWB]. This conclusion was no doubt based on the fact that the wealthier members were simply tacking the Lord’s Supper onto their own riotous fellowship meal.

“The cup” denotes the container in which the wine was served, but there is more as the contexts connote. It also implies the wine (fruit of the vine) which it contained.

QUESTION: Did they drink real wine at the Last Supper? Did Jesus really drink wine? Yes, Jesus drank real wine, according to the custom of the day, He probably drank wine diluted with water at the ratio of three parts water to one part wine. See Appendix I at the end of this book for a paper I wrote a number of years ago entitled, *Wine Drinking in New Testament Times*.

ILLUSTRATION:

Methodist dentist, Dr. Thomas Welch, objected to his church's use of fermented wine in the communion service. Experimenting at night in his kitchen he came up with a nonalcoholic grape beverage, which he named "Dr. Welch's Unfermented Wine".

He approached church officials to persuade them to substitute his beverage for the traditional wine. The elders regarded his suggestion as being an unacceptable innovation.

A son, Charles, who was also a dentist, changed the name to Welch's Grape Juice. He set up a production facility in a barn behind the family home. Response was so overwhelming that he gave up dentistry and devoted full time to making and distributing grape juice [BI: QV].

THE NEW COVENANT IN MY BLOOD. The word is used in Mark: “This is my blood of the covenant (my covenant-blood), which is poured out for many” (Mark 14:24). The word “covenant” referred to an agreement in which one party established terms for a relationship which the other party accepted or rejected. The Old Testament records the Old Covenant which Jehovah God established with Israel at Sinai and reveals how God maintained that covenant and saw it through to its fulfillment. The primary focus of the Old Covenant was the written Word (Ex. 24:1-8). The main focus of the New Covenant is the Living Word (John 1:14-18). Jesus gave His followers the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper in which the cup is a representation of the blood of the Lamb of God which was poured out at Calvary as the basis for a covenant relationship with God.

No student of the Old Testament can miss the emphasize placed on the Old Covenant, nor should we miss the accentuation of the fact that the First Covenant would yield to the New Covenant.

"Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make **a new covenant** with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD. "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "**I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.**" "They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more" (Jer. 31:31-34, emphasis added).

AS OFTEN AS YOU DRINK IT. Literally, it is "How many times," implying that He expects Christians to observe the Lord's Supper. However, He does not give us a schedule to follow. For example, He did not instruct the church to observe this holy ordinance at every service, or even every Sunday. He did not set aside certain calendar days for its observance. Many churches schedule the Lord's Supper on a quarterly basis, believing that this is often enough to honor the spirit of the ordinance if proper emphasis is placed on its observance. Some feel that it must be observed weekly, and others may prefer a monthly service.

Perhaps as important as the frequency of the observance of the Lord's Supper is the question of when and how it will be observed. Should it simply be tacked onto a regular worship service, or should an entire service be given to the observance? Should it be observed in the morning service or at some other time? My personal preference is a quarterly observance in which the entire morning worship service is committed to the observance of the Lord's Supper. The order of service leads the worshiper through the service without unnecessary announcements and other interruptions. I make the announcements before the choir comes in to the sanctuary, we worship with the Tithes and Offerings, and have prayer. When the choir comes out we begin a service, moving from a Responsive Reading to hymns and Scripture read by deacons, and special music. Without a word, deacons service the elements and on the pastor's signal worshippers eat the bread and drink the grape juice. We then sing a hymn and quietly move out of the Sanctuary.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME. The Lord's Supper is a memorial service. "Matthew and Mark left this to be understood, but Luke mentions it, and Paul says it twice (here and in 11:24). The Jewish sacrifices constantly reminded Jews of their sin (Heb. 10:1-3), but the Lord's Supper brings to mind Christ and his sacrifice that paid for our sins once for all" [NCWB].

11:26 - YOU PROCLAIM THE LORD'S DEATH UNTIL HE COMES. *“For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.”* In the Passover service each element is explained in terms of the Exodus story [F.F. Bruce: p. 113]. The Lord's Supper is a sermon dramatized in the taking of the elements. It looks back on Christ's life and death and it looks forward to His second coming. “The second coming of Christ is a pervasive, underlying assumption of many New Testament passages. Even the backward-looking memorialization of the death of Jesus by the Lord's Supper carries a promise of His future return [DSB]. The Lord's Supper is the great preacher of the death of Christ until He comes again (Matthew 26:29). Maranatha is an Aramaic invocation: Our Lord, come!

ILLUSTRATION:

A powerful ruler built a great palace. Among the rooms was one that was always locked. He called it the Chamber of Memories. Every day he visited that room, but no one else was permitted inside. Finally one day the servants got a peep inside the locked room. There was no silver, no gold, no precious jewels. All they saw was a humble shepherd's robe; the one the king had worn before he came to the throne. The Lord's Supper reminds us of what we were before Christ found us and how far we have come [BI: Robert C. Shannon].

When Paul writes, “until He comes,” the Greek verb leaves no doubt that he is certainly coming. When Jesus Christ is physically present with us, we will no longer need the symbols of his body.

The Lord's Supper is a foretaste of the time when we will eat and drink with him in the Father's kingdom (Matt. 26:29). Just as the bread was placed before the Lord every Sabbath (Lev. 24:5-8), so the early church celebrated the Lord's Supper every Sunday. Like priests in the Holy Place of the temple, we worship in Christ's spiritual temple, but so far he, like the High Priest in the Holy of Holies, is the only one who has physically entered (Heb. 9:1-3, 6, 7). When he comes again, however, we too will enter (Rev. 7:15; 21:22) [NCWB].

11:27 - UNWORTHY. *“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.”* The Lord's Supper is an opportunity to remember the Lord Jesus Christ, to glorify God the Father, and to submit to the leadership of God the Spirit. It may also be an opportunity to sin! For some of the people at Corinth it was the latter. But how does one observe the Lord's Supper “in an unworthy manner?” By taking the elements with unconfessed sin, or through irreverence in eating and drinking the elements. What are the consequences for the “guilty” person? This sin may result in severe judgment, including sickness or even physical death (v. 30). With that in mind each person should examine himself, or herself before partaking (vv. 28, 31).

Participation in this holy act of worship is sinful if we make it a social occasion as some of the Corinthian believers were doing, or if we participate without committing ourselves completely to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Divine discipline will fall on the sinner who brings dishonor to Jesus Christ.

He does not say or imply that we ourselves must be worthy to partake of the Lord's Supper. No one would ever partake on those terms. Many pious souls have abstained on the grounds -that they are not worthy. Every repentant sinner may eat the bread and drink the "cup" when served in the Lord Supper if that person has found forgiveness in Jesus Christ, desires to remember reverentially what Jesus did for us at Calvary, assuming that the individual comes before the Lord in humility and meekness.

SHALL BE GUILTY. The offender shall be held guilty as in Matthew 5:21f. That person shall be guilty of a crime against the body and blood of the Lord by such sacrilege (Hebrews 6:6: 10:29).

The Corinthians' despicable behavior at the communal meal was not without result, which Paul proceeded to point out. Nowadays when this passage is read before participation in the Lord's Supper, it is usually intended to produce soul-searching introspection and silent confession to Christ so that no one will sin against the spiritual presence of the Lord by irreverent observance. Paul's application was probably more concrete [BKC].

Who are they who are "guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord? Immediately - that is, in the Corinthian church, they were the arrogant, snobbish, wealthy members who showed contempt for poorer members by utter disregard for their feelings and their need (11:21-22). "These came to the remembrance of Christ's work of unity and reconciliation (cf. Eph. 2:15-16) with a trail of deeds that had produced disunity and alienation!" [BKC]

11:28 - A MAN MUST EXAMINE HIMSELF. "*But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup.*" This self-examination "is not meant to keep him away from the Lord's Table, but to allow him to partake of the bread and cup in the right way [NCWB]. Each member should test himself as he would a piece of metal to be sure his motives are pure. Such self-examination would prohibit the disgraceful conduct in verses 20ff.

11:29 - EATS AND DRINKS JUDGMENT. "*For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly.*" This is not "The Judgment," but judgment in general. It has been established that some of the believers in Corinthians were coming to the Lord's Table in a totally unworthy manner. Their unrighteous approach to the Lord's Supper was regarded as unworthy for at least three reasons: (1) a breach of fellowship (v. 18), (2) doctrinal heresy (v. 19), (3) a contemptible attitudinal toward less fortunate members (v. 21). "To approach the Lord's Table so carelessly is to eat and drink judgment to oneself, failing to discern the Lord's body. At Corinth this judgment of God had manifested itself in physical

sickness and even death (v. 30). Note that this loss by some was not of their salvation but of their physical lives. That God may ultimately use such a severe method of discipline towards His children should promote holy reverence for the things of God [BSB].

JUDGE THE BODY. " The verb (*dia-krimo*) is our word "discriminate," thus to distinguish between the good and the bad, right and wrong. Eating the bread and drinking the juice as symbols of the Lord's body and blood in death probes one's heart to the very depths.

Vincent offers an interesting summary on this verse:

This false and horrible rendering has destroyed the peace of more sincere and earnest souls than any other misread passage in the New Testament. It has kept hundreds from the Lord's table. *Êñsíá* is a *temporary* judgment, and so is distinguished from *êâôÛêñéíá* *condemnation*, from which this temporary judgment is intended to save the participant. The distinction appears in v. 32 [VINCENT].

11:30 - FOR THIS REASON. "*For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.*" Because of their irreverence some of them were "weak," some are "sick," and a number "sleep" in death. "A number sleep" may be translated "many sleep." The word actually means adequate or sufficient. A sufficient number of people were sleeping (dead) because of their sin.

There is no more shocking verse in the Bible on irreverence in the house of God than this. Robertson says, "Sufficient numbers are already asleep in death because of their desecration of the Lord's table" [ATR]. Paul evidently had knowledge of specific instances. As in 5:5 ("destruction of the flesh"), this judgment had the salvation of the spirit (soul) as its purpose, "so here the judgment of the Lord is a disciplinary chastisement to preserve believers from being overwhelmed in the condemnation pronounced on the godless world (Ex. 15:26) [Bruce].

11:31 - IF WE JUDGE. "*But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged.*" If we examine ourselves and repent of sin, we may avoid the judgment of God. God is Judge of every person. There is an ongoing judgment in life in which God watches our actions, judging us or blessing us as He determines appropriate. There is also a final judgment in which we shall all give account to God. In the on-going judgment in this world He chastises us as a loving Fatherly, always with a positive purpose, relative to our redemption and our sanctification. His ultimate purpose in this chastisement is to bring us into conformity to His will (conforming us to the image of His son, Romans 8:29). This judgment is also designed to save us from more severe judgment and the catastrophes we bring upon ourselves (v. 30).

11:32 -WHEN WE ARE JUDGED. "*But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.*" God disciplines us to correct us and develop us in His Spirit, so that we will not be condemned with the world. This

condemnation is not the loss of one's salvation. It is not the judgment of eternal separation from God, but general judgment to which the world is subjected. Many afflictions are meant to separate us from the ultimate condemnation of the evil world.

11:33 - WAIT FOR ANOTHER. "So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another." When you come together to eat, show courtesy - unlike the guilty parties at Corinth. Wait your turn, do not rush ahead of everyone else.

11:34 - AT HOME. "*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.*" If anyone is so hungry that he cannot wait for others or share with the poor, let him eat at home.

THE REMAINING QUESTIONS. This denotes questions they had asked Paul about the Lord's Supper. He has answered their questions, but when he arrived in Corinth he would deal with any other questions that might arise. Paul has found much fault with the church at Corinth and has dealt with some of the problems, but this points specifically to questions about the Lord's Supper, because he will go on to deal with questions on other subjects after he moves on from the Lord's Supper in this letter. Not even Timothy and Titus, whom he sent to them, could answer all their questions, and there were some Paul would only be able to deal in person.

I would be interesting to know what some of the other questions might have been. Should we practice open communion? Or should we practice closed communion? What about "closed" closed communion? And do we still have to use unleavened bread? What is the difference between sacraments and ordinances? Should we use real wine, or is grape juice acceptable? Taking the last question first, Welch's Grape Juice is "the fruit of the vine" and as such it is believed by most churches to be acceptable. Neither *ordinance* or *sacrament* is a biblical term. Some interpreters believe the word "sacrament" conveys the concept that God's grace is dispensed almost automatically through participation in the Lord's Supper. Others believe the word "ordinance" stresses obedience in doing that which the Lord explicitly commanded. The dangers involved in improperly defining and applying these terms run from superstition to legalism. *The Holman Bible Dictionary* offers the following:

The "sacraments" varied in number for a thousand years in the church's early history. Peter Lombard (about A.D. 1150) defended seven, and Thomas Aquinas (about A.D. 1250) argued that all were instituted by Christ. After A.D. 1500, Martin Luther and other Protestant reformers rejected five of these, insisting that only baptism and the Lord's Supper have a biblical basis. Most Protestants agree with their assessment.

Not only the name and number but the practice and meaning of the ordinances have been matters of continuing debate. Who should receive baptism or participate in observing the Lord's Supper? What are essential elements in the observances that ensure validity? What do they accomplish in the life of the

individual and the church? Definitive answers acceptable to all Christians have not been forthcoming for these or many other questions, but a survey of biblical evidence should be helpful in reaching some conclusions [HBD].

That brings us to what is meant by open or closed communion? The terms would seem to be self explanatory, but it is not quite that simple, because when you move from church to church, or from denomination to denomination the definitions may vary. Open Communion to some may mean open to anyone, while to others it may mean open to all of our denomination. Closed Communion to some may mean closed to all but their own denomination and “Closed, closed” means closed to all but their own local church. It is said that the late J. R. Graves, when preaching a revival in another church, began by transferring his church membership to that church so that if they observed the Lord’s Supper he could participate. When he returned to his church the next Sunday he would move his letter back home.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS: What should be done if a deacon is serving the unleavened bread and a lost person takes a piece of the bread. Should he rebuke the lost person? Take the bread away from him? To make it more interesting, assume the individual is a visitor and the deacon does not know if he is a believer, but knows he is not a member of the local church? The wrong move at this point could mean that the visitor would never return - or that the lost person would never be saved.

What would happen to the lost person who takes the elements, even though instructions are given before the elements are served? He may look around and see that almost everyone around him is taking the elements and for fear that his failure to take the elements would make him a “target” for all those church members.

A number of years ago one of our members was asked to sing a solo. She asked her sister, a member of another Southern Baptist Church four miles away, to accompany her on the piano. Her sister, knowing that we were observing the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper, asked her pastor if she should participate. He called me and I assured him that she should participate. In the conversation on the phone he made the statement that he would serve the elements only to members of our denomination because “only Baptists are the true church.” I knew that there were a few other people who thought theirs was “the only true church,” but I had never heard that we believed that! I am sure our Methodist and Presbyterian brothers and sisters in Christ would marvel at this revelation.

Is there any wonder that Paul anticipated more questions when he arrived? Of this much we can be sure - condemnation anyone who disagrees with you is not synonymous with righteousness.

C. The Use of Spiritual Gifts (12:1 - 14:40)

1. The Variety of Gifts (12:1-11)

Having finished the discussion of the Lord's Supper, Paul concludes the first part of his letter. Now the apostle now turned to another matter. The first part of his letter was wholly corrective. From the start to the end, it is wholly constructive. The corrective section was intended to deal with the disorderliness caused by the carnalities of the church which prevented the fulfillment of her functions, that of fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

In chapters 12-14 Paul deals with the subject of spiritual gifts against the background of divisions and moral laxity in a church that probably boasted of more spiritual gifts than any other in the New Testament. Chapter 12 deals with the unity and diversity of the gifts, chapter 13 with the power of love, and chapter 14 with the specific gifts of prophecy and tongues.

Spiritual gifts enable God's people to do His work. The Holy Spirit reveals Himself in each life through the person's particular gift. God the Father is the ultimate source of each gift. Each gift helps us testify of Christ. Thus the three Persons who make up the one God in Christian faith are very closely identified in providing spiritual gifts and in guiding their work [DSB].

Essential information may be gleaned from these chapters on the Person and ministry of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2 we see that God poured out His Spirit on all the Christians at Pentecost. All new believers in Christ have received the Spirit (Acts 2:38; Ro 8:9). Only the indwelling Holy Spirit can enable the believer to confess Christ as Lord (in word and deed). Some of the Corinthian saints were confused about this.

Some church members spoke in unknown tongues (1 Co 14:2) and claimed this gift showed they had the Spirit. In their view Christians who did not speak in tongues did not have the Spirit. Paul disagreed strongly. One sign shows the Spirit's presence. The Spirit is present with those who sincerely confess that Jesus is Lord. He is never present with anyone who says that Jesus is cursed. The Spirit is present with all Christians and with no one else. The Spirit is always working to build up the people of God, never to tear them apart; and He is always working to extend the gospel message, never to muzzle that message.

The ministry of the Holy the Spirit is revealed in this Scripture:

- (1) He is present when people confess that Jesus is Lord.
- (2) He is working in a church which follows the way of love.
- (3) He is active when the church uses His gifts of prophecy to proclaim the gospel (See 1 Jn 4:1-3).

replace chart.

12:1 - NOW CONCERNING SPIRITUAL GIFTS. *“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware.”* Wow! We knew this was coming. As the student

of the Scriptures begins a study of 1 Corinthians, he is aware that chapters 12-14 are just ahead. We might dismiss some of the problems that divided those ancient believers with a reminder that the church was in its infancy, they did not have the complete New Testament, they had a unique situation, or even that they were primitive people. Thus reasoning, one might conclude that we would have abolished divisions, or the problems that divide us as we move into the third millennium A.D. Whatever we conclude about other problems at Corinth - hair covering, hair length, the role of women in church, lawsuits - everyone who has tried to discuss spiritual gifts with those who hold a different view are well aware of how divisive the subject of spiritual gifts really is.

Let me hasten to add that I did not claim that spiritual gifts are divisive, for genuine gifts of the Spirit should edify the church, not divide it. Controversy and schisms come from interpretations, philosophies, and opinions. As we study spiritual gifts in these chapters, it will help to remind ourselves that the Holy Spirit, - the Third Person of the Trinity who gives the spiritual gifts - is the divine author of every word. That is divine **Inspiration**. He has protected it against all foes as well as the errors of many who have professed to believe it for almost twenty centuries. That is divine **Preservation**. At the point of salvation God placed His Spirit in our heart (our spirit - mind, emotions, and will) so that He might enlighten our hearts and minds that we might understand that which He inspired someone to write many centuries ago. That is divine **Illumination**. The One who authored the Scripture helps us to understand it and apply it in our daily life.

QUESTION: Wouldn't it be something if the Holy Spirit suddenly started revealing the same thing to all believers, to all churches, and to all denominations? One might conclude, based on sermons and comments made, that the Holy Spirit must go from church to church, or from one denomination, dictating various interpretations and applications, many of which are diametrically opposed to each other. Some seem to think that the study of Theology (the study of God) is a denial of the Holy Spirit. As we study these three chapters it will help to remember that just as there is one Author, there is but one right interpretation - many applications, but one correct interpretation. We must prayerfully study the Scripture and trust God to give us an understanding of the meaning and enable us to make an application of the Truth. At the same time, we must be very careful that we do not let extra-biblical "revelations" overshadow and outweigh the inspired Word of God.

GIFTS. This was clearly one of the questions they asked Paul in their letter to him (7:1). The answer to this question runs to the end of chapter 14. It is clear that a lot of trouble had arisen in Corinth in the exercise of these spiritual gifts. G. Campbell Morgan insists that the word "gifts" should not be included in this verse. It is not in the Greek. He has, "now concerning the spiritualities" [MORGAN]. The church was cursed with carnalities. It needed to return to spiritualities, the things of the spirit, as opposed to the things of the flesh.

A number of different words are used in the Greek New Testament in association with "gifts" - *pneumatikon* (spiritual gifts), *charismaton* (grace gifts, vs. 4), or simple *domata* (gifts, Eph. 4:8). Paul will mention some twenty different gifts. There are four lists of gifts in the New

Testament, one differing from others according to purpose of the Lord in that particular passage:

- (1) In Rom. 12:6-8, Paul speaks of gifts in a general way.
- (2) In Eph. 4:11, Paul deals with the gifts that enhance the unity of the body of Christ.
- (3) In 1 Pet. 4:10, 11, Peter emphasizes the service the gifts render.
- (4) In 1 Cor. 12:28-30, Paul is concerned with an order of importance of gifts.

In 12:8-10, Paul deals with the more spectacular, or sensational gifts or “manifestations of the Spirit” (vs. 7) because they were the ones most abused by the Corinthians.

Spiritual gifts differ from talents in that gifts are of supernatural origin rather than natural endowments. The Holy Spirit gives each Christian one or more gifts “as He wills” (12:7, 11). The purpose of the gifts includes the common good of the church (vs. 7), the proper functioning of the body of Christ (12:14-26), edification (14:3-12), and the confirmation of the Gospel (the preached Word (14:24, 25; Acts 1:8; Heb. 2:3, 4). Each believer needs the contribution of every other member of the body of Christ (12:14-26). The outline Paul uses is as follows:

- (1) Gifts and the unity of the body (Ch. 12).
- (2) Gifts and love (Ch. 13).
- (3) Gifts and edification (ch. 14).

12:2 - WHEN YOU WERE PAGANS. *“You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the mute idols, however you were led.”* The church at Corinth was not unique in this respect - all churches in Gentile countries were made of a mixture of Jews with their background in Judaism and Gentiles with their background in paganism.

TO MUTE IDOLS. It is, literally, “unto the idols, the dumb.” “However you were led” may mean “as often as you were led,” or by whomever you were led. Bruce notes that Apollo was particularly renowned as the source of ecstatic utterances, “as on the lips of Cassandra of Troy; the priestess of Delphi of the Sibyl; at the humbler level, the fortune-telling slave-girl of Acts 16:16 was dominated by the same kind of rhythmic spirit. Paul does not suggest that any prophecy or glossolalia at Corinth proceeded from such a source. He reminds them that there are “inspired utterances other than those produced by the Spirit of God” [BRUCE]. Paul implies here that in their pagan days they were led to worship idols by powers outside themselves; i.e., demons.

12:3 - THEREFORE I MAKE KNOWN TO YOU. *“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." A believer, "led by the Spirit of God, would never curse Jesus but rather acknowledge His supreme lordship; i.e., His complete deity as Yahweh" [RSB]. When these Gentile converts were still pagans they spoke under the influence of evil spirits (vs. 2). Now that they professed faith in Jesus Christ it was necessary for the church to determine the source of the speech - God or Satan. How could they know that the Holy Spirit was the source of this gift? The first test is the attitude toward Jesus Christ (1 John 4:1-6). That is the first test one must use today to distinguish between what might be called "Christian cults" and the true Gospel. If Satan is the source of the speech, or the cult philosophy, Jesus Christ is not the focal point of their message - certainly not the Jesus of Scripture.

JESUS IS ACCURSED. "No one, speaking by the Spirit of God" would ever say that "Jesus is accursed"(anathema) - as both Jews and Gentiles had done when He was crucified (Gal. 3:13). This blasphemous language against Jesus was used mainly by the Jews (Acts 13:45; 18:6). It is even possible that Paul had once tried to make Christians say "anathema Jesus."

JESUS IS LORD. The Romans used the term *kurios* freely for their emperor in emperor worship. "Most important of all is the early establishment of a polemical parallelism between the cult of Christ and the cult of Caesar in the application of the term 'kurios,' 'Lord'" [ATR]. The battle-cries of the spirits of error and of truth sounding forth Corinth. Satan never gives up without a struggle. One is reminded of the demand made of Polycarp that he say "*Kurios Caesar*," and how each time he replied "*Kurios Iesus*." He paid the penalty for his loyalty with his life. Robertson is right: "Light-hearted men today can say 'Lord Jesus' in a flippant or even in an irreverent way, but no Jew or Gentile then said it who did not mean it" [ATR].

12:4 - VARIETIES OF GIFTS. "*Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit.*" The word denotes distinctions, differences, varieties. In association with the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost there were three phenomenal manifestations; a sound as of a rushing mighty wind, cloven tongues as a fire, and believers speaking in some seventeen different languages. The words "cloven tongues" tells us that there was one common "tongue" from which a single "tongue" reached down and rested upon each individual believer, symbolizing that there is one Spirit who fills each individual. He indwells each believer, yet He remains a whole Person.

QUESTION: Why do some people say Holy Spirit and others say Holy Ghost? The King James translators rendered the word for spirit (*pneuma*) "ghost" for reasons that related more to the English language in 1611 than with a literal translation of the Greek word. Greek word *pneuma* can be translated as "wind," "breath," or "spirit" depending upon the context. The Hebrew equivalent is *ruach* ("God breathed into man the breath of life and he became a living soul").

In both Testaments, *spirit* is used of both God and human beings. *Spirit*, whether used of God or of human beings, is difficult to define. The kinship of spirit, breath, and wind is a helpful clue in beginning to understand *spirit*. In His conversation with Nicodemus (John 3), Jesus said that the Spirit is like the wind in that one cannot see it but one can see its effects. This is true of both the Spirit

of God and the spirit of a human being [HBD].

This “same Spirit” gives each believer at least one, but possibly more spiritual gifts. These gifts may well parallel his or her talents, but not necessarily. For example, a very timid and inarticulate with an absolute horror of getting up in front of a crowd may become a forceful and dynamic preacher of the Gospel. A lost person may be very talented but he has no spiritual gifts. If that talented lost person is saved he immediately receives the greatest gift of all. What is the greatest spiritual gift of all? The greatest gift of all is God’s gift of His Holy Spirit to His people; that is the ultimate spiritual gift (Ac 2:38). When the new believer receives the Holy Spirit he receives whatever spiritual gifts the Father has elected to give him.

NOTE ON GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT. The background of the New Testament teaching about the Spirit and spiritual gifts is found in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament the work of the Spirit is usually seen in His giving a selected individual a gift (or gifts) with which he was to serve God by serving the people. In the New Testament, thus in the church, the Holy Spirit indwells each and every child of God, not just certain selected leaders. Every Christian receives a gift (or gifts) from the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:7). These gifts are spiritual endowments which equip the believer to love, worship, and serve the Lord Jesus Christ. For more, see 1 Cor. 7:7; Rom. 12:1-8; 12:--14; Eph. 4:1-13; 1 Peter 4:10.

12:5 - VARIETIES OF MINISTRIES. “*And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord.*” Ministries is from *diakonos* which may carry a general meaning of service (see 11:13), a special ministration like that of Martha of Bethany, and the collection (1 Cor. 16:15; 2 Cor. 8:4).

We have a variety of “gifts” (vs. 4) to meet a variety of “ministries.” What use are gifts if not for a ministry? God gives some gifts in the area of music - thank God for bestowing this gift on those who play the instruments, direct the music, sing in the choirs, and also for those who sing in the congregation. One Sunday evening as we prepared for the service, Jim White, who directs our music, pointed with excitement to where a visitor had sat for the morning worship and asked, “Did you hear that lady who sat right over there singing this morning?!” During that same morning worship service I baptized Mrs. Irene (Mickey) Steward, an adult lady “with seniority.” The week before I simply told Billy Antley when we would have the baptism and left everything else up to him. I knew the baptistry would be cleaned and filled, the water temperature would be just right, and there would be someone there to help Mrs. Steward, and that he would be there to assist me. Afterward, he would drain the baptistry and do what every else was needed.

There are as many ministries as there are gifts to fulfill them; for every ministry there is a corresponding gift. We need people who can work with babies, toddlers, younger children, older children, youth, senior adults, and in many cases people with various physical or mental limitations.

My sister, Linda Furr, asked me to proof an article she was writing for the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board. Her suggestions for Sunday School teachers who work with gifted children should be studied by every teacher who works with Kindergarten through sixth grade.

Linda is well qualified to write on the subject, having coached students who have won state, national, and international competitions. There are children with learning disabilities who need special help in Sunday School, and there are both children and adults who need Christian counseling.

When I was a student at Mississippi College I often attended services at First Baptist Church, Clinton, before I accepted a student pastorate. At the end of every service I always knew when I left the sanctuary the pastor would be standing at the door to greet worshippers. I also knew that Dr. Berry would be standing just beyond the pastor with a smile and a greeting for everyone who passed by. Even after all these years I cannot think of First Baptist, Clinton without thinking about that little extra blessing I received when Dr Berry spoke to me and asked how things were going. Dr. Berry, a retired College president, had found a ministry and he had a spiritual gift that enabled him to fulfill it, a gift of love, encourage, comfort.

THE SAME LORD. “Lord” is a favorite title for Jesus Christ in the Pauline Epistles. But, why not just call Him Jesus, or Christ? Why Lord? Shouldn’t that title be reserved for God the Father since it was one of His titles in the Old Testament? In the Old Testament the First Person of the Trinity is called God (*Elohim*), with emphasis on power; Lord (*adonai*), with emphasis on His sovereignty; and LORD (YHWH, Yahweh), the covenant name, the most holy name. In the New Testament Jesus is Lord, sovereign over all who place their faith and trust in Him.

Now, let me try to clear up a common misconception - and it is possible that I may even have mislead some in the past. It is no secret that there are many people who profess Jesus Christ as their Savior to not live as though He is their Lord. I have challenged people, “You profess Him as your Savior, now crown Him as Lord in your life.” That is not wrong, but it does require an explanation. I became aware of this recently when in a conversation a friend reasoned that some professing Christians behave as though they do not know the Lord because they were saved, but they are not any more. Knowing his background I was surprised by the statement. My immediate response was, “That is impossible!” I then shared various Scripture verses with him, A lady who had been listening said, “I think what he means is that they have accepted Jesus as Savior, but they have never made Him Lord.” I agreed with her that many people who profess to be Christians - let’s assume they are - have not submitted to His Lordship. However, Jesus never invites anyone to come to Him as Savior without submitting to him as Lord. If you do not receive Him as Lord, you do not receive Him as Savior.

I realize the new Christian may not understand that concept, and the backslide may not be totally conscious of it, but the simple fact is, If He is not Lord of all He is not Lord at all. The sovereignty of Jesus Christ is the reign in of Christ in the hearts of believers. How can we possibly think of receiving citizenship in His Kingdom without submitting to His lordship? Perhaps it would be less confusing if, instead of saying “Okay, you have received Jesus as Savior, don’t you think it is time to accept Him as Lord,” we say, “When you received Jesus as Savior, you accepted His lordship over your life, and if you are not letting Him reign as the Sovereign Lord of your life you must repent.” Failure to submit to His lordship is not an

oversight, of the lack of another step - it is sin! The solution is not in taking another step in the same direction. We must repent.

12:6 - VARIETIES OF EFFECTS. *“There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons.”* Vincent says that “effects” here point to the “outward manifestations and results of spiritual gifts” [VINCENT].

WORKS ALL THINGS. What Paul is saying is that God is the Energy and Energizer of the Universe. He is speaking only of spiritual gifts and results here, but the principle applies to the universe in Col. 1:16 and Romans 11:36.

Note the Trinity in these verses.. the same spirit (vs. 4), the same Lord (Jesus, vs. 5), the same God (Father, vs. 6). “The Holy **Spirit** gives us the gifts (12:4) to serve Christ our **Lord** (12:5), and this shows **God** the Father’s operation at work in all the members of Christ’s body. The word “administrations” in 12:5 is the same word usually translated “ministries.” The expression “all in all” in 12:6 means “all the gifts in all the persons who possess them.” [NCWB]

Any person who would boast of his spiritual gifts needs to study these verses - and I put that in the plural because the person would boast probably would not entertain the thought that he might be limited to one gift. We will do well to remember the words of Zechariah, “...Not by might, not by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord...” (Zech. 4:6).

THE SAME GOD. At the last regular meeting of 1999 the Executive Board of the Louisiana Baptist Convention heard reports from organizations. The chaplain of our retirement home at Arcadia was one of many people giving reports on their various ministries. The chaplain announced to us that if the Lord does not call anyone (at the home) home during the next few months (by Y2K) five residents will have lived in three different centuries. That is amazing within itself, but can you imagine what these five people have witnessed in their lifetimes? We think first of the technological, scientific, material, and cultural changes. We would do well to think of the spiritual (theological) changes we have witnessed during the last century.

There are three basic world-views and the Twentieth century witnessed them all. Those three world-views are **theistic, atheistic, and New Age** (Postmodern) **religious movements**(plural, for they are many movements with certain things in common). From Adam to the early part of the Twentieth Century man’s world view was basically theistic; most everybody believed in God, god, or gods. Somewhere around 1935 (post WW II in the Bible Belt) the liberal elite in America began exerting tremendous influence over education, entertainment, politics, culture, and even religion (primarily through the teaching of evolution with all its implications). This influence moved us **from the theistic period into the atheistic period** (Modernism with its materialistic philosophy). True, only a small minority would ever openly embrace atheism, but these people had enough influence to change the face of America with the gospel of evolution. Southern Baptist failed to understand what was happening because they were experiencing phenomenal growth during that period - put by the end of the atheistic

period their growth was slowing down and before long they would be reporting no growth in one year, even though baptisms worldwide broke all records.

Somewhere around 1975 to 1980, while preachers and Sunday School teachers were still warning about threats from the Secular Humanists, some very astute observers began to understand that the influence of Humanism was waning - actually yielding to religious influences. Was Christianity actually winning the battle for America? What most people did not comprehend - and many still do not understand - was that the force behind the demise of what I would call strict Humanism was the New Age religious movements, replacing the belief there was no god with the view that there is a god, actually many gods - in fact everything is god and god is everything (Pantheism), which means that you may actually be your own god (Monism: all is one and one is all). New Agers (Postmodernists). During all three world-views there have been Christians, atheists, and agnostics (I don't know if there is a God). There are millions of Christians today who have no concept of Postmodern influences, beliefs, or activities.

Many church leaders who could identify Humanism (how could they miss "There is no God") still do not understand Postmodernism ("Sure there is a god; there are many gods, in fact you are god). Those who do not understand this are not equipped to teach people the dangers inherent in all these various movements. They may be aware of the fact that Humanism taught moral relativism, but since they hear Postmodernists talk about God, Jesus, Christ, angels, the spiritual realm, and religion they do not understand that these people are not talking about the God of the Bible. The Christ they tout is far removed from the Christ of Scripture. Until we understand Postmodernism we will never comprehend the spiritual warfare going on in America.

Sadly, we are caught up in a spiritual warfare that has already changed the face of America, given us tens of millions of abortions, transformed whole neighborhoods into battlegrounds, invaded schools with violence, imposed homosexuality on education, entertainment, and politics (and even the church), confused the roles of men and women, filled the country with single parent homes, and emptied churches. Christians have been playing when they should have been praying. Ignorance of Scripture is appalling among church members. They are all for a dog and pony show, a rock concert, or a gospel quartet, but have no time for serious Bible study. They go to church to be entertained, traumatized, analyzed, encouraged - but never confronted! We have given our children pizzas and soft drinks and trips to the water slide, when they needed the Word of God. We are losing them because we are giving them what they want and what parents think they need - we are keeping them busy and off the street. But we are not teaching them the Word of God and for that reasons they are not prepared for spiritual warfare, and they are not equipped to make decisions that will glorify God and produce maturity in the faith.

One God! There is but one God and He is the God of the Bible. Shaeffer said the most meaningless word in the English language is the word God spelled with a small "g." He was right, and that being the case, the most significant word in the English language is God spelled with a capital "G." If you tell me that God could not have created the world and all that is in it - just the way He says He did it in Genesis - then please spell your god with a small "g." If you

believe there are many gods (“If your god suits you and my god suits me we should both be happy”), please spell your god, or gods, with a small “g.” Until Jesus comes, I am going to spell my God with a big “G” because He is the one and only God, and beside Him there is not other, not could there be another.

I once asked a retired missionary what impressed him most with the church in America after forty years on the foreign mission field. After a pause, he said, “Games and gimmicks. That is the main difference I see today. I didn’t see when I left for the mission field. As a Southern Baptist I have been engaged in “the Battle for the Bible” most of my ministry. Little did we heed the words of Francis Shaeffer in the late nineteen fifties that the Scripture would be the next great battlefield of Christianity. That battlefield, spanned my entire ministry, has seen many victories in which we have taken a stand for the Inspiration of Scripture. Many preach inerrancy of Scripture today. I once said in addressing pastors and an area Women’s Missionary Union (WMU) meeting, “We have won a great victory for the Word of God; I think it is now time to focus our attention of the God of the Word.

12:7 - MANIFESTATION. *“But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”* God gives each person a gift and He holds him accountable for what he does with it. Most believers would be pressed to name their gifts (for which they will give account). Each Believer is given at least one spiritual gift at the point of salvation when he or she is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. That gift is given at God’s initiative, not the result of man’s quest - or request. Spiritual gifts vary from person to person and this is what led to some of the problems at Corinth. These “various gifts” are given to unite the church, not divide it. The saints are given gifts so they can serve each other (1 Peter 4:10), which will unite the church. Boasting of one’s spiritual gifts will divide the church. Anyone who uses a gift to create disunity and disharmony among God’s people does not understand the purpose of spiritual gifts. He is misguided and he may mislead others.

Spiritual gifts are given for the edification of the entire church, not to make one person feel proud and another feel left out. Paul lists a number of gifts here, but there is no reason to suppose his list is comprehensive. It is interesting that the Scripture does not mention some of the gifts which are widely recognized today, such as gifts of music, youth work, or counseling. Does that mean that these are not legitimate gifts? Of course not. Some have suggested that whatever skill you have which can be used to serve Christ and His people is a gift of the Spirit, and a general way that may be true. However, an individual may simply use a natural talent where it is needed while neglecting a spiritual gift which was given for a specific purpose. How many believers today can really identify their spiritual gifts?

The Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts according to the sovereignty of God. He gives whatever gifts He decides, to whom He elects. Some of these gifts may be given suddenly while others must be developed slowly. The believer should thank God for his gifts and seek to use them responsibly. The ultimate gift of the Spirit is the one gift available to every Christians, and that is the gift of love (1 Cor. 13). We will see that to have all other gifts and lack love is to have nothing; to lack all other gifts and have love is to have everything (13:1-3).

To summarize, the gifts of the Spirit are given at His initiative, they had a unity in source (4-6), and they also had a unity in purpose. They were given, not for personal enrichment (14:4; 1 Peter 4:10), but “for the common good”(meaning the good of the Church), and for the building up of others (1 Cor. 10:24; 14:12).

12:8 - WORD OF WISDOM. *“For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit...”* We see in this passage the variety of gifts - nine manifestations of the Spirit's work in 8-10. Others, along with some of these, are given in Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:28-31; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 4:10-11. By “the word of wisdom” God makes known to His children His purpose for them in a particular situation (Acts 6:1-7; 15:13-21). The “word of knowledge” is the Holy Spirit’s revelation of the facts in a situation that he might have missed with intuitive or cognitive reasoning (John 4:18; Acts 5:3). Logos (Word in John 1 where it refers to Jesus) is reason, then speech. Wisdom is intelligence, then practical action in accordance with it. Here it is speech filled with the wisdom of God (2:7), under the influence of the Spirit of God. This gift is placed first. It is the highest? No! See 1 Cor. 13.

Now for a word of warning about the “word of wisdom.” Pat Robertson has popularized “a word of knowledge” on his popular, long-running television program, *the 700 Club*. Is this “the word of Wisdom” Paul references here? Can I prove, or disprove, Robertson? No. Who can prove or disprove “a word of knowledge?” Or disprove it. All we can do is say we believe it, disbelieve it, or we do not know. I do, however, have a problem with Robertson’s “word of knowledge”: First, he announces it - every single program. Second, it always fits into its appropriate time slot. Third, when I have watched the program his “word of knowledge” has been a bit too general for me. Without a doubt, if a million people see a particular program someone out there in TV land is going to have lower back pain! But back to the announcement: why announce it, other than the fact that it is a part of the schedule? Should this gift be announced anymore than the gift of counseling, singing, playing an instrument, or preaching? Should the soloist pause before singing to announce, “I have a gift from God for you?” There would not be anything wrong with making the statement, but it is not necessary. If the person has a gift for singing, spirit-filled believers will recognize it.

12:9 - TO ANOTHER FAITH. *“To another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit.”* This is not the faith of surrender, a saving faith. In Ephesians 2:8-9, Paul wrote, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.” In Romans 11:6, we learn that salvation is either all of grace or all of works, because grace and works are mutually exclusive. Faith is the only thing that is compatible with grace for the simple reason that the faith that leads to salvation is the gift of God, not something man can muster up for himself. All believers are recipients of the faith that enables us to trust Jesus Christ for salvation. Certain saints, upon exercising the faith necessary to receive Jesus Christ as Savior, receive a special gift of wonder-working faith through which they will glorify God, as in 13:2 (Matt. 17:20). All born-again Christians have saving faith, so this obviously denotes the faith which moves mountains (13:2), the power to lay hold on God's promises for results (cf. James 5:17, 18).

GIFTS OF HEALING. The Holy Spirit gave some of His people special gifts to carry on His healing ministry. Peter and John were especially blessed with this gift, and their ministry of healing was used to bring great numbers to faith in Jesus Christ. This gift is sometimes referred to as a temporary gift, a gift that served a special purpose in the early church (before the New Testament was Completed and distributed).

Just as there are various kinds of illness, even so there are various kinds of healing gifts (the fact that “gifts” is plural should not be overlooked). All healing comes from God. He still heals, most of the time using the medical profession, but not always. The gifts of healing were given to authenticate the Gospel. It should be noted that even Paul could not heal indiscriminately (2 Tim. 4:20).

It would be interesting to be able to encapsulate the healing ministries of the Twentieth Century and, if possibly, try to correlate those ministries with the rise of Pentecostalism since 1900. There seems to be a parallel between the growth of one and the emphasis of the other, from the small rural tents of the first half of the century to the mammoth auditoriums of the latter part of the centuries - especially in the eighties and nineties. The role of radio and television - especially TV - must not be left out of this review. There have been many, many preachers whose widely publicized accounts of healing have drawn huge crowds to their services. Numerous others have used Madison Avenue techniques to attract millions of followers to their televised healing services.

Sadly, some of those who have claimed that they were healing people with all sorts of diseases have been exposed as frauds. For more on this, see John MacArthur’s book, *Charismatic Chaos*. I have gone into a number of Christian Book stores in which the selection of books and the placement of the displays suggested that the store was owned or operated by Charismatic Christians. On occasions when someone asked if I needed any help, I had answered that I was just browsing to see what is new. Then, if the clerk was not busy I might ask where I might find some of the books by John MacArthur. I usually find that they do not carry many of his books (Few if any carry *Charismatic Chaos*).

A number of questions may arise when we look at this subject. Do I believe in divine healing? Absolutely! Do I believe some people today have the gift of healing? Absolutely! Do I believe everything I hear from those who seem to trade on divine healing services. No. Do I believe that all those who have the gift of healing are outside the medical profession? Absolutely not! May a person who is not a physician have the gift of healing? Yes. Then, should we pray for the gift of healing? While there is not doubt that we should pray for healing for ourselves and others, one would be hard pressed to find Scriptural support for praying for this particular gift, or any other gift for that matter. Spiritual gifts are given by the Holy Spirit to whomever God has determined to give them, according to His omniscient purpose and His grace.

Early in his ministry Oral Roberts held a crusade in a giant tent in Memphis, Tennessee - a suburb of my hometown of Sledge, Mississippi! Someone provided transportation for a

number of people from my community to attend two or three services over a period of weeks. If I had not been active in church, and if my parents had not monitored my growth in the Lord and His Word, these services might have been rather disturbing, even scary at points. In particular, there was the disconcerting warning that when he cast out demons of some unfortunate soul they would enter any of us who were not holding onto the back of the folding chair in front of us (as “a point of contact”).

Neighbors took a daughter who was, to use the terminology of the day, a deaf mute. This family placed great faith in Oral Roberts and believed if they could get her in the “healing line” she would be healed. She was not, and when the family wrote to Oral Roberts, someone in his organization wrote back that she probably got out of her place in line! That letter answered a lot of questions for people in the community.

The hand of God has not been shortened nor His power diminished through the centuries. However, I believe that it served the Lord’s purpose to give certain gifts in abundance to His servants who were ministering for Him during those early days - between the death and resurrection of the Lord and the completion of the New Testament - to accomplish His purpose. In the years following the death of the Lord there were thousands of people who had either seen Him perform miracles, or they had seen or heard of people who were healed by Him. To give the gift of healing to a greater number of believers during that period would affirm the promises and prophecies of Jesus and assure the masses that the same power of God that had been manifested by Jesus was continued through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

What should the child of God do in case of a serious illness today? Two things: go to the doctor and take advantage of all the help available, including diagnostic exams, treatment, surgery, and miracle drugs. He should ask the church to pray for God’s healing (he should also pray for healing. God has blessed us with facilities, treatments, and procedures the ancients could not have imagined. Doctors today can diagnose, prescribe, and even offer a prognosis, but only God can heal. When he has done that - he should trust God. If God blesses someone with the gift to heal that individual He will do it at His Own initiative.

12:10 - THE EFFECTING OF MIRACLES. *“...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.”* In this verse Paul adds to the list of the gifts of the Spirit. To knowledge, wisdom, faith, and healing he adds miracles, prophecy, tongues, and the interpretation of tongues. The gift of “effecting miracles” denotes the spiritual endowment to perform powerful, supernatural works. Like the gift of healing, the gift of effecting miracles is a rather general terms, and as such a specific definition is not easy. The notes in the Believer’s Study Bible merit consideration:

A miracle is a temporary supernatural suspension of the laws that govern this world as we commonly observe them. Miracles confirm God's truth (Heb. 2:3, 4) when He does a new work, as in the time of the giving of the Law under Moses, in the revival under Elijah and Elisha, and in the introduction of the Christian era. Because the gift of miracles primarily authenticated the apostolic office (2 Cor.

12:12), it is not as prominent or active in the present era. It will again be prominent in the Great Tribulation (Rev. 11:3-7). God still works miracles today, though His method would appear to be direct rather than instrumental (i.e., through a human agent) [BSB].

Without going back to read the works of Francis Shaeffer again - I have read more than twenty of his books three or four times - I recall his emphasis on class A Miracles and class B miracles. He, as I recall, identified class A miracles as supernatural acts in which natural laws are defied, suspended, or interrupted, acts for which there could be no natural or human explanation. The raising of the dead is certainly a class A miracle - I had driven through the Oral Roberts campus only a few hours before he surprised the world by announcing that he had raised the dead in services, though it could not be documented.

An MRI and other tests reveal that a patient has a large malignant tumor that must be removed immediately, and as family and friends pray, surgery is scheduled. But if before the surgeon begins, he asks for another MRI and this time there is no sign of a tumor, that is a class A miracle. There are many examples in the New Testament: The raising of Lazarus and the widow's son at Nain, the blindness on Elymas, the sorcerer, the casting out of demons, and walking on water.

A class B miracle is one in which every single detail in a given situation could be explained in natural terms - except for the fact that they were all brought together at the same time and in a manner that defies the laws of probability. If as we approach an intersection we witness a horrible collision, we might say to a friend in the car, "You know, if that idiot back there had not cut in from of me and made me slow down we might have been in that accident. It's a miracle!" How could you prove it one way or the other?

The day I had a heart attack (the doctor called it "a big one") there were so many little things that fell into place in such an order that I was convinced that the Lord had overruled my stubborn will to place me on a table in the emergency room when it occurred. I detailed this in *UNDEFEATED: Finding Peace in a World Full of Trouble*. One of my nurses assured me that the kind of heart attack I had was the kind you hear about all the time in which the individual does not make it to the hospital. I consider what happened in my case a class B miracle - I could not prove that any part of it was a miracle, but when I consider all the things that moved me in the direction of the hospital that day, and the order in which they occurred, and remembering the frustration at not being able to get in the right lane, or to turn right at the intersection that would have taken me away from the hospital, I am comfortable with calling this a miracle.

In my case, however, no one worked (effected) a miracle. This verse says that some are given the gift of "effecting miracles." Do I believe that? Absolutely! Do I believe we see as great a percentage of believers blessed with that gift as we see in the early church - before the completion of the New Testament? There were probably more miracles per square mile in Jerusalem during the first few months (or years) after Pentecost than at any other place (or time) in the history of Christianity - or the history of the world, for that matter. The more spectacular

gifts were given in abundance before the New Testament was completed and circulated. Does that mean that there are no miracle workers today? It does not mean that at all.

I am still skeptical of “miracle workers,” just as I am skeptical of all that is called a miracle today. There is a popular television program hosted by Richard Thomas about modern day miracles. I have watched it a few times and I agree that some of the miracles seemed miraculous, but of others I was more than a little leery. The dog that came to the aid of its master was not an angel! What then should we conclude? The gift of “effecting miracles” is given as God determines - and to whom He determines. Christians are only instruments God uses for His purpose, and He may equip them with any gift that will accomplish His purpose. The church needs all the gifts God gives various individuals, and these gifts should bring unity to Christ's body. Such gifts may include the God-given skills of modern physicians, scientists, and counselors, but we must not limit these gifts to such skills. Who has not witnessed people who seem to have a spiritual instinct for doing the right thing at the right time when a fellow church member has a catastrophic illness, a death in the family, there is a terminal illness, or some other crisis? There are people who have “a gift” for saying the right thing at the right time to one who is depressed, discouraged, or bereaved. They may have had no training but their gift can usually be enhanced by training.

Remember that God gives spiritual gifts as He determines. There is no basis for boasting or gloating over spiritual gifts that are wholly given by the grace of God without any merit on our part.

PROPHECY. This is the gift Paul will praise most (chapter 14). This is not always prediction, but a speaking forth of God's message under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, forth-telling of divine truth as well as foretelling future events. The Believer's Study Bible Notes provides interesting commentary:

To prophesy is to tell forth a message from God. Prophecy is Spirit-inspired utterance (14:29, 30), which is of great value (14:1, 3, 5). One who preaches today in the wisdom and power of the Holy Spirit has the gift of prophecy (Rev. 19:10). A minority who had the gift of prophecy had also the office of prophet, which was second only to that of the apostle (v. 28; Eph. 4:11). These two offices were foundational in instructing the infant church (Eph. 2:20). When the first century came to an end, the offices of apostle and prophet ceased, for the Scripture made them unnecessary [BSB].

DISTINGUISHING OF SPIRITS. The gift of discerning of spirits is crucial in determining whether or not some manifestation is a true spiritual gift; is it really of the Holy Spirit (supernatural) or if it is a fake. This gift is needed to discern between the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the gifts that are of the devil. Compare this with 1 John 4:1. Barnes comments:

This must refer to some power of searching into the secrets of the heart; of knowing what were a man's purposes, views, and feelings. It may relate either to

the power of determining by what spirit a man spoke who pretended to be inspired, whether he was truly inspired or whether he was an impostor; or it may refer to the power of seeing whether a man was sincere or not in his Christian profession. That the apostles had this power, is apparent from the case of Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5:1-10, and from the case of Elymas, Acts 13:9-11. It is evident that where the gift of prophecy and inspiration was possessed, and where it would confer such advantages on those who possessed it, there would be many pretenders to it; and that it would be of vast importance to the infant church, in order to prevent imposition, that there should be a power in the church of detecting the imposture [BARNES].

VARIOUS KINDS OF TONGUES. The KJV has “divers kinds of tongues.” This does not refer to gibberish like some of those involved in the modern “tongue” movement (unknown tongues) but in a real language that could be understood by one familiar with that tongue as was seen on the great Day of Pentecost when people Palestinian Christians spoke in some seventeen different languages in sharing the Gospel with worshipers from all over the known world who were there for Pentecost. In Corinth, there was no such variety of people, it required an interpreter to explain the tongue to those who did not know it. For this reason, Paul placed this gift lowest of all. It created excitement, but in their case it did little good.

Speaking in tongues was one of the most sensational gifts, and while it was one that could be used for the glory of God it was one that was easy to abuse by some people. That has not changed. There have been reports of pagan people who practiced speaking in unknown tongues. There have been reports of people in the occult who practiced speaking in tongues. When I was a teenager neighbors asked us to come to their home to hear a Holiness preacher who had been attending our services for several months because there was no local Holiness church. These neighbors obviously had the best of intentions in bringing together Christians friends to hear this gracious man who seemed to love our church.

Brother Lowe (not his real name) preached a good sermon and he preached with conviction. Suddenly he began to say some things I could not understand. When he finished, as we left to return to our home my sister Linda began asking, “Mother, what was he saying? Did you understand what he was saying?” Mother, probably in an attempt to shut her up until we got into the car, said, “He was speaking in an unknown tongue.” Uncharacteristically, Daddy broke in, “No he wasn’t! He was calling us what the Germans were calling the Russians in Berlin after the war (WWII), and some of it wasn’t very nice.”

Pentecostalism brought with it a revival of tongues in the early nineteen hundreds. Neo-Pentecostalism popularized this spectacular manifestation beginning in the sixties. It has been rightly said that the old Pentecostalism appealed to the down and out; new Pentecostalism to the up and out.

When the modern Charismatic movement was spreading rapidly during the sixties and seventies I knew I would have a lot of questions to ask about it, so I prayed, asking the Lord for guidance. I did not want to oppose anything that He was doing. Volumes have been written on the subject.

I have also talked with many others about it.

What have I concluded? There was a legitimate gift of tongues at Pentecost and on certain other occasions, but if you follow the growth of the church in Acts you will not see a pattern. Those who spoke in other languages at Pentecost - real languages, not unknown languages - may never have spoken in other languages again. The same might be said of others (in the home of Cornelius, in Ephesus, Acts 19). Does God give people the gift of speaking in other languages today? God can do anything He elects to do. However, when we look at chapter 13, I think we find that some of the more spectacular gifts declined with the completion of the New Testament, its distribution and finally mass publications following the invention of the printing press.

I believe the greatest, and most practical expression of a spiritual gift in reference to other languages in modern times might well be found in translations and interpretation of Scripture from one language to another. Bible translators must have both a gift and training. Some people pick up a new language very quickly. Dr. H. Leo Eddleman majored in Greek in Seminary, yet J. Edgar Hoover said that he had the best working knowledge of Hebrew of any non-Jew in the United States. Dr. Eddleman was a missionary to Israel immediately before the Second World War. He found an Arab who did not know any English at all, and persuaded the Arab to teach him Arabic. In six months he was preaching in Arabic. Around 1980 I told Dr. Eddleman that a friend, Dr. T. J. DeLaughter, told me about visiting churches in the Holy Land and having someone tell him that Dr. Eddleman had been back to see them not too long before Dr. DeLaughter had visited them. Dr. DeLaughter, who taught Hebrew at New Orleans Baptist Seminary when Dr. Eddleman was president, told me that the Israelis were amazed that Dr. Eddleman still spoke the language like a native. He has done high-level secret translations of secret documents for "a high-level secret organization within our government" (the only way he would identify it for me) and had been sent to Moscow to interpret for Golda Myeir. I asked Dr. Eddleman how he speak the language so well after all those years. He said, "This week I am reading Sherlock Holmes in the unvoeled Hebrew." Did Dr. Eddleman have a gift of tongues? I think he did.

THE INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES. In case no one was present who understood the particular tongue, it required a special gift of the Spirit to someone to interpret it if any one was to receive benefit from it. It was necessary to be able to distinguish between that which came from the Holy Spirit, that which was a satanic counterfeit, and that which was simply a work of the flesh. The gift of distinguishing spirits met this need. Barnes comments:

The power of interpreting foreign languages; or of interpreting the language which might be used by the "prophets" in their communications... This was evidently a faculty different from the power of speaking a foreign language; and yet it might be equally useful. It would appear possible that some might have had the power of speaking foreign languages who were not themselves apprized of the meaning, and that interpreters were needful in order to express the sense to the hearers. Or it may have been that in a promiscuous assembly, or in an assembly

made up of those who spoke different languages, a part might have understood what was uttered, and it was needful that an interpreter should explain it to the other portion [BARNES].

SUMMARY: LIST OF NINE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

(permanent or temporary).

From an audio tape by W. O. Vaught

- (1) Wisdom - counseling, with reference to divine solutions to problems through the Holy Spirit.
- (2) Knowledge - The ability to learn and categorize doctrine according to the wisdom of the Spirit.
- (3) Faith - to move mountains, not saving faith.
- (4) Healing - a temporary gift.
 - a. Paul is able to heal - Acts 19:11.
 - b. Paul couldn't heal Epaphradites - Phil. 2:27.
 - c. Paul could not heal Trophimus - 2 Tim. 4:20.
- (5) Working miracles - a temporary gift.
- (6) Prophecy - a temporary gift.
- (7) Discernment of spirits.
- (8) Tongues - other known languages (modern application - linguists).
- (9) Interpretation of tongues (modern application - missionaries).

12:11 - THE SAME SPIRIT. *"But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills."* There are many gifts and all believers receive one or more gifts of the Spirit at the time of their salvation, but there is once source of all the gifts - the Holy spirit. "All these gifts are miraculously bestowed; they cannot be acquitted by human art or industry, the different languages excepted; but they were given in such a way, and in such circumstances, as sufficiently proved that they also were miraculous gifts" [ADAM CLARKE].

The Holy Spirit is the source of all spiritual gifts and He is distributes "to each individual just as He wills." This is powerful - it is all of God. We do not receive spiritual gifts on the basis of human merit, so there are no grounds for conceit or pride, and definitely no basis of boasting of gifts that are all of God. This should promote unity withing the church fellowship as well as humility before God. Sadly, the false gospel of self-esteem with which modern education, psychology, and politics has been inundated has also flooded the church. But when we understand what the Bible has to say our first concern will be high Christ-esteem, not high self-esteem.

2. The Purpose of Gifts: Unity in Diversity (12:12-31)

In 12:12-31, Paul describes the relationship of gifted believers to each other, using the

analogy of the human body. “The Spirit has formed a spiritual organic unity of the many dissimilar members of the Body of Christ (vv. 12-13). The constitutions both of the human body and of the Body of Christ demand that all members (even those that seem unimportant) function in harmony (vv. 14-20). Finally, the need for mutual dependence, respect, and care for each other is emphasized (vv. 21-31)” [RSB].

12:12 - AS THE BODY IS ONE. *“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.”* There were major divisions in the church at Corinth. Imagine that! I am so glad Paul got all that cleared up two thousand years ago so that the modern church does not have to concern itself with such things. Of course that is being facetious. It is for the very reason that there are divisions in the church today that this Scripture is so relevant. The church, as the body of Christ, is a unit - “one body.” Just as the human body is one body, the church is one body. All members of the human body are important, some more so than others, but all are required for a complete, functioning body. When a member of the body is lost, or ceases to function, the whole body is effected by it. When there is a division in the church the whole church is effected by it. Some of the members at Corinth were causing divisions over that which was supposed to bring the members together as one in the Lord.

SO ALSO IS CHRIST. The church is the body of Christ. Paul also calls Christ the Head of the Body, the Church (Col. 1:18, 24; Eph. 5:23, 30). Christ as the Head of the Church has a body composed of the members who have varied gifts and functions like the different members of the human body. They are all vitally connected with the Head of the body and with each other. He elaborates in the following verses.

12:13 - FOR BY ONE SPIRIT. *“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.”* The “one Spirit” is the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Godhead. He is “one” as the Father is “one,” and those who are baptized by Him are baptized into one body. The Holy Spirit joins all believers to the Body of Christ. Since the tense of the verb shows past action, it is something that all believers have experienced - and that includes carnal believers, or backsliders. All believers “are made to drink of one Spirit” is a reference to the Spirit's living and dwelling within us (John 7:37-39). The gifts of the Spirit are intended to strengthen and unify the church, never to weaken and divide it.

At the point of conversion every believer is born again through the ministry of the Holy Spirit (John 3:3-6). Simultaneously, he is baptized by the Holy Spirit, uniting him with the body of Christ, the church, and at the same time uniting him with Christ (the Head of the Church) in His death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-5). Thus, by this one baptism (Eph. 4:5), he is in Christ (Gal. 3:26, 27). John the Baptist described Jesus Christ “as the baptizer (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33), in the sense that He poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit (the Promise of the Father) after He had been crucified, buried, and raised to glory. Christ Jesus is the ultimate source, for He sent the Spirit as an ascension gift at Pentecost (cf. Acts 2). Since

Pentecost, the Holy Spirit is the agent who is baptizing; the Lord’s body is the element into which all believers are immersed” [BSB]. Spirit baptism is a miracle by the might hand of God at the time of the new birth. When we are born again we are baptized by the Holy Spirit and when we are baptized by the Spirit we are added to the body of Christ. It needs to be stressed - the baptism of the Holy Spirit happens at conversion. It is not some second blessing that some believers receive at a later date.

Baptism by the Holy Spirit must be distinguished from being filled by (with) with the Spirit: Baptism by the Spirit is never commanded of believers; filling with the Spirit is (Eph. 5:18). After Pentecost (see Acts 8:14-17) baptism by the Spirit is once-for-all at conversion - it never needs to be repeated, nor can it be. Being filling by the Spirit is not only commanded, it must be repeated (Acts 2:4; 4:31). “The baptism is positional; the filling is experiential. The baptism does not bestow power, but the filling does (Acts 4:31). Confusion arises because on the Day of

Contrasting the Baptism and Fillings of the Holy Spirit	
Baptism (Romans 6; 1 Corinthians 12:13)	Filling (Ephesians 5:18)
One-time experience	Continuously experienced
Happened in the past at salvation	Happens in the present for sanctification
Brings union and relationship with Christ	Brings communion and fellowship with Christ
Introduces us into the body of Christ	Empowers individual members of the body of Christ
Is never commanded of us	Is commanded as a repeated action
A positional state brought about by God at salvation	An experiential state brought about by our submission and obedience to God's will
All Christians have had this experience	All Christians should have this experience, but <i>some</i> do not.

Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) the baptism of the Spirit (Christ's ascension gift) and the filling with the Spirit happened almost simultaneously” [BSB].

WE WERE ALL MADE TO DRINK OF ONE SPIRIT. The Greek verb is first aorist passive. The reference is to a definite act in the past, probably to the inward experience of the Holy Spirit symbolized by the act of baptism.

12:14 - NOT ONE MEMBER. *“For the body is not one member, but many.”* The human body is one organism, made up of many organs. So it is with the church. This is the key to the whole problem of church life both local and general.

12:15 - IF THE FOOT SHALL SAYS. *“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.”* This is the condition of the third class. The condition of the first class assumes a statement to be true, the condition of the second class assumes it to be false. The condition of the third class assumes neither. The foot might say it, but saying it does not make it so.

12:16 - IF THE FOOT SAYS. *“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.”* This is the same argument as in verse 15. Fact is fact whether we state it or not, and error is error whether we state it correctly or not.

12:17 - AN EYE. *“If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?”* Paul continues along the same avenue of thought. The eye is a wonderful organ and very useful (Num. 10:31), it is the light of the body (Luke 11:34). *“And yet how grotesque it would be - if there were nothing else but a great round rolling eye!”* [ATR].

12:18 - CHRIST PLACED THE MEMBERS. *“But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.”* Paul has been using absurdity to illustrate absurdity (verses 15-17). God placed the members of the human body where they are - for His pleasure - and gave each its function. He gives spiritual gifts to members of the body of Christ for a purpose. Each member of the body is equipped to fulfill His purpose. Why would anyone challenge God's will? See Romans 9:20.

12:19 - GOD HAS PLACED THE MEMBERS. *“But now God has placed the members,*

each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.” Now Paul applies the logic of verse 17 to any member of the body. The application to members of the church is too obvious to miss. It is particularly applicable in the case of a “church boss.”

12:20 - ONE BODY. *“But now there are many members, but one body.”* This brief summary statement - repetitious, but not superfluous or inessential - gives us his argument in a nutshell. The Holy Spirit gives individual members gifts, not for their own glory but for the edification of the body. The purpose of these gifts is to assure unity in the body, not to create disunity or divisions.

12:21 - THE EYE CANNOT SAY. *“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.”* The point is that the eye cannot truthfully say to the hand that it had no need of it. Admittedly, there are people who function without visions and vision and there are people who lose a hand who enjoy a productive life. Dr. Charles Melton was an outstanding pastor, educator and denominational worker who continually amazed all who knew him, including this writer. Once a student at Clarke College saw Dr. Melton in the lobby of his dorm and since Dr. Melton was blind and the student was in a hurry he decided against speaking. The student walked behind the Dr. Melton - in sock feet - and as he passed, Dr. Melton asked, “Jim, are you not going to speak to me?”

When Dr. Melton was pastor in Marks, Mississippi I stopped by from time to time to visit and on one occasion I dropped my hand in my pocket and when there was a slight rattle of keys and change I noticed an almost imperceptible tilt of his head. I wondered if he was counting my change or psycho-analyzing me! He lived in the Belen community near Marks and one night he and his wife walked to a neighbor’s home nearby. Remembering something he had left at home he announced that he would go back to get it. The friends asked their twelve year old son to walk with him. The boy had been watching Dr. Melton navigate around the church and had become convinced that he was faking his blindness - no blind person could walk around all that furniture without hitting it! That night the youth decided to expose him, so he deliberately walked him into an automobile - and had to answer to his parents.

I was once totally humiliated by a student at Mississippi College in a basketball game in a physical education class. The student had been born with no arm at all on the left side, and a very short right arm with three finger-like projections which might be seen when he wore a short-sleeved shirt. He lettered in football and track and field, so I knew he was fast and agile, but I did not know he could fake a pass one way and pass the other!

As amazing as these people were, that is not the point. God created the body to function with both eyes and hands and they are interdependent upon each other. They compliment each other - how often have we heard of the importance of hand-eye coordination? In the body of Christ, God equips believers with gifts to make the function as a whole body, with all members interdependent upon each other, a sort of hand-eye-tongue coordination.

12:22 - MUCH TRUER. *“On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.”* The weaker members are necessary. I love working with wood. There is a special sense of satisfaction in seeing plans designed in my own mind, sketched on paper, and finally produced in wood. Then I choose the wood - I love oak - I decide on cuts, joints, nails or screws, router bits, and stain. When I am finished I do not have a collection of wood, nails, screws, and glue; I have a table. I am sitting at my desk, looking at a printer table I made for that purpose. What I see is a fantastic laminated maple top, legs bonded with my own design to receive the shelf on which I put a file box in which I keep floppy disks. Obviously, the wood is what is visible - plus the stain and the polyurethane. I know, however, that without the glue, nails, and braces what I would have is a useless pile of wood.

12:23 - WE BESTOW MORE HONOR. *“...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.”* Literally, we place around as a garland. Jesus was clothed, albeit in mockery, in royal raiments (Mark 15:17) (Matthew 27:28).

MORE PRESENTABLE. Less presentable (less honorable) members are honored by being dressed more presentably.

12:24 - BUT GOD HAS SO COMPOSED THE BODY. *“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...”* Paul rejects the idea of the later Gnostics that matter is evil and the physical organs degrading. He gives “a noble picture of the body with its wonderful organs planned to be the temple of God's Spirit (6:19) in opposition to the Epicurean sensualists in Corinth” [ATR].

“Giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked” shows that God recognizes even the most ordinary contributions of the members whose service attracts the least attention of other people.

12:25 - NO DIVISION. *“So that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.”* In the previous verse Paul spoke of God as “Giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked,” for a specific purpose - “that there be no division in the body.” This speaks to the very issue that was plaguing the church at Corinth, the church that man have boasted more spiritual gifts than any other church in the New Testament, and at the same time may have been the most divided church of the period. They were divided over a number of things, from leadership, to moral issues, to spiritual gifts. Divisions breed division, and division breeds divisions. On the surface that may seem to be a redundant statement until you try to work with a divided church and seek a solution to the schism. Then you will see that no matter how hard you work to bring about a reconciliation between two or more parties, no matter how united the groups appear, the smallest offense may polarize the factions over night. Until the issues involved in the division are resolved there will be no healing and the union is in appearance only. The healing often means that some people are going to have to confess sins and ask forgiveness and many people are going to have to forgive, both the forgiving and the asking for forgiveness must be genuine - neither can be superficial.

CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER. Casting our own cares on our Lord, we take cares of others (See 1 Peter 5:7, where the same word is used). He cares for us, we should care for one another. In this way the purpose of God in His plan for the body is realized. Trouble in one organ affects the whole body. Both medical doctors and chiropractors make this claim convincingly. By the words “have the same care, “ Paul personifies the parts of the body as if each is anxious for the others. Both modern medical science and the social sciences confirms Paul’s claim.

12:26 - IF ONE MEMBER SUFFERS. *“And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.”* Paul continues the personification of the members of the body, each of which rejoices in the blessings of others.

REJOICE WITH IT. One may tingle with joy all over the body thanks to the wonderful nervous system and to the relation between mind and matter. See 13:6 for joy of love with truth. A diseased organ in the human body may have a profound effect on other organs. Healthy organs work together to produce a healthy organism - the whole body. The analogy between the human body and the church needs little amplification here.

12.-27 - YOU ARE CHRIST'S BODY. *“Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.”* The allusion to the human body continues. Is he saying that the church at Corinth is one member in the overall (universal) body of Christ as some have speculated? Or does this mean that each local church is the body of Christ and each individual member of the local church is a member of the body of Christ? “While the body of Christ is made up of all Christians everywhere throughout history, each local church is the body of Christ in miniature, with individual members filling their different roles to make it a balanced and harmonious unit” [NCWB]. Each Christian has his own place and function in the body of Christ. As all the members of the human body compose one body, having a common head, so it is with all the members and parts of the Christian church. “The specific idea is, that Christ is the Head of the whole church; that he presides over all; and that all its members sustain to each other the relation of fellow-members in the same body, and are subject to the same head; compare the note at 1 Cor. 11:3. The church is often called the body of Christ; Eph. 1:23; Col. 1:18, 24” [BARNES].

12:28 - GOD HAS APPOINTED. *“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.”* Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, is the head of His body, the church. The Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, is usually seen as the One giving spiritual gifts to believers (vv 3,7). God the Father, the First Person of the Trinity, provides human leaders for the church, but He remains the unqualified sovereign authority of the church. God, in His sovereignty, has appointed both offices and gifts in the church. The church is His, the members are His, the power is His, and the choice is His.

FIRST APOSTLES. The gifts here are ranked in order of honor. The members at Corinth were repositioning the gifts, belittling the more important gifts by promoting and elevating the

spectacular gift of tongues over more important gifts. In the list in Acts 13:1 Barnabas was listed first and Saul last: “Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.” The word Paul uses means “to send from one person to another, and from one place to another. It points to persons immediately designated by Jesus Christ, and sent by him to preach the Gospel to all mankind” [ADAM CLARKE].

The word “Apostle” may be used in a general sense to mean a missionary (Rom. 16:7; Phil. 2:25). However, Paul here uses the word

in its particular or restrictive sense to mean the Twelve (Luke 6:13) who were the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20), especially in its doctrine (Acts 2:42). The N.T. is their written teaching, as the Spirit inspired them or their associates (John 16:13). An apostle had to be baptized by John the Baptist and had to be a witness of the resurrection (Acts 1:22); therefore, the apostles have no successors. Administration is the gift of governing, presiding over, and guiding the church (1 Tim. 5:17) [BSB].

PROPHETS. Second in regard to endowments and importance is the office of prophet. A prophet was a person who, under Divine inspiration, “predicts future events; but the word is often applied to these who preach the Gospel” [CLARKE]. The ministry of prophets was to announce and interpret special revelations they received from God, “to reveal spiritual insight which is hidden to others, and to foretell the future to warn and encourage their hearers” [DSB]. The twofold ministry of proclaiming (forthtelling divine truth) and prediction (foretelling future events) distinguishes the prophet from someone who merely prognosticates the future. “The authority of prophets derives from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. As a gift of the Spirit, prophecy may be given to and exercised by any of God's people. [DSB].

TEACHER. Third in rank of gifts is that of teacher. While the prophets received “new revelations by the Holy Spirit, the teachers taught what was already revealed. The teachers include evangelists and pastors (shepherds)” [NCWB]. The teachers are “the guardians and interpreters of the Christian tradition and give religious instruction to the converted. As Jesus taught those who responded to His preaching, so teachers are to explain the mysteries, nature, and principles of the Kingdom and to make clear the meaning of the Scriptures to the congregation” [BSB]. Teachers also instruct believers in the moral duties of the Christian life. The church should elect individuals as teachers who have been endowed with the spiritual gift of teaching. Any person who has sat through class fighting boredom or sleep while counting the minutes until an unprepared Sunday School teacher rambles, chases rabbits, and supplements the lesson with illustrations that do not fit the subject knows that all teachers were not elected because they had the gift of teaching from the Lord.

One other point must be made here; teachers may have another office in the church other than that of an elected teacher. Pastors, for example should teach (1 Ti 3:2; 5:17; Tit 1:9). I have observed in his books that John MacArthur lists his title as Pastor/Teacher of the Grace Community Church. “It is a calamity when the preacher is no longer a teacher, but only an

exhorter” [ATR]. Every pastor is a teacher, but often deacons, youth workers, and ministers of music have been given the gift of teacher.

MIRACLES. This denotes those who had the power of working miracles; referred to in 1 Cor. 12:10. Without a doubt this gift was more prevalent during the first decades after Pentecost than during modern times. Those miracles were used to give authentication to the Gospel preached by those apostles, prophets, and teachers before the completion of the New Testament. In the next chapter Paul probably makes that point. Are there no miracles today? Absolutely! I believe in miracles, I just have a problem with those who seem to trade in them. I believe God intervenes in nature as He intervenes in history to accomplish His purpose. News agencies have debunked many so-called miracles in recent years, but there are many legitimate miracles, both Class A miracles and Class B miracles. God can interrupt natural events and change elements, and He can cause circumstances to occur in such a way as to defy human reason.

HEALING. The gift of healing included “laying hands upon the sick, and healing them, Mark 16:18; which, as being one of the most beneficent miraculous powers, was most frequently conceded” [CLARKE].

HELPS. Is this a reference to the work of deacons, help rendered to the poor and the sick? Possibly, this would include the many helpers who make their contribution without receiving or expecting much credit. Everyone who has ever worked long in Vacation Bible School has probably taught children about God’s helpers’ possibly through choruses in which children sing, “We are helpers.” Lightfoot, however, conjectures that these were “the apostles’ helpers; persons who accompanied them, baptized those who were converted by them, and were sent by them to such places as they could not attend to, being otherwise employed” [CLARKE]. The Levites were called “helps” (helpers) of the priests. The word occurs Luke 1:54; Romans 8:26

Just as Lightfoot’s position was conjecture, so are our speculations as to whom the “helps” were. Barnes conjectures that

They might have been those to whom was entrusted the care of the poor, and the sick, and strangers, widows, and orphans, etc.; that is, those who performed the office of deacons. Or they may have been those who attended on the apostles to aid them in their work, such as Paul refers to in Rom. 16:3. “Greet Priscilla, and Aquilla, my “helpers” in Christ Jesus;” and in 1 Cor. 12:9,” Salute Urbane our helper in Christ;” see note on Rom. 16:3. It is not possible, perhaps, to determine the precise meaning of the word, or the nature of the office which they discharged; but the word means, in general, those who in any way aided or rendered assistance in the church, and may refer to the temporal affairs of the church, to the care of the poor, the distribution of charity and alms, or to the instruction of the ignorant, or to aid rendered directly to the apostles. There is no evidence that it refers to a distinct and “permanent” office in the church; but may refer to aid rendered by any class in any way. Probably many persons were

profitably and usefully employed in various ways as aids in promoting the temporal or spiritual welfare of the church [BARNES].

ADMINISTRATIONS. Some render the word “governments.” Paul possibly has in mind bishops, elders, the outstanding leaders (1 Thes. 5:12). Interestingly, the two offices (pastors and deacons) which are not specifically are the two that survive today. See Phil. 1:1 for both offices. Clarke quotes Lightfoot who “contends that this word “does not refer to the power of ruling, but to the case of a person endued with a deep and comprehensive mind, who is profoundly wise and prudent; and he thinks that it implies the same as discernment of spirits, 1 Corinthians 12:8” [CLARKE].

Different churches and different denominations have different forms of government, and without a doubt, each will think his is best - and probably things his is the most Scriptural. It goes without saying (most things that could go without saying should!) that there is no system that is perfect. There are problems with each. Southern Baptist, for example, believe in the autonomy of the local church - no hierarchy - and no individual, no conference, no organization can tell the local church how to operate. It is a good system, it usually works well enough, and it has support in Scripture (see Acts 15). This system has many advantages for the local church, even if it may at times leave the pastor in a vulnerable position in which he may be skewered over the fire by anyone with a bone to pick. Sadly, even seemingly trivial things have led to the forced termination of the pastor service. At the same time, most Southern Baptist pastors are convinced that this system is one that the Lord has blessed, even if does leave the pastor vulnerable at times.

Some Southern Baptist churches profess to be a theocracy - a democracy under the leadership of the Holy Spirit - are in reality, governed by a “board” of deacons or a church council. Each member of a Baptist Church has a voice, but sometimes the “board” (which is supposed to be a deacon “body”) convinces the church that all business should be conducted through the deacon body. In most cases any member may participate in a church business meeting. This is good, but it can be abused. I think I heard someone refer to some business meetings as a two hour ride through ulcer gorge.

A number of years ago a man stopped by to visit when he saw me working on a project in my driveway. He told me all the things he had against the former pastor, his wife, teachers, deacons, and the deacon chairman in particular. There was no rotation of deacons and the man to whom he referred served as “chairman of the board” for nearly thirty years, micro-managing every faucet of church life. Some members cringed in his presence - one lady confided that he actually scared her.

The visitor told me all he had against the deacon chairman and then concluded by saying, “But he knows how to run a church.” If, however, he thought he was supposed to “run” the church he had a lot to learn!

There is no reason to think that the terms, apostles, prophets, teachers, helpers, and administrations (governments) used in this verse referred to permanent and established ranks and

orders in ministry and in the local church. Nor are we told that these would be permanent offices which were to continue to all times as an essential part of its organization. For example, it is certain that the “order” or office of “apostles” has ceased, and there is a great deal of debate concerning the place of “miracles,” “healings,” and the “various kinds of tongues” in the church today. Furthermore, “it is certain that in the use of these terms of office, the apostle does not affirm that they would be permanent, and essential to the very existence of the church; and from the passage before us, therefore, it cannot be argued that there was to be an order of men in the church who were to be called ‘helps,’ or ‘governments.’ The truth probably was, that the circumstances of the primitive churches required the aid of many persons in various capacities which might not be needful or proper in other times and circumstances” [BARNES]. Whether or not this verse calls for

a permanent arrangement that there should be “governments” in the church, or an order of men entrusted with the sole office of governing, is to be learned not from this passage, but from other parts of the New Testament. Lightfoot contends that the word which is used here and translated “governments” does not refer to the power of ruling, but to a person endowed with a deep and comprehensive mind, one who is wise and prudent [BARNES].

While there is a lot of debate among scholars, this much is clear is: there were those who administered government in the church during the Apostolic Age. The passage does not determine the form, or manner of government, nor does it prove that this particular office, or gift, was to be permanent in the church. Two things may be gleaned from this text:

- (1) In the primitive church there were rulers distinct from the people or church members, to whom these were bound to yield obedience.
- (2) That these rulers were appointed of God - God set them in the church.

As to the question of the permanence of these offices, while this passage alone affirms no position, “a distinction must be made between these offices which were obviously of an extraordinary kind, and which therefore must cease; and those of an ordinary kind, which are essential to the edification of the church in all ages” [BARNES]. That the commission which the apostles received from Christ carried with it certain authority is hardly debatable. They had apostolic authority which was not passed on to other teachers, but it was their practice to ordain leaders (elders) in every church they started. “The infallible guidance of the Spirit was not promised in the same measure to succeeding teachers. But being, in their case, vouched by the power of working miracles, it directed the Christians of their day, to submit implicitly to their injunctions and directions” [BARNES].

VARIOUS KINDS OF TONGUES. This refers to those who are endowed with the gift to speak in different languages, not “unknown tongues.” The gift of tongues “suited the Corinthian penchant for self-expression and the pursuit of personal freedom. This self-centeredness also afflicted the church in other areas (e.g., eating sacrificial foods, women in worship, celebration

of the Lord's Supper). Love for others was an essential need in the Corinthian church, and to that fundamental attribute Paul then turned to pay eloquent tribute" [BKC].

12:29 - ALL ARE NOT. *"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?"* The answer expected to all of these questions in verses 29-30 is no - we might add, "Of course not!" The point is that God has given various gifts to various persons, and each person - and each gift - is necessary for the complete edification of the body of Christ.

12:30 - ALL DO NOT HAVE. *"All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they?"* Again the context demands the answer, "No." This is supported by the Greek text.

12:31 - BUT EARNESTLY DESIRE. *"But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way."* The word "but" implies contrast - rather than earnestly desiring what we may today term power positions in the church, we should earnestly desire "the greater gifts." Rather than earnestly desiring the sensational gifts - which will attract a lot of attention - we should "earnestly desire the greater gifts." The words "earnestly desire" bring to mind the "effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man" in James 5:18. Earnestly desiring the greater gifts, one should pray fervently for them. Desire them and pay for them, always remembering that gifts are given at God's initiative. Paul ranks some spiritual gifts above others, but all are of God.

A STILL MORE EXCELLENT WAY. There is no way that Paul was urging them to be dissatisfied with their gifts, or their place in the body of Christ. He has just "explained that the Holy Spirit determines this, and that all parts are equally necessary. He wanted them, however, to hold the best gifts in the highest estimation by recognizing that the value of an ability does not depend on how spectacular it is but on how much it strengthens the church" [NCWB]. He also wanted them to develop their gifts and use their abilities to the fullest for God, and to be available to the Holy Spirit.

The "more excellent way" is the way of love. There is a poor chapter division here - there were no chapter divisions in the Greek. This verse belongs to chapter 13, the great Love Chapter.

CHAPTER 13

The Thirteenth Chapter of 1 Corinthians ranks with the Model Prayer and the Twenty Third Psalm as favorite passages among believers of all ages. This is the great love chapter, but it also includes references to faith and hope (13:7), to all of the fruits of the Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:22, 23): patience (13:4), faithfulness (13:7), joy (13:6), gentleness (13:5), goodness (13:5), and

kindness (13:4). This love is produced in us as a response to God's love for us, as revealed in and through Jesus Christ. Love for God in the believer overflows in love for others, especially to our brothers and sisters in Christ.

3. The Supremacy of Love - 13:1-13.

At the conclusion of the chapter 12 Paul promised to show the Corinthians a more excellent way than the way in which they were now going at the time. They were so distracted by contentions, divisions, and envy over gifts, that unity was nearly destroyed. Adam Clarke writes:

This was a full proof that love to God and man was wanting; and that without this, their numerous gifts and other graces were nothing in the eyes of God; for it was evident that they did not love one another, which is a proof that they did not love God; and consequently, that they had not true religion. Having, by his advices and directions, corrected many abuses, and having shown them how in outward things they should walk so as to please God, he now shows them the spirit, temper, and disposition in which this should be done, and without which all the rest must be ineffectual [CLARKE].

There are three divisions in Chapter 13:

1. The values of love, 13:1-3
2. The virtues of love, 13:4-7
3. The victories of love, 13:8-13

13:1 - IF I SPEAK WITH THE TONGUES. *“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.”* This is the third class condition, a supposable case (maybe yes, maybe no). “The tongues of men” means a known human language. “Of angels” seems to denote ecstatic utterances, or unknown tongues. Writers have compared this with a fragrant rose, noting that it is a pity to dissect this gem or to pull to pieces this rose, petal by petal. Fortunately, Paul's language calls for little critical commentary here because it is the language of the heart. It is, without a doubt, the greatest, strongest, deepest, and the most beautiful thing that ever flowed from the pen of the Apostle Paul. Without a doubt, some of the Jewish believers would have found this passage comparable to Job and Isaiah, the great Old Testament literary masterpieces.

Paul cuts through the haze in introducing the Thirteenth Chapter of 1 Corinthians, a chapter that is placed between chapters 12 and 14 by no accident. Of course, this was one simple unit at the time these Corinthian Christians first read it. There were no chapter divisions in the

original and the chapter divisions help in a practical way, but at times the divisions are unfortunate in that they do not always follow the natural divisions in the subject matter. Because of the beauty and loftiness of the language this chapter is often read and studied as a separate unit, without attention to the context. We may read it by itself at any time and be blessed by it, but the fullest meaning is only realized when we keep it in the context of Paul's great discourse on the gifts of the Spirit.

As the Neo-Pentecostal movement of the later part of the Nineteenth Century gained momentum many churches were divided over some of the basic tenets of the movement. I was pastor of a church with a large number of young people. One of our deacons was the director of the youth department, and one day he told me he needed to talk with me about something. When we were seated in my study he said, "I think we have a potential problem in the youth department that you should know about. I don't know that there is anything you can do about it but I think you should know what is going on. A couple of teachers are going to a charismatic church on Saturday nights and then on Sunday morning they are talking with their Sunday School classes about what is happening. I am concerned about the effect it can have on our church. Too many churches have already been split over this movement." Many churches had indeed been divided over the charismatic movement and he had a right to be concerned. These ladies grew up in a Pentecostal church and even though they have been Baptists for a long time, they were open to the teachings and the experiences associated with the movement.

Bob Moore was not only a committed Christian, he was grounded in the Scripture, he was experienced in dealing with church problems, and he loved our church. He was also my friend. As a matter of fact, Bob was a friend to all those whom the Lord called to His service. He understood the pastor's vulnerability and sought to protect him from needless controversy. Some time later, after I had been called to another church, I mentioned a difficult situation that had been imposed on me. Bob said, "Johnny, your deacons should never have let you get into that position. Not one of your deacons had his job on the line but yours was." I thank God for that kind of insight, especially when I recall a deacon or two who have deliberately put me in harm's way for no better reason than that I could discern than simply to watch me squirm. Bob was concerned about a potential problem but he had rather try to deal with it than to involve his pastor in a controversy that has often dealt with more from the standpoint of emotions rather than sound doctrines.

The following Sunday I preached on verses from chapters 12, 13, and 14 to a packed house.

I had spend a lot of time in prayer and Bible study before preaching that Sunday morning. As I moved from a series of points into the conclusion, I stressed that we might not all agree on this subject, but I wanted to make one appeal to anyone who advocated a few key tenets of the charismatic movement. I said, "If you believe in the ecstatic elements of this movement I want you to know that I am not going to condemn you. We can agree to disagree, we can disagree agreeably. But there is one request I want to make. Before you try to impose this movement on

our church I want you to read Chapter Thirteen very carefully because if you try to bring tongue speaking and things like that into this church you will meet with resistance and you will need to practice the love stressed in this chapter.” At the close of the service one of the ladies said, “I want to thank you for that message. I don’t agree with you, but I appreciate what you said.” The other lady thanked me for the way I dealt with it. God used that message to help defuse a potentially serious problem.

Before you become entangled in a controversy over the gifts of the Spirit, read this chapter over and over. The Holy Spirit, the giver of all spiritual gifts, is also the divine Author, Preserver, and Illuminator of every word of Holy Scripture. The Holy Spirit is given credit for an incredible array of revelations and interpretations. I recently made the interrogatory statement to a friend, “Wouldn’t it be interesting if the Holy Spirit began revealing the same thing to everyone?”

Tongues are probably mentioned first in this chapter for two reasons. First, the gift of tongues was the least of the gifts of the Spirit. Second, the Corinthian believers were placing undue emphasis on this gift. Barnes writes:

To speak foreign languages was regarded then, as it is now, as a rare and valuable endowment ... The word “I” here is used in a popular sense, and the apostle designs to illustrate, as he often does, his idea by a reference to himself, which, it is evident, he wishes to be understood as applying to those whom he addressed. It is evident that among the Corinthians the power of speaking a foreign language was regarded as a signally valuable endowment; and there can be no doubt that some of the leaders in that church valued themselves especially on it; see 1 Cor. 14. To correct this, and to show them that all this would be vain without love, and to induce them, therefore, to seek for love as a more valuable endowment, was the design of the apostle in this passage [BARNES].

BUT DO NOT LOVE. The Greek word used here for love is *agape*. The Greek word for love between man and woman (and even of an object) is *eros*. The Greek word *phileo* refers to the love that exists in a friendship. *Agape* characterizes God (1 John 4:8) and it was what He manifested in sending His Son to die for us (John 3:16). *Agape* is mental attitude love. It is the only kind of love that can be commanded and the only kind every believer can experience. It can be commanded because it is directed by the mind and not the emotions. It is the *agape* type love that prompts us to minister to the needs of another, even if that person is not especially pleasant. *Agape* seeks the highest good for others, assessing their needs in light of God’s love for them and then taking the action we believe He would have us take. If we do what God commands us to do in His Word, as guided by the Holy Spirit emotions will take care of themselves.

Agape is what motivates us to seek the salvation of the lost and the relief of those who are suffering. If, however, we wait for some warm fuzzy feeling before we witness to the lost person he may die and go to hell before we share the Gospel with him. If we wait until there is a

strong emotional attraction to those who are dirty, destitute, and disorderly, we may never get involved. If we are intimidated by the rich and powerful, they may go to hell and our cowardice will be held against when we stand before the judgment bar of God. What then is our motivation?

- (1) The highest motivation is God's love for us.
- (2) The second highest motivation is our love for Him.
- (3) The third highest motivation is our love for others.
- (4) Other factors may be empathy, sympathy or even guilt.

I have heard a lot of preachers explain that agape is godly love or Christian love. It is interesting that when the New Testament speaks of God's love for the Son it uses *phileo* rather than *agape*. Furthermore, in John 3:19 ("...men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil"), the word is *agape* - evil men *agape* evil things. What is missing here? We need a working definition of the word agape. It denotes a mental attitude kind of love - the only kind that can be commanded. You cannot command one to *phileo* his neighbor - meaning to develop a strong personal friendship with him. You cannot command a young man to fall into love (*eros*) with a certain young lady. But God can command all believers to love one another - and to love lost people.

Paul explains how it works in Romans 8:29, "For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son." Sanctification is being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. In Phil. 2:5, he wrote, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus..." The more you come to think as Jesus thought, the more you are being conformed to the image of Christ. I once heard one of my all-time favorite preachers make a statement on love that I had to question. Speaking of God's command to love one another, he made that statement, "You cannot love everyone, but Christ in you can." After thinking about that comment, I concluded that God did not command Christ to love them, He commanded me to love them. But how can I love people I don't even like? I know - I should not write that! What I am supposed to say is, "It is not the person I don't like, it's his ways." Right? Well, let's face it, I have met some people I did not like. I didn't like their ways, either. But when I recalled that God commands me to love them, and that *agape* means that I must seek their highest good, my first concern was their relationship with Jesus Christ.

Early in my ministry I spend a lot of time visiting a large city jail (Jackson, MS) and the Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman. I saw a number of prisoners saved, and even helped the chaplain, Roscoe Hicks, baptize a lot of prisoners. I saw some very arrogant men in prison - sorry, they were not all suffering from low self-esteem! I saw some people I never would have associated with on the outside. I also saw a few convicted murderers I could enjoy being with a lot more than a few church members I have known - this, of course, was after they had been born-again. I went there because of *agape* love, but after many visits I also developed a *phileo*

love (friendship) with a few. George, the chaplain's assistant, was serving time for burglary. I usually got to the office before the chaplain and visited with George. One morning I arrived to find a new man, Dick, there. He told me that George had been released. Amazingly, the people whose business he had burglarized were outstanding Christians and they helped him get out and gave him a job. I have not seen George since then, but I will never forget him, nor will I forget that I held both kinds of love for him.

Agape is more than mutual affection; it expresses unselfish esteem of the object loved. Christ's love for us is undeserved and without thought of return. The love that His followers show for others is of the same nature.

A NOISY GONG OR A CLANGING CYMBAL. Paul says that even if he spoke in tongues of men and angels, if he did not love others, he had already become "a noisy gong, or a clanging cymbal." These things were associated with pagan worship, as these Corinthians well knew.

13:2 – THE GIFT OF PROPHECY. *"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."* Paul is not condemning these important gifts, nor is he trying to minimize them. Look back to 12:1-11 to see the great value he placed on the gifts of the Spirit. What he is saying here is that love is superior to these gifts, and at the same time, essential to them. Faith, even the faith which removes mountains, is nothing without love.

The gift of prophecy was essential to the early church. In the period before the New Testament was completed, there must have been many questions for which there was no satisfactory answer except through direct revelation by means of those whom God chose to bless with the gift of prophecy. No doubt, those who brought them the sure and certain word of the Lord, just like the prophets of old, were held in high esteem by many believers.

ALL MYSTERIES. Paul is not here claiming to know all mysteries, but many were revealed to him by the Lord. He did not know all mysteries, but even if he had, that information would have been as nothing without love. It is interesting that he uses the word "all" before mysteries, knowledge, and faith. There must have been many who would have loved to have had "all mysteries," "all knowledge," and "all faith." Faith here is the faith to work miracles, such as healing the sick. This does not denote the saving faith of Ephesians 2:8. Some of the Corinthians boasted because they had a measure of some of these gifts. Paul is saying that even if you had "all" these highly prized gifts, it would be meaningless without love.

This passage proves that it was one part of the prophetic office, as referred to here, to be able to understand and explain the "mysteries" of religion; that is, the things that were before unknown, or unrevealed. It does not refer to the prediction of future events, but to the great and deep truths connected with religion; the

things that were unexplained in the old economy, the meaning of types and emblems; and the obscure portions of the plan of redemption. All these might be plain enough if they were revealed; but there were many things connected with religion which God had not chosen to reveal to people [BARNES].

Without love (*agape*) the ecstatic gifts (vs. 1) are worthless. The word Paul uses for “I am nothing” is not *outheis*, (nobody), but *outhen eimi*, (an absolute zero). Equally worthless are the teaching gifts (prophecy, knowledge of mysteries, and “all knowledge”) if the individual does not have genuine *agape* love. “This includes knowledge both of what God had revealed long ago, and of secrets God was just then making known to his people (see Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:3-6)” [NCWB].

While we might question whether or not the child of God can effectively exercise the most important gifts of the Spirit without love, it is safe to say that, if one could possess the faith to move mountains and did not have love, then he is nothing. Paul states it in the first person, understanding its application both to himself and to those who would read this letter. It may be inferred here that there were members of the church at Corinth who boasted of their spiritual gifts who did not love other members of the same church, not to speak of other people. The intensity and multiplicity of the divisions in the church make that clear.

There have been many churches in recent decades that have been divided over spiritual gifts, the split usually coming when one who feels especially blessed with certain ecstatic gifts decides to spread those gifts throughout the church, or transport them to other churches. I am still waiting to hear of a church that has been split over the gift of *agape* kind of love. I will concede the point that some may have been split over an abuse of *phileo* love (in the sense of misplaced friendships, or betrayal of friends) and far too many churches have been troubled by the abuse of romantic love (*eros*) - to be more accurate here, lust. Divisions do not occur because of the Second Great Commandment, or the Golden Rule.

13:3 - IF I GIVE. “*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.*” This is a proof enough that charity, in our sense of the word, is not what Paul has in mind. There are philanthropists who give great sums to feed and clothe the poor. For years now entertainers, athletes, and politicians have had to have a cause. They like to be identified with groups that reach out to the poor and needy around the world. Televisions viewers are bombarded with appeals to “send money naow” - if you care you will send money naow!

Charity, in the modern sense of the word, might lead one to give everything he owns to feed, clothe, and shelter the needy, but “almsgiving can go no farther than to give up all that a man possesses in order to relieve the wants of others. The word Paul uses (*Psomiso*), which is translated “to feed the poor,” means to divide into morsels or bits of food, and put them into the mouth like feeding an infant; which implies carefulness and tenderness in applying the bounty thus freely given” [CLARKE]. Under certain circumstances both philanthropy and martyrdom

have been used to glorify God and advance His kingdom. Both, however, without love are without profit. “Profits me nothing” is literally, I am helped nothing.

I SURRENDER MY BODY TO BE BURNED. Martyrdom followed early believers like a shadow. Many do not realize that it did not end with the early church, or with Constantine’s decree making Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire. Jesus made no secret of the risk in following Him. In fact, the Greek word translated “witness” is the word from which we get the English word “martyr.” There were early believers who foolishly sought martyrdom for the glory they envisioned. By using the expression “surrender my body to be burned” could hardly be an allusion to early Christians martyrs, even though there had been some (Stephen and James are examples). But the time of mass slaughter of Christians was still a few years off at the time Paul wrote this. It would certainly be applicable when the time would come that many early believers would court martyrdom. It might also have been a reference to the three Hebrew children who were thrown into the fiery furnace. Vincent’s comments are excellent:

Bishop Lightfoot finds a possible reference to the case of an Indian fanatic who, in the time of Augustus, burned himself alive at Athens. His tomb there was visible in Paul’s time, and may have been seen by him. It bore the inscription: “Zarmochegas the Indian from Bargaosa, according to the ancient customs of India, made himself immortal and lies here.” Calanus, an Indian gymnosophist who followed Alexander, in order to get rid of his sufferings, burned himself before the Macedonian army (see Plutarch, “Alexander”). Martyrdom for the sake of ambition was a fact of early occurrence in the Church, if not in Paul’s day. Farrar says of his age, “both at this time and in the persecution of Diocletian, there were Christians who, oppressed by debt, by misery, and sometimes even by a sense of guilt, thrust themselves into the glory and imagined redemptiveness of the baptism of blood.... The extravagant estimate formed of the merits of all who were confessors, became, almost immediately, the cause of grave scandals. We are horrified to read in Cyprian’s letter that even in prison, even when death was imminent, there were some of the confessors who were puffed up with vanity and pride, and seemed to think that the blood of martyrdom would avail them to wash away the stains of flagrant and even recent immoralities” (“Lives of the Fathers,” ch. vi., sec. 2) [VINCENT].

13:4 – LOVE IS PATIENT. *“Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant...”* In verse 4-7 we see the virtues of love, a portrait of genuine Christian love, its virtues painted in marvelous harmony on the palette a godly life. Paul now shifts from the first person to the third person and replaced himself with a personification of love. “Some have seen in verses 4-6 the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23); others have seen here a description of Christ Himself. As different sides of the same coin, both are applicable and provided a solution to the many Corinthian problems. Love, defined by 14 predications (half of them negative, half positive) constituted the “way” [BKC]. Paul’s illustrations, or descriptions,

of love are all drawn from its effect in regulating our conduct toward others, or our contact with them.

The “reason” why he made use of this illustration, rather than its nature as evinced toward “God,” was, probably, because it was especially necessary for them to understand in what way it should be manifested toward each other. There were contentions and strifes among them; there were of course suspicions, and jealousies, and heart-burnings; there would be unkind judging, the imputation of improper motives, and selfishness; there were envy, and pride, and boasting, all of which were inconsistent with love; and Paul therefore evidently designed to correct these evils, and to produce a different state of things by showing them what would be produced by the exercise of love [BARNES].

Now, after emphasizing how essential love is, the Apostle Paul begins not by defining it but by describing what love in action is like. For one thing, love is patient. The New Testament word for patience means a willingness to bear up under, to endure, to persevere. The word rendered “patient” here denotes slowness to anger or passion; longsuffering, patient endurance, forbearance. It is opposed to a quick temper, overaction, overly passionate expressions and thoughts, profanity, and to irritability. It denotes the state of mind which is willing to try to bear up under oppression, and not to retaliate when oppressed or provoked, and when one seeks to injure us. See also, Rom. 2:4; 9:22; 2 Cor. 6:6; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:12; 1 Tim. 1:16; 2 Tim. 3:10; 4:2; 1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 3:15.

LOVE IS KIND. This is the only time this word (*chreôsteuetai*) is used in the New Testament. The word connotes one who good-natured, gentle, tender, affectionate. Love is never harsh, sour, morose, or ill-natured, never crude, caustic, or critical.

The idea is, that under all provocations and ill-usage it is gentle and mild. “Hatred” prompts to harshness, severity, unkindness of expression, anger, and a desire of revenge. But love is the reverse of all these. A man who truly loves another will be kind to him, desirous of doing him good; will be “gentle,” not severe and harsh; will be “courteous” because he desires his happiness, and would not pain his feelings [BARNES].

At his inauguration as President of the United States, George Bush expressed his desire for a kinder, gentler America, to the derision of opponents. Whatever one thinks about his presidency, I think even his political enemies will concede now that he was basically a kind and gentle man. Politicians and a biased media can make minced meat of a kind and gentle man - and they did with President Bush. It would seem that the Christian who shows godly kindness for other people would be popular, or at the least, be left alone. However, the world despises Jesus Christ and everything that reminds it of Him, including virtues which promote peace in society.

Ronald Reagan, before his illness began to effective his mental faculties, called

conservative radio talk show host Rush Limbaugh to thank him for something he had said. During the television conversation Limbaugh reminded him of how viciously the media and other critics attacked him, and of many of the charges they brought against him. He observed that he had never heard the former president attack those critics, and he had never heard him say anything ugly to them or about them. When they really got ugly, Mr. Reagan would simply shake his head, smile, and say, "Well, there you go again." That seemed to make some more irate because they could not get him to give them anything to use against him - they used it but the people were not swayed by the reports. Ronald Reagan responded that he had not lost his temper and attacked his critics because he was perfectly willing to let history decide whether or not he was right or wrong. My point is not to defend any particular action of Ronald Reagan, but to recall his kindness under fire.

LOVE IS NOT JEALOUS. Love is never jealous or envious. The word comes from the Greek word meaning to be zealous. It is commendable when one is zealous for the right things, but condemned when it takes the negative road - when it is zealous for the wrong things. Love is not grieved because another possesses a greater portion of earthly, intellectual, or spiritual blessings. "Those who have this pure love rejoice as much at the happiness, the honor, and comfort of others, as they can do in their own. They are ever willing that others should be preferred before them" [CLARKE].

In a practical sense, one may be jealous of his peers and envious of those who are, or who are deemed to be above his station in life. Either hurts the individual who harbors those feelings, nurtures the memories, and feeds the emotions to keep them alive and growing. Those attitudes may be held in check for a while, but there is always the danger that they will motivate the individual to take actions, or say things that will hurt the other person. When jealousy and envy are permitted to run their course, it is not a very pretty thing. The effects on the individual and the church are the opposite of love.

Lord, what a thoughtless wretch was I,
To mourn, and murmur, and repine,
To see the wicked placed on high,
In pride and robes of honour shine!
But oh! their end, their dreadful end!
Thy sanctuary taught me so;
On slipp'ry rocks I see them stand,
And fiery billows roll below.

Now let them boast how tall they are,
I'll never envy them again;
There they may stand with haughty eyes,

Till they plunge deep in endless pain.

Their fancied joys how fast they flee,
Like dreams as fleeting and as vain;
Their songs of softest harmony.
Are but a prelude to their pain,
Now I esteem their mirth and wine.
Too dear to purchase with my blood;
Lord, 'tis enough that thou art mine,
My life, my portion, and my God.

(Author unknown)

LOVE DOES NOT BRAG. The KJV has “vaunteth not itself...” It denotes the vainglorious, the braggart (only here in the New Testament). The braggart either sees himself as superior to others, or seeks to establish superiority over them through boasting. From Mongolian folklore comes this helpful little fable of the boastful frog.

Two geese were about to start southward on their annual autumn migration, when they were entreated by a frog to take him with them. On the geese expressing their willingness to do so if a means of conveyance could be devised, the frog produced a long stalk of grass, got the two geese to take it one by each end, while he clung to it by his mouth in the middle. In this manner the three were making their journey when they were noticed from below by some men.

The men loudly expressed their admiration for the device and wondered who had been clever enough to discover it. Whereupon the vainglorious frog opened his mouth to say, "It was I," lost his hold, fell to the earth, and was dashed to pieces.

Moral: When you have a good thing going, keep your mouth shut! [BI].

I once heard the joke about a man who died and went to Heaven. He had been a survivor of the Jamestown Flood and had never missed an opportunity to tell everyone he met about it. In fact, his neighbors dreaded his visits because he always “topped” every story with his account of the Jamestown Flood. When he arrived in Heaven he began stopping everyone he saw and telling them how he had survived the Jamestown Flood. Finally he met a man and after a brief greeting, asked, “How would you like to hear about how I survived the Jamestown Flood?” The man said, “I will be glad to listen to your story, but before you begin, maybe I should tell you that my name is Noah.”

IS NOT ARROGANT. The KJV has “is not puffed up...” To puff one’s self out like a pair of bellows. Bragging is an outward manifestation, this is an inner attitude. One problem with this

inner attitude is that it almost finds a way to express itself - a word, a look, or some action by which one seeks to assert superiority over another - or all others. I have often been amused when I have observed that often those who are the most arrogant have the least excuse for it!

13:5 - DOES NOT ACT. Godly love “*does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered...*” Genuine love - the love that God gives through the ministry of the Holy Spirit is expressed in both positive and negative terms. Here we have it stated negatively. There are some things that love will not do. It will not lead one to violate the Ten Commandments, the Golden Rule, or the any of the other ethical principles set down by Jesus Christ. Christian love will never do anything that is unbecoming of a Christian. Sadly, there are those who profess to love fellow church members but never hesitate to say unkind things to them or about them. That is not the *agape*’ kind of love.

DOES NOT SEEK ITS OWN. *Agape*’ does not lead one to place his own interests above the interests of others. It is not selfish or self-centered.

IS NOT PROVOKED. The word denotes irritation, vexation, or annoyance. It is used in New Testament only here and Acts 17:16. *Agape*’ does not “fly off the handle” over every offense.

DOES NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT A WRONG SUFFERED. To count up, to take account of as in a ledger or notebook. Love does not live with a view to settle the account. *Agape*’ does not keep score.

13:6 - DOES NOT REJOICE. “*Does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth...*” There are those who rejoice in unrighteousness. In Romans 1:32 we see this spirit: “And although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also *give hearty approval to those who practice them*” (emphasis added). The depth of degradation is seen in the attitude of those who rejoice in ungodly things, and we should never be surprised that fallen man can, and will, rejoice in evil. Many try, for one reason or another, to hide their sins, but others flaunt them.

REJOICES WITH THE TRUTH. Truth here is personified as opposed to unrighteousness. Paul returns at this point to the positive side of the picture (vs. 4) after the remarkable negatives of verses 4 and 5. *Agape*’ not only values the truth, it rejoices in it.

13:7 – BEARS ALL THINGS. “*Bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*” Peter expresses it so well: “Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8). Love covers, protects, forbears.

The *agape*' type love we are dealing with here is not naive, but it is forgiving. Parents may strongly disapprove of the behavior of a wayward son or daughter, but love them through trials, rebellion, and various sins, never approving of the sin but holding out love and hope for restoration.

Love does not lower the standards. It does not compromise Christian ethics, which are simply a reflection of New Testament morality. I could not have loved my sons any more than I did when they were growing up, but the standards set for our home were those set by God Himself in His holy Word. My first loyalty was to God and then to them. Compromise in the area of ethics and morality does not show love for our children, it simply dishonors God before them. The "for me and my house" attitude holds before our children a loving heavenly Father who is love - and at the same time He is holy. Because He loves us He wants to forgive and restore us when we sin, but because He is holy He must deal with sin. He deals with it through forgiveness if we repent, or by judgment if we do not.

BELIEVES ALL THINGS. *Agape*' is not gullible, but has faith in God and in godly people. Most of us can think of parents who refuse to believe their children can do any wrong, even when presented with the evidence. An irate parent may rant and rave against a teacher or principal when her child has been disciplined, predictably proclaiming, "My child would never do anything like that!" "I trust my child." Or, "My child would never lie to me." That kind of love is a filial (maternal or paternal - family) type of love, but it is not the *agape*' type of love. Once a child gets a parent to defend him when he is in the wrong the parent becomes an enabler, encouraging bad behavior.

Christian love is not filled with doubt for everyone else. It is realistic, but not cynical. An individual visits the pastor to talk about a problem. The pastor believes in the person, seeks to focus on positive things which will encourage him in dealing with an issue. He believes the person can reach the point that he will face the problem more honestly and make the best decisions in time. But that does not mean that he is naive enough to believe every thing the person says in a time of crisis or stress. The person may be in a state of denial: "I know I didn't do anything to cause her to leave me!" The pastor believes in the person is sincere, and he has faith that God will provide comfort, guidance, and strength. At the same time he knows that the individual may be speaking from anger or frustration, or pain, and in doing so he may not be facing the truth in this situation.

HOPES ALL THINGS. *Agape*' sees the bright side. It does not despair. Hope in the New Testament is synonymous with assurance. This kind of hope is never just wishful thinking. Earlier in the Twentieth Century many people used the words "hope" and "wish" almost synonymously. Are you going to the fair - I hope to. Will you see your grandchildren Christmas - I hope so. Yet, in a time of despair they might say, "I don't see any hope." What they were saying was, "I don't see any way out of this." The Great Depression, the Dust Bowl day in Kansas and Oklahoma challenged people to look for any hope of escape. Some gave up, others committed suicide. Still others migrated to Oregon or some other place because they had hope.

A young man named Miller, a distant relative of mine, left north Mississippi and went to Oklahoma looking for work. One morning when his car would not start he ran five miles to work, knowing that if he had been late someone else would have been given his job. If this man had been like many today he would have lost his job anyway, but he lived in a day when punctuality was taught as a virtue. He never thought of just getting to work on time, he was always early. He allowed for car trouble or for some other delay. Hope for himself and his family lay in that job and he guarded that hope with the “Protestant Work Ethic” one used to hear so much about. When he found work he began looking for something for his brothers, and in time the several members of the family amassed a lot of wealth. One of the brothers, Clyde Miller, became a WW II hero, a successful rancher, a business man with interests throughout the region. But in talking with me it was obvious that Clyde has not forgotten those days when they placed their faith in God and trusted Him to provide work for that older brother in the oil fields in Oklahoma.

ENDURES ALL THINGS. *Agape*’ preserves. It carries on like a seasoned soldier, facing obstacle after obstacle without thought of giving up. If anyone asks me for an example of a Christian, I might point to evangelists like Billy Graham, television ministers like Charles Stanley, great pastors like Adrian Rodgers, great pulpiteers like the late R. G. Lee. I might think of the missionaries, William Carey, David Brainerd, Luther Rice, or Lottie Moon. There are always the suffering saints and martyrs whose testimonies have been preserved in books. However, if I were asked to point to good examples of Christians, I think I would start with two women whom I have had the privilege of observing more than any others, my mother, Claudine Sanders, and my wife, Rebecca (Becky). In all my life I have never known anyone for whom I had greater respect than those two women.

Twelve years after my mother’s death, following an eight year battle with cancer, I preached a revival in my home town of Sledge, Mississippi. During that week numerous people talked with me about my mother’s faith and her character. This was not our home church, but they all had know her and they all knew of her love for her Savior. Even after she had been bedridden for several years, as long as she could respond, when anyone asked, “How are you?”, her response was a smile and, :I’m fine.” She witnessed as long as she could speak. I was amazed at the number of people whom god blessed through my mother that we did not know about until after her death. Like Daniel, she “purposed in her heart” to be faithful to her Lord during those long years of terminal illness, including those final years in which she was bedridden.

Love “endures all things.” Any pastor who has been in the work very long has faced numerous trials. Sadly, as America moved into the Post-Christian era in the middle of the Twentieth Century church members ceased to hold the pastor in the same esteem their parents and grandparents had. Forced terminations have been far too common, and often times the issue has been something over which the pastor had little or no control. I served one church for fifteen

years and during that time the Sunday School enrollment increased for a few years and then it began to decline. Some of the people kept remember when they had fifty in a children's choir or when they had twice as many in Sunday School. They had forgotten that in those days there was a family on every forty acre farm. There were no forty acre farms anymore. Almost every young person who graduated from high school went on to college or found a job in a larger city and never returned to the community. For fifteen years we led our association (twenty seven churches) in funerals. My predecessor told me they led the association in funerals for the ten years he was there. It was simply a matter of urbanization and nothing was going to stop it.

There were, however, people who could not understand why attendance was down. God provided strong support from a faithful and supportive nucleus, but there were many times when I knew I was blamed - someone must always be blamed! I was blamed by deacons who never reached one person for the Lord in fifteen years, Sunday School teachers whose classes only added new members once a year by promotion from a younger class. During those times my family and I had to endure a lot of things we do not like to recall. There are, in spite of all the negative things, many things I recall with joy and thanksgiving. I remember those who supported me from the first day to the last. I remember the courageous and the faithful. I remember those who refused to compromise.

I especially remember the times when I would be sitting in the den when Becky would come down the hall with her Bible and say, "Let me show you what I just read." Invariably it was something I needed at that very moment. Becky has had to endure a lot of things. Love for her husband and children is one kind of love that motivated her; love for friends is another; but the love that enabled her to endure those things in the right spirit was the *agape*' type of love.

13:8 - LOVE NEVER FAILS. *"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."* *Agape*' is a mental attitude type of love which is commanded by God of His children, and as such it is different from love that is of this world. You cannot command *phileo* (personal friendship), you cannot command *eros* (romantic love), but God can command *agape*' because it is controlled and directed by the mind - the mind which is under the control of the Holy Spirit.

Agape' is a permanent gift, not a temporal one. It is a permanent gift and it will never fail. In our finite way we may fail to appreciate the fact that it never fails when we are rejected, when we are rebuffed, or even when we are discouraged. What this verse tells us is that if we apply *agape*' love in all relationships, if we are both motivated and mobilized by mental attitude love it will never fail. We may neither see nor appreciate the success, but that is in God's hands. Abraham never had a clear legal deed to all the land God gave him, but he knew it was his because God said it was his.

GIFTS OF PROPHECY, THEY WILL BE DONE AWAY. The gifts of prophecy to which Paul refers here are gifts the Holy Spirit bestowed upon certain individuals in the early church in order for God to communicate to believers divine truth, doctrine, or His will purpose

for certain persons at a particular time in the history of the church. God, at His Own discretion, can do anything He wants to do at any time - with any one. However the particular gift of prophecy here was apparently to serve His purpose for that time in the history of the church, but there would come a time when it would cease to be given.

TONGUES...WILL CEASE. Sorry, I did not say that, God did! The gift of tongues was a real, supernatural phenomena during that special period. What period? The early church. Can I be more specific? I believe I can and I will address that in the discussion of verse 10. Does that mean that here has been no genuine case of individuals “speaking in tongues” since that time? No, there have been many examples, both in Christian and pagan circles. But is this a gift for which Christians should pray fervently today? Gifts are given at God’s initiative, not at man’s request, and not because a certain few suddenly attain a mysterious level, or have a mystical experience at which time they begin speaking in tongues. If it serves God’s purpose he can do anything He elects to do. But should we seek the gift of tongues. No! Why should we be pleading with God for gifts that, as a rule, ceased at a certain time in the past. Far better to pray for love. The better we understand *agape*’ love the more we will desire it. We are not talking about a warm fuzzy feeling. It is not an emotional experience, but a gift from God which is directed by the Spirit of God, Who indwells the child of God to enable him to reach out to others whom God has created in His Own image so that He can redeem them for His purpose, or bless the saved according to His purpose.

KNOWLEDGE...WILL BE DONE AWAY. The gift of knowledge served a purpose in the early church, but there would come a time when it would become inoperative, just like the gifts of prophecy and tongues. The word translated, “will be done away” (*katargew*) means to become idle or inoperative. All these gifts, prophecy, tongues, and supernatural knowledge will pass away. But what about these people who get “a word of knowledge” (at exactly the same time in every program” on television? Does this mean that God does not communicate with people today? It doesn’t mean that at all. Does it mean that no one is given any knowledge about future events? Our primary source of knowledge comes from the inspired, inerrant Word of God, the Bible. At the beginning of the Letter to the Corinthians Paul stressed that certain truths are spiritually discerned - lost people cannot under the deeper truths of the Kingdom of God. That has not changed. What has changed is that we no longer need those revelations as they did in the early church - before the New Testament was completed and distributed.

Gifts of knowledge, prophecy, and tongues were common in the early church, but this is not God’s normal method of operation today. He is God, and I spell it with a capital letter - He can do anything He chooses, at any time. I was attending a colloquy at Luther Rice Seminary in 1978 when Dr. Hollis Green introduced General Jerry Curry, a three-star Air Force General who had earned the Doctor of Ministry degree from the school that pioneered the degree program so that he could work with his thirteen chaplains out in Colorado Springs to establish a more effective chaplaincy program. The Air Force had to approve the degree and Luther Rice Seminary - the Air Force “wouldn’t let any of their people be associated with anything second

rate.” After Dr. Green had shown the general around the school he dropped him off at the airport in Jacksonville, Florida. Within minutes Mrs. Hollis Green answered the phone to hear a man say, “This is Jerry Curry. Tell Dr. Green there is a fire brewing at the seminary.” Dr. Green was as baffled as she, but jumped into his car and headed back to the school. This message was from a no non-sense three star general! But what could it mean? As he drove he tried to recall controversy that might have been ignited - but how would General Curry know?

Arriving at the school, he began a careful, methodical inspection. He saw no one there, and he smelled no smoke - just in case he meant a literal fire! As tempted as he was to give it up and go home, he couldn't get past the fact that three star generals do not play practical jokes - not this kind, anyway. Finally he reached the third floor and opened a door to find a wooden chair against a space heater. It was so hot it was almost ready to ignite. A fire was brewing at the seminary! Do I believe God revealed this to Jerry Curry? I sat with General Curry, I shook hands with him and looked him in the eyes. I met his wife - and read her book, *The General's Lady*. I believe it. But I also know that the gift of prophecy and the gift of knowledge ceased to be the Lord's normal means of communicating with His people at a certain time - a time He alone really knows.

Paul's point is that Christian love will never come to an end. But according to God's plan, gifts would, “though not necessarily all at the same time. Prophecy, for example, was a gift given for the founding of the Body of Christ (Eph. 2:20)” [RSB].

13:9 - WE KNOW. “*For we know in part and we prophesy in part...*” We know “in part,” as opposed to whole. Those who think they know it all have a lot to learn! Here on this earth we have but little knowledge even of earthly things, let alone heavenly things. Even the most intelligent people here on earth have but limited knowledge - and amazingly, only the more intelligent are most aware of how much they do not know. I met and talked with Nigel Lee in 1998 when he was introduced at the Auburn Avenue Presbyterian Church, Monroe, Louisiana. The pastor who introduced him told us that Dr. Lee had ten earned doctorates. Dr. Jan Mercer is a creation scientist who spent years investigating available evidence in the area of origins and is absolutely convinced that the available evidence supports a special creation. Dr. Mercer was a professor of biology in Texas and she is currently a member of the Cambridge Graduate School faculty, of which I am honored to be a member. I once heard Dr. Mercer say that she believes that Dr. Henry Morris, founder of the Institute for Creation Research, has one of the top five minds in America. All the knowledge Dr. Lee and Dr. Morris have accumulated is insignificant in comparison with what all of us will possess in Heaven.

As a youth and young adult, I heard R. G. Lee preach many times on television and in person. I had rather hear R. G. Lee preach than any other person I have ever heard - and I am not alone in that. The leading preachers in America called him “the Prince of Preachers.” But as many times as I had heard Dr. Lee, he still surprised me when he spoke at a Ministerial Association banquet when I was a student at Mississippi College and challenged us to memorize

the New Testament. I had won awards for memory work - tied for first place in the state one year! But I could hardly believe Dr. Lee was serious until I learned that he had, in fact, memorized the New Testament. He was brilliant, but the first day in Heaven he was in possession of knowledge he could never have imagined on earth.

When Sir Isaac Newton had made such astonishing discoveries in the laws of nature, far surpassing any thing that had been done by all his predecessors in science from the days of Solomon; one of our poets, considering the scantiness of human knowledge when compared with that which is possessed by the inhabitants of heaven, reduced his meditations on the subject to the following nervous and expressive epigram:—

Superior beings, when of late they saw
A mortal man explain all nature's law,
Admired such wisdom in an earthly shape,
And show'd our NEWTON as we show an ape.

These fine lines are a paraphrase from a saying of Plato, from whom our poet borrows without acknowledging the debt. The words are these... "The wisest of mortals will appear but an ape in the estimation of God." Vid. Hipp. Maj. vol. xi. p. 21. Edit. Bipont [CLARKE].

WE PROPHECY IN PART. The gift of prophecy, and the ability to prophesy, no matter how crucial to the church, especially in the early church, was of limited scope. "The gifts were temporary blessings in an **imperfect** age. One day they would give way to **perfection**, toward which all the gifts pointed" [BKC].

13:10 - THE PERFECT. "*But when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.*" Most older Christians will be more familiar with KJV, "When that which is perfect is come." The word rendered "perfect" means complete full-grown, mature. Here it is neither masculine nor feminine, but neuter. It is not male nor female, but something neutral - apparently not a person but a thing. What is perfect that is not a divine Person? One thing: the Bible. This seems to mean that when the New Testament was completed, when it became a complete canon, there would no longer be a need for these specific gifts. I am not dogmatic about the time when "that which is the perfect comes" for a number of reasons. First, the last New Testament book to be written was Revelation in A.D. 96. Second, it would be many years before the canonization of the books. Third, even after the New Testament was completed it would be centuries - until the invention of the printing press - before man would be capable of producing and circulating large volumes of it. Today the Bible may be found almost everywhere, in many languages, and through various mediums. I have many printed copies, as well as a lot of translations on my computer. The King James Version may be accessed by Internet by people in remote parts of the world.

I have expressed one interpretation of “That which is perfect” but there are other possibilities. Some would point to

- (1) the completion of the canon of Scripture.
- (2) the maturity of the church at the close of the apostolic age.
- (3) the death of believers and their immediate presence with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8).
- (4) the rapture of the church.
- (5) the return of Christ.
- (6) the eternal state.
- (7) the end time events as a unified whole.

To summarize this important passage, Paul says that prophecies, tongues, and knowledge will come to an end because of the nature of their purpose in God’s plan. The time of their cessation (at least for knowledge and prophecy; cf. v. 9) will be when “the perfect (complete) comes.”

It is possible that tongues will cease in and of themselves prior to the ceasing of knowledge and prophecies. The middle voice in Greek is used for "cease" with respect to tongues. The passive voice is used with "fail" and "vanish away" with respect to prophecies and knowledge. The middle voice often speaks of reflexive action, thus indicating that tongues may cease in and of themselves, whereas prophecies and knowledge must be acted on by "the perfect" when it comes [BSB].

13:11 - WHEN I WAS A CHILD. *“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.”* This verse needs little or not commentary - even for a child. “When I was a child,” Paul says, I spoke, thought, and reasoned as a child, in contrast with the way I spoke, thought, and reasoned when I became an adult. “I did away” (perfect active indicative) has the force of “I have put it away for good.” Paul, however is not focused on himself, but “the perfect” (vs. 10). Ryrie points out that there are “stages of growth within the present imperfect time before Christ’s return. After the church began, there was a period of immaturity, during which spectacular gifts were needed for growth and authentication (Heb. 2:3-4). With the completion of the NT and the growing maturity of the church, the need for such gifts disappeared” [RSB].

CHILDISH THINGS. Here we should not think of “childish” in the sense of silly or emotionally immature. “Things” in this verse correspond to tongues, prophecy, and knowledge. The comparison between the adult and the child continues. Elsewhere, Paul, in describing the purpose of gifts, employs the imagery of growth and maturity. According to Ephesians 4:11-16, the gifts were to be used to bring the church from a state of infancy to adulthood.

The word translated “mature” in that passage (Eph. 4:13) is the word translated “perfection” (*teleion*) in 1 Corinthians 13:10. In the Ephesians passage, maturity

is defined as “attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” Such a state will obviously not exist until Christ’s second coming. It would appear that the same perspective was developed in this passage to the Corinthians. Paul applied the illustration to himself (cf. vv. 1-3). The threefold talking, thinking, and reasoning were probably meant to balance the thrice-mentioned gifts (v. 8). With the coming of adulthood, such gifts become *passé*. Paul’s use of the word **became** (*gegona*, a perf. tense verb, probably proleptic; cf. Rom. 13:8; 1 Cor. 14:23) was of course to be understood in the context of the illustration. It does not indicate that he personally or the church collectively had yet arrived at that point (cf. Phil. 3:12). It would not, on the other hand, necessarily rule out a gradual obsolescence of certain gifts as the church progressed toward maturity [BKC].

13:12 - FOR NOW WE SEE IN A MIRROR. *“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.”* “In a mirror” might be paraphrased, “by means of a mirror.” Since ancient mirrors were made of polished metal instead of glass, all who looked into them saw “dimly” to a lesser or greater extent, depending on the quality of the metal and the polish of the surface. The word translated “dimly” denotes an enigma (we see in a mirror obscurely). Corinth was famous for its mirrors.

A city like Corinth, famous for its bronze mirrors, would have particularly appreciated Paul’s final illustration. The perfection and imperfection mentioned in verse 10 were deftly likened to the contrasting images obtained by the indirect **reflection** of one’s face viewed in a bronze mirror and the same face when viewed directly. Such, Paul said, was the contrast between the imperfect time in which he then wrote and the perfect time which awaited him and the church when the partial reflection of the present would give way to the splendor of perfect vision [BKC].

“To see a friend’s face in a cheap mirror would be very different from looking at the friend” [ATR]. Vincent provides more on mirrors of that time:

The thought of imperfect seeing is emphasized by the character of the ancient mirror, which was of polished metal, and required constant polishing, so that a sponge with pounded pumice-stone was generally attached to it. Corinth was famous for the manufacture of these. Pliny mentions stone mirrors of agate, and Nero is said to have used an emerald. The mirrors were usually so small as to be carried in the hand, though there are allusions to larger ones which reflected the entire person. The figure of the mirror, illustrating the partial vision of divine things, is frequent in the rabbinical writings, applied, for instance, to Moses and the prophets. Plato says: “There is no light in the earthly copies of justice or temperance or any of the higher qualities which are precious to souls: they are seen through a glass, dimly” (“Phaedrus,” 250) [VINCENT].

THEN I WILL KNOW FULLY. The word Paul used means to know fully or completely. To all who love both knowledge and wisdom, this promise makes Heaven even more special. I have often thought what it would be like to be able to comprehend all of the Scripture, to know it and understand all of it all the time. I would love to have a perfect knowledge of history, poetry, music, philosophy, and science. Heaven will be a place of enlightenment.

13:13 - FAITH, HOPE, LOVE. *“But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.”* Charity is an unfortunate translation, as we have seen. All the other gifts pass away but these three abide forever. Faith and hope are blessings available to every child. They rank with are the greatest of His blessings, but there is one that is greater - “but the greatest of these is love.” To summarize the notes on love with which I began this chapter, even at the risk of repetition, let me review some basic points. “Love” is a translation of the Greek noun *agape*. In this nominal form the word has only seven possible appearances in secular Greek writings. The writers of the New Testament, for practical purposes, coined the word (or re-coined it) to describe Christian love. *Eros*, the more common Greek word for “love,” is not found anywhere in the New Testament. The Believer’s Study Bible Notes contributes to our understanding of these words:

The appetitive, self-interested love of eros could never describe the selfless giving of Christian love. *Philos* (Gk.) is a term often employed, its general meaning of esteem and affection heightened by a Christian context. There are occasions when *agape* and *philos* are apparently used interchangeably or synonymously. The primary term for Christlike love, however, is the Greek word *agape*. To comprehend precisely what the early disciples meant by *agape*, one must examine the attributes of love listed in vv. 4-8. Here Christian love is not described by feelings but defined in loving acts [BSB].

ABIDE. The word Paul used means to remain, continue, abide; and is applied to persons remaining in a place, in a state or condition, in contradistinction from removing or changing their place, or passing away. Here it must be understood to denote permanency, when the other things of which he had spoken had passed away. The idea is, that faith, hope, and love would “remain” when the gift of tongues should cease. These would survive them all.

And the connection certainly requires us to understand him as saying that faith, hope, and love would survive “all” those things of which he had been speaking, and must, therefore, include knowledge 1 Cor. 13:8-9, as well as miracles and the other endowments of the Holy Spirit. They would survive them all; would be valuable when they should cease; and should, therefore, be mainly sought; and of these the greatest and most important is love [BARNES].

Paul, in contrasting these gifts with those mentioned before, seems to be saying that faith, hope, and love will survive “all” other things of which he had been speaking. If so, he is saying that those other gifts would vanish, or be absorbed by greater gifts and endowments. The time is

coming

when the lesser gifts (temporal gifts) would be useless anyway. But that faith, hope, and love will “abide” forever.

BUT THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE. Faith, hope, and love will “abide” but of “these three.” love (for obvious reasons) is most important and of greatest value.

Not because it would “endure” the longest, for the apostle does not intimate that, but because it is more important to the welfare of others, and is a more eminent virtue than they are. As the strain of the argument requires us to look to another state, to a world where prophecy shall cease and knowledge shall vanish away, so the same strain of argumentation requires us to understand him as saying that faith, and hope, and love will subsist there; and that there, as here, LOVE will be of more importance than faith and hope [BARNES].

This is not to imply that there will be no occasion for faith and hope in heaven. That is not what Paul is saying. Faith is trust in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, and it will be as necessary in heaven as it is on earth. In fact, the great purpose of our salvation is to restore trust in God among those who have been alienated by sin. Without faith Heaven would not be Heaven. The same may be said of hope. “It is true that many of the objects of hope will then be realized, and will be succeeded by possession. But will the Christian have nothing to hope for in heaven? Will it be nothing to expect and desire greatly augmented knowledge, eternal enjoyment; perfect peace in all coming ages, and the happy society of the blessed forever? All heaven cannot be enjoyed at once; and if there is anything “future” that is an object of desire, there will be hope. Hope is a compound emotion, made up of a “desire” for an object and an “expectation” of obtaining it” [BARNES].

Faith and hope pertain to, and benefit the individual, but love pertains to society (to other believers), and without it the Kingdom of God would be less than heavenly. Individuals may be saved by faith and live in hope; but the whole character of the Kingdom of God depends on love. For that reason it is more importance than all other gifts and endowments - more important than prophecy and miracles, and the gift of tongues and knowledge - and its importance is affirmed in part by the fact of its survival. Furthermore, love is the very nature of the kingdom of God. It will bind the Kingdom of God together in a harmonious society. Also attesting to the superiority of love is the fact that love is essential to faith and hope.

4. The Superiority of Prophecy over Tongues - 14:1-24.

Following chapter 13, Paul comes back to the thought in 12:21 and proves the superiority of prophecy to the other spiritual gifts, not counting faith, hope, and love (13:13). This chapter should be studied with chapter 13. It concludes the chapter, or gives an application of the principles set forth in the previous chapter. In 12:31 we are promised “a still more excellent

way.” In chapter 13 that way is described in a beautiful discourse. In 14:1, we have, “Pursue love.” Now read 12:31 and 14:1 together.

Chapter 14 is wholly concerned with the application of the principle which has been revealed in 12:31 - 14:1. In chapter 12, Paul said there is one Spirit, one Lord, and one God, and he enumerated the gifts of that one Spirit. Then he insisted that the unity of the church should be experienced through the variety of gifts. Members should desire the greatest gifts (which are given at the discretion and initiation of the Holy Spirit).

At the point of salvation every Christian is given a gift (or gifts). He was born with certain talents which need to be developed. He is given gifts which need to be developed. You have been given certain gifts by the Holy Spirit. There is nothing more important in your life than your using those gifts to worship God, to win souls to Christ, and to minister to others that you might bring glory to God. You will be held accountable for what you do with your gifts. It would be interesting to know how many Christians can even identify their gifts!

In this chapter, Paul lists a number of reasons that speaking in an intelligible language, or speaking so that the church may be edified, is to be preferred to speaking in an unintelligible language.

His list outlines chapter 14:

1. There is the obvious advantage of being understood (the edification of the church), 2-5.
2. No one edifies the church without delivering that which was understood, any more than the sound of a trumpet in battle unless it is sounded so that it is understood by the army, 6-11.
3. Edification the church is of primary concern, and if one spoke in an unknown tongue, it was his duty to interpret or see that it was interpreted, 12-15.
4. Unknown tongues cause confusion and embarrassment when those who heard them would be ignorant of what was said, and be unable to join in the devotions, 16-17.
5. Paul himself was blessed with more gifts than any of them, yet he prized far more highly the gifts that promoted the edification of the church, though he uttered but five words they could understand, than all the gift of speaking in foreign languages, 18-19.
6. He illustrated the point from the Old Testament, 20-21.
7. The real use of the power of speaking foreign languages was to be a sign to unbelievers, an evidence that the religion was from God, and not to be used

among those who were already Christians, 14:22.

8. The effect of their all speaking with tongues at the same time would be confusion and disorder, and the conviction that they were deranged; but the effect of order, and of speaking intelligibly, would be to convince and convert them, 23-25.

9. Paul gives rules regarding the proper use of tongues, 14:26-32.

10. Rule number one is that order was to be observed (God is the author of peace, not confusion); 14:33.

11. Paul states that on no pretense are women to be allowed to speak in the church, even though they should claim to be inspired, 34-35.

12. He then required all to submit to his authority, and to admit that what he had spoken was from the Lord, 36-37.

13. He concludes by directing them to desire to prophesy, and not to forbid speaking with tongues on proper occasions, but to do all things in decency and order, 38-40.

14:1 – PURSUE LOVE. *“Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.”* Believers should actively “**pursue** love” and at the same time “**desire earnestly** spiritual gifts.” Many people meet in small groups and in church gatherings and exhaust themselves in prayer and in ecstatic worship, pleading for the lesser gifts, especially tongues. If we are going to pursue any gift it must be love. We are to actively and earnestly pursue love with the same commitment the legendary Texas Ranger displayed in pursuit of an outlaw - “he always gets his man.” A lot of factors came into play as the ranger pursued the outlaw, he did not simply hope the criminal would fall into his lap. He had to use his head, he had invest tremendous energy, and he could not quit until he had apprehended his man. The believer should pursue the *agape*’ type of love, never assuming that it is just going to happen.

My pastor friend once said, “You cannot love everyone, but Christ in you can.” It sounded good, but he was as wrong as he could be. The Scripture does not command Christ in me to love other people, it commands me to love them. But I cannot love them apart from the ministry of the indwelling Spirit of God. I do not simply let “Christ in me” love them, I must love them - but I cannot love them unless Christ is in me. I may never experience a close personal friendship (*phileo*) with them, but I can practice a right mental attitude love toward them. I can seek their highest good according to the will and purpose of Jesus Christ. We often think of love as simply an emotion, and emotions are important to us. The total personality involves intellect, emotions, and volition (will). We must obey God’s command to love one another (without waiting for some “feeling” for them) and trust the emotions to the Lord.

We should desire earnestly the gifts of the Spirit, understanding that He decides what gifts He wants us to have. We should pray for love, pray that it will abound, pray that we will grow in godly love daily. Then we must exercise it if it is to grow in us.

This chapter is a continuation of the subject commenced in chapter 12 and continued through chapter 13. In chapter 12, Paul discussed of the various endowments which the Holy Spirit confers on Christians, and had shown that these gifts were bestowed in a different degree on different believers, and yet so as to promote in the best way the edification of the church. It is far better, he said in 12:31, to desire the more eminent of these endowments, and yet there was one gift of the Spirit which is of more value than all others, one which is available to all, one which should be the desire of all believers. That is love. In chapter 13, he shows why love is the superior gift - and the one gift which is to be actively pursued.

These people had placed an unusual value on a lesser gift - speaking in another tongue, a more demonstrative gift and one that obviously was so prized among them that those who spoke in another tongue began to boast of their gift as though it were the superior endowment. Now, in this chapter the subject of chapter 12 is continued with special reference to the subject of "prophecy," as being the most valuable of the miraculous endowments, or the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. To make his point it was necessary to correct an erroneous estimate which they had placed on the gift of tongues, which they had prized beyond measure, possibly because it gave them importance in the eyes of the pagan. They had inflated the value of tongues and devalued the superior gift that would edify the church by speaking in a known and intelligible language. To correct their misconception, he will now show the relative value of these gifts, and stress the superiority of the gift of "prophecy" for the edification of the church.

ESPECIALLY THAT YOU MAY PROPHECY. Prophecy is preferred over tongues for practical reasons: it is clear (vs. 3) and it edifies the church (vs. 4). Prophecy, which could be defined as speaking for God under the inspiration of the Spirit, included foretelling the future, explaining difficult parts of Scripture, and teaching Christian belief and behavior. "Preaching and teaching today correspond to this prophecy, but without the direct divine inspiration, since the Bible contains God's complete message to his church. Paul was telling the Corinthians to desire the gift of prophecy more than any other gift, especially more than speaking in tongues" [NCWB]. Speaking in tongues (in this passage) was to God. Prophesying was delivering the Word of God to people. "In corporate prayer, all should participate, but they cannot if the prayer is unintelligible. Praying which pleases God is neither spiritless mind nor mindless spirit, but prayer in which the mind is tuned to the frequency of the Holy Spirit" [DSB]. Praying in tongues needs interpretation for the mind of the person praying to be actively involved in the prayer, and also for the congregation to be actively involved in worship. The Disciple' Study Bible Notes on Acts 2;1-4 provide an excellent summary of the gifts of the Spirit.

The gift of the Spirit to the church at Pentecost fulfilled Old Testament prophecies concerning the Spirit and Jesus' promises to give the Spirit to His disciples....What God began in the unique Pentecost event has continued

throughout the life of the church. All Christians receive the Spirit... The church received the Spirit at a moment God chose. The church had not become more committed, prayerful, or spiritual. The gift of the Spirit was entirely a matter of grace. The Spirit was given each person in the church, as the tongues of fire separating and resting on each person shows. The Spirit represented a new commitment of God to the covenant relationship summarized in Lev 26:12.... In Ac 2 (and presumably, therefore, Ac 10; 19) the church apparently spoke foreign languages they had not studied (2:8-11); at Corinth some members of the church uttered "sounds" which no one present could understand (1 Co 14:6-19) [DSB].

At Pentecost God gave His Spirit to all His people to witness and prophesy. The accompanying signs were secondary, given to affirm and confirm the gift of the Holy Spirit and enable those early witnesses to share the Gospel at a strategic time (Pentecost) when there were Jews in Jerusalem from all over the Roman world, thus adding many souls to the Kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit gives the church the gifts it needs to witness to the world, thus honoring the Great Commission. What God commands, He equips and enables us to do. We must be ready to receive the gifts God gives but we should not judge one another on the basis of having or not having received certain gifts.

14:2 - ONE WHO SPEAKS IN A TONGUE. “*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.*” As noted in the comments on verse 1, while the saints in Jerusalem at Pentecost spoke in known languages (at least seventeen), these people - or some of them - were speaking in unintelligible sounds. They might pray to God in tongues no one could understand and He will understand the thoughts of their mind and hearts, but no one else will understand them.

What Paul meant by speaking “in a tongue” has the subject of much debate. One view is that Paul uses the word “tongue” (*gloôssa*) against the background of first-century pagan religions. Those holding this view define it as

ecstatic speech similar to that expressed by the sibylla, or female prophetesses. The Cumaen sibyl (cf. Virgil *Aeneid* 6. 77-102) was the most famous of the 10 female prophetesses claimed by various regions. Others see the tongues-speaking in 1 Corinthians as ecstatic speech similar to that of Pythia, the female oracle at Delphi (Plutarch *Moralia* 5. 409e) or similar to the maenads of Dionysus in their ecstatic frenzy (Ovid *Metamorphoses* 3. 534, 710-30; cf. Euripides *Bacchae*). That the Corinthians may have thought of this gift as analogous to the pagan ecstasies is certainly possible, but to suggest that Paul used the term with reference to this pagan background is hardly enlightened scholarship [BKC].

The backdrop for most of Paul’s theological concepts and the usual source of his terms was the Old Testament. “This is evident by Paul’s use of *gloôssa* outside of these three Corinthian chapters. He used the word 21 times in 1 Corinthians 12-14 but only 3 other times in his other letters. Each of Paul’s other uses was either in a quotation from the Old Testament (Ps. 5:9 in Rom. 3:13; Isa. 45:23 in Rom. 14:11) or in an allusion to it (Isa. 45:23 in Phil. 2:11)”

[BKC] . In all three instances he used the word “tongue” as a figure of speech for the statement or confession made. Whether good (Rom. 14:11; Phil. 2:11) or bad (Rom. 3:13) the statement was clearly intelligible.

The same may be said of the meaning of the word *gloôssa* elsewhere in the New Testament. Whether it was used literally of the physical organ (e.g., Mark 7:33; James 3:5; Rev. 16:10) or figuratively of human languages (e.g., Acts 2:11; Rev. 5:9; 7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 17:15), it nowhere referred to ecstatic speech. If it is reasonable to interpret the unknown with the help of the known, the obscure by the clear, then the burden of proof rests with those who find in this term a meaning other than human language. The context of this verse is the assembled congregation in Corinth (1 Cor. 11:2-14:40, esp. 14:4-5) in which utterance in a tongue was given without the benefit of interpretation (cf. vv. 13, 19). Apparently no native speaker of the tongue was present in the assembly (cf. vv. 10-11), and no one was given supernatural enablement to interpret it [BKC].

MYSTERIES. The emphasis here is on unexplained mysteries. The utterances Paul deals with here were mysteries, truths requiring a supernatural disclosure which God had not provided the Corinthians in this particular instance. “As a result, the expression of tongues became an exercise in futility for the assembly as a whole, with only the speaker deriving some benefit (v. 4) in **his spirit** (cf. v. 14), the sentient aspect of his being (*pneuma*; cf. Matt. 5:3; Acts 17:16; 2 Cor. 2:13)” [BKC].

There are many mysteries today associated with tongues, especially when you consider the fact that pagans have actually spoken in tongues. I recall the man who supposedly spoke in an unknown tongue in my neighbor’s home, but was in reality speaking obscenities in German.

SOME SUMMARY POINTS ON TONGUES

NOTE: Jesus never spoke in an unknown tongue. Furthermore, God never commands anyone to speak in an unknown tongue. Charismatic Christians claim that speaking in tongues is proof of spirituality. Some even insist that it is a proof of salvation. One man told me he had never seen anyone who was saved who did not speak in tongues. I said, “Well, you are looking at your first one right now.” Consider these

SEVEN POINTS:

1. Tongues are prophesied in Isaiah 28:11.
 - a. These are other tongues, not unknown tongues.
 - b. Warning to Jews.
 - c. Motivation for church -- learn language and evangelize the world.
2. The prophecy in Isaiah 28:11 was possibly fulfilled in 1 Cor. 14:21. Paul interprets prophecy.

3. Tongues to be discontinued (1 Cor. 13:10). Missionaries today attend a language school. “Why,” asked former missionary and college and seminary president Leo Eddleman, “would God call these missionaries and let them go through college, seminary, and language schools, and then just give this gift to others?”
4. The initial fulfillment of the prophecy of Is. 28:11 is seen in Acts 2.
5. Tongues can be a satanic operation (2 Cor).
6. We see how Satan controls the vocal cords in the Old Testament (Isaiah 8:18-19). Satan controlled the tongue of the serpent in the Garden of Eden.
7. Tongues was a problem at Corinth, so Paul will deal with the problem in chapters 12 - 14.

NINE MISCONCEPTIONS ANSWERED:

1. Nobody is saved by speaking in tongues.
2. Nobody gets the gifts of tongue by being spiritual.
3. Speaking in tongues should never be confused with the filling of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit fills you, you become like Christ instead of speaking in a foreign language or an unknown tongue.
4. Those who received the gift should not have felt superior.
5. Those who lacked the gift should not have felt inferior.
6. Where tongues are listed they are at the bottom of the list.
7. Tongue were effective only when under control of the Holy Spirit.
8. Tongues were a temporary gift.
9. Even though temporary, the gift was so divisive that Paul had to write three chapters to try to straighten it out.

14:3 - PROPHECIES. *“But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation.”* The word translated “prophesies” means either to foretell future events or to forthtell divine truth. In either capacity, the message is intended for the edification of the body of Christ. The office of prophet in the Old Testament was no more important in the communication of divine truth from God to people than the role of the prophet in the early church prior to the completion and circulation of the New Testament.

Here is an important question: Can God not still reveal future events to chosen individuals? Absolutely! Can He not directly reveal a divine message to an individual today? Absolutely! He can and will do anything He chooses to do. Next question: Is this His normal way of reveling His will today? I don’t believe it is. If “that which was perfect” (13:10) is the Bible, then God’s primary, basic, and normal means of communication is through the study of His holy Word under the direction of the divine Author, the Holy Spirit. In Revelation 22:18-19, we have a warning from Jesus Christ of the consequences of adding anything to, or taking

anything from “this book.” Therefore, we must be very careful in consideration of extra-biblical revelations and prophecies.

While one may argue that “this book” concerns the final book of the Bible only, I would remind him that the Revelation was given as the final installment of the Bible, and as such it is at least possible, if not probably, that this applies to the whole canon of Scripture. Can I prove that. Maybe not to your satisfaction, but to me the implications - and consequences - are such that I would never attempt to add to or take from any portion of Scripture. I am too close to that appointment that has already been made for me, at which time I will have to give an account before the divine Author of all Scripture.

The modern day parallel to the office of prophet in the early church is that of the pastor/teacher of the inspired Word. The primary role of the preacher is that of proclaiming the inspired Word and making an application of it so that the lost will be saved, and the saved will grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18), and the church will be edified.

EDIFICATION. Edification means “building up.” The prophet proclaims the Word of God in order to build up, nurture, and develop the church as individual believers and encourage the community. The Old Testament prophet delivered the “thus saith the Word of the Lord” to the people. In the early church, before the New Testament was completed, God communicated His message through certain prophets, like Paul, for the edification of believers. Today the preaching and teaching of the Word of God should be for that same purpose. Prophecy is “Spirit-inspired speech from God that is intelligible and convicts the hearts of the hearers. Prophets edify the church and not simply themselves. For this reason, Paul preferred the gift of prophecy over that of tongues. Prophecy is to be exercised in a spirit of order and not tumult” [DSB].

EXHORTATION. “Exhortation” (*paraklasis*) is the act of calling, begging, or persuading. The word might be translated “encouragement” or “comfort” (calling to one’s side). In the great passage on the Holy Spirit in John 14-16, the Holy Spirit is called the Comforter, meaning “One called along side.” Exhortation involves encouraging one toward a goal.

CONSOLATION. “Consolation” (*paramuthia*) may be translated encouragement, exhortation, or comfort. The idea is to call to one’s side for the purpose of comfort and encouragement. The point Paul is making is that the one who prophesies does so with the purpose of encouraging the saint and for the edification of the church. The one who spoke in a foreign tongue did neither unless there is someone to interpret for him.

14:4 - ONE WHO SPEAKS IN A TONGUE. “*One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church.*” One who “speaks in a tongue” (12:10) without the benefit of the gift of interpretation (12:10), or without an interpreter, might edify himself but not others in the church.

The edification resulted from the fact that the user of a gift experienced the confirmation that he was the individual object of God's grace (cf. 12:18, 28) and able to offer praise to God (14:16). Though he himself would not comprehend the content of that praise, his feelings and emotions would be enlivened, leading to a general exhilaration and euphoria. This was not a bad thing. Paul certainly was no advocate of cold, dispassionate worship. The gifts were not given for personal enrichment, however, but for the benefit of others (12:7; cf. 10:24; 1 Peter 4:10). Personal edification and exhilaration were often natural by-products of the legitimate exercise of one's gift, but they were not the main reasons for its exercise [BKC].

One of the most outstanding Gospel Music personalities in America is Joel Hemphill of Nashville, Tennessee and West Monroe, Louisiana. Hemphill has printed a tract entitled, "Why I Speak in Tongues," in which he deal with many of the same Scriptures verses we are looking at in this chapter. He quotes this verse in the NIV, "A person speaking in tongues helps himself to grow spiritually." I find it interesting that he would quote from the NIV because many who share his position are King James only people ("It was good for Paul and Silas and it's good enough for me").

Mr. Hemphill's tract is a well written, carefully thought defense of his position, and while I disagree with his conclusions, I respect him and his right to interpret this chapter as he feels he is being led.

The emphasis of this verse is not that speaking in tongues will help one grow spiritually, but that while it may help the one doing the speaking, it helps no one else. Hemphill takes issue with a fellow minister who stated that Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 12-14 to discourage speaking with tongues while, as Hemphill writes, "he plainly says in 1 Corinthians 14:5 'I would that **ye all spoke with tongues.**'" To be frank, they were both right. Paul was trying to bring tongue speaking in the church at Corinth under control, and Paul did say that he wished they all spoke in tongues - not just those who were boasting of but all of them. Hemphill proceeded to quote other verses and list various people who have spoken in tongues.

As one might expect, Joel Hemphill quoted Acts 19:2: "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed' (KJV). This is a very unfortunate mistranslation. Paul arrived in Ephesus to find disciples of John the Baptist who were holding services. In an effort to try to determine where these people were in their walk with the Lord, Paul asked them a very pertinent question "**Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?**" Dr. Leo Eddleman was president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary when I was a student there. We spent many hours together in the gym and later on he preached two revivals for me. When he was writing his commentary on Acts (*A Practical and Exegetical Commentary on Acts*) I was doing a lot of research for my own study. We discussed this subject on a number of occasions and I distinctly remember his translating this verse: "Believing, did you receive the Holy Spirit?" This is a literal translation, as Robertson shows:

apparently Paul was suspicious of the looks or conduct of these professed disciples. The first aorist active participle *pisteusantes* is simultaneous with the second aorist active indicative *elabete* and refers to the same event [ATR].

Joel Hemphill is sincere and his life reflects a deep faith in the Lord. To his credit, he does not advocate speaking in tongues in church without an interpreter. For him it is a matter for private worship or prayer. However, the Scripture does not teach that there is “something more” after we are saved. When we are saved we receive the Holy Spirit. How can you receive one Member of the Trinity apart from receiving the whole Trinity?

This is a very sensitive subject for many people. A number of people have been surprised at the attitude of some - I stress, some - charismatics who have become very ugly with those who disagree with them. Jay Adams and John MacArthur have reported “hate” mail from hundreds of charismatics after writing books on the subject. I have visited a number of book stores over the past few years that were reportedly owned or operated by charismatic Christians. Some were well run and well stocked with books of popular writers - with the exception of John MacArthur. The one book I have not seen in those stores is MacArthur’s *Charismatic Chaos*, and that is understandable. Of course they have a right to carry the authors they choose.

My purpose here is not to pick on charismatic Christians. Some of the most sincere and gracious believers I have known are charismatic saints. However, Paul was inspired to write these words: “One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself...” There is no escaping it, it is printed in God’s inerrant Word, so it must be so. Does that mean that the individual who speaks in a tongue does so for the express purpose of glorifying himself? That is not what the Scripture says; it says it “edifies himself.” Since the word means to build up, I would certainly agree that many who speak in tongues are seeking to build themselves up. According to this verse, however, they are not edifying the church.

ONE WHO PROPHESES EDIFIES THE CHURCH. The early Christians who were given the gift of prophecy delivered the “thus saith the Word of the Lord” for the purpose of building up the church. How is the church today edified? I followed George Clark as pastor of Hillcrest Baptist Church in Nederland, Texas in the early seventies. I saw a lot of unchurched people all around the church and there were plans to build four hundred houses beginning four blocks from the church. My great passion was evangelism. I wanted to reach those people. Our Sanctuary was filled for the second service every Sunday morning and I realized that we would not grow until we provided more space. Members told me that my predecessor had stated very clearly that he understood his calling to be in the area of the edification of the body, and he had done an outstanding job of that. My calling was to reach lost people and then to see them grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

How is the edification of the church accomplished today? By preaching and teaching under the guidance, and in the power, of the Holy Spirit. The New Testament has been completed for many centuries now, and it has been mass produced and shipped all over the world. The Gideons International reported November 7, 1999, that they had just added

Macedonia to the list of nations in which they distribute the Word of God, bringing the total to 183 nations. Edification is accomplished when, under the control of the Holy Spirit, the message of God is made clear in the proclamation, interpretation, and application of the Gospel. There is, of course, no edification that is not grounded in prayer and Bible study.

14:5 - I WISH. *“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.”* To interpret this as meaning that Paul is saying that all believers should desire for themselves the gift of tongues is to miss what he is saying here. Such a conclusion is drawn, not from exegesis (taking our from the Scripture) but eisegesis (putting your thoughts into the Scripture - reading your thoughts into it). On a human level, Paul wished they “all spoke in tongues” - that might have stopped some of the boasting and healed some of the divisions. Spiritual gifts, however, are given at the discretion of a Sovereign Lord. He makes the decisions.

Let me stress that at that point in the history of the church - before the Scriptures were completed, printed, and distributed - there were those to whom God gave the gift of tongues in order that those individuals might witness to those who spoke and understood a different language - a different known language. The subject here is not an “unknown tongue” or unintelligible sounds.

In fervent prayer there may be times when our deepest emotions may not permit us to adequately articulate our thoughts. At such time one inner desires or thoughts may only be expressed to God in “groanings” that cannot be expressed at the moment (Romans 8). The Holy Spirit will assist us in our prayers, bearing our thoughts up to the Father as our prayers. At such times, the individual is edified, but others are not. This does not imply that God’s people should desire or strive for a “prayer language.” It simply teaches that our inability to express ourselves in an hour of grief, confusion, or ecstasy will not prevent our communication with God. Such a time for each believer may be very rare, and certainly not something that one plans in advance.

A warning is in order here. Those who since that their faith is incomplete, or that their sanctification may be arrested by their failure to pray or speak in an “unknown tongue” may become so intense in this effort that they open themselves up to a satanic counterfeit. Even occult groups have spoken in tongues. Commit yourself to that which edifies the Lord’s church and leave the gifts to the discretion of the Giver of all gifts. If you are open to Him you will never be denied any gift He has in store for you.

BUT EVEN MORE THAT YOU WOULD PROPHECY. Prophecy is by far the greater gift because it edifies the whole body and not just the individual, as in the case with speaking “in tongues.” “Once again, as in 12:31, Paul stresses the priority and importance of the gift of prophecy (vv. 1, 5) because of its edifying nature for the church body as contrasted with the gift of tongues, which at Corinth was being misused for personal edification only” [BSB]. Expository preaching and teaching Scripture lend themselves more to the edification of the body than speaking in tongues with which the members are unfamiliar.

UNLESS HE INTERPRET. Tongues in Acts served a practical, evangelistic purpose in that the Gospel was shared with thousands in their own native tongue (seventeen nations are mentioned in Acts 2), resulting in the salvation of three thousand souls on the Day of Pentecost, and others on the other two occasions. Tongues in Corinth glorified the individual rather than God, therefore, instead of edifying the church, it created problems. The modern movement generates excitement, but often creates trouble in the church. To keep this in context, what Paul makes it abundantly clear in this verse is the self-centeredness of the Corinthians' preoccupation with "tongues." In 14:20 he adds that they were behaving childishly and foolishly.

A modern application would be a missionary or evangelist who addresses a congregation in a foreign country in his own language without the benefit of an interpreter. Many have seen, if only by tape, an evangelist preaching through an interpreter. He speaks a few words and waits for the interpreter to translate his words into the language of the congregation before speaking again. Suppose he went on without stopping for the interpreter. The people would be confused, not edified.

14:6 - WHAT WILL I PROFIT? - *"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?"* "If I come" is the third class condition, a supposable case. In verse 4, Paul says that those who speak in tongues edify only themselves. Here, he does not say that **he** would not benefit, he says that **they** would not benefit from it ("what will it profit you?"). This should be the concern of everyone who says anything in a service: "What shall it profit the church?" Preaching, teaching, and the communication of revelations from God would be very beneficial, but not if no one could understand the message.

Tongues are useless without interpretation - this applies to "unknown tongues," as well as "other languages" (the issue in Corinth was foreign languages). Why would Paul speak in other languages if almost everyone there could understand him in Greek? Because Corinth was often filled with merchants and sailors from many nations who might know enough Greek to tend to business, but they thought in their own native tongue. They needed to understand the Gospel and God gave Paul and certain others the gift of speaking to them in their own native language.

14:7 - EVEN LIFELESS THINGS. *"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?"* "Lifeless things" (*apsuches*, from *psuche*) denote things without a soul or the breath of life. Paul further illustrates his point by referring to a flute or harp, which represent both wind and stringed instrument. If these instruments were to produce "mere sounds without order, harmony, or melody, though every tone of music might be in the sounds, surely no person could discern a tune in such sounds, nor receive pleasure from such discords: even so is the person who speaks in an unknown tongue, but does not interpret" [CLARKE]. One speaking in a tongue not known by anyone present makes no more contribution to the edification of the church than those discordant and unmeaning sounds do to pleasure and appreciation of music. If those instruments do not give a distinction in sounds they are

meaningless at best, at worst confusing and obnoxious. Anyone who has ever given a small child a toy piano or drum understands that. One speaking in an “unknown” tongue may leave some in awe, but others confused and discouraged if no one can interpret what he is saying.

14:8 - AN INDISTINCT SOUND. *“For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle?”* The trumpet was commonly used by the military in most countries. It was a well-known wind instrument, and was made of mostly of brass, silver. It was used for various purposes by the military - to summon soldiers; to orchestrate their march; to call them to meals; to call them to battle; to sound a retreat; and to signify to them what they were to do in battle, whether to charge, advance, or retreat. There were no walkie-talkies, no radios, no other modern means of communicating commands. An uncertain sound was one in which none of these things were indicated, or a mixed message was received. The indistinct sound could be catastrophic. The bugle was used to communicate commands, but if it gives off an indistinct sound soldiers will not know whether to charge, retreat, or stop to eat!

WHO WILL PREPARE. Paul chooses a single case of what was communicated by the trumpet, as an illustration of what he meant. The idea is, that foreign tongues spoken in their assembly would be just as useless in regard to their duty or edification as would be the sound of a trumpet if, instead of the usual and intelligible sounds, made an unintelligible screech. What would the soldier do? The “mere beating on a drum would be useless, unless some tune was played by which it was known that the soldiers were summoned to the parade, to advance, or to retreat” [BARNES].

14:9 - SPEECH THAT IS CLEAR. *“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.”* Students of the Word are not surprised by the repetition here. In the first place, the Holy Spirit is the divine Author. In the second place, Paul is using the rabbinical method in teaching them. All members would not have a copy of this Scripture in their hands so that they could read any time they chose. They would hear it read at church and repetition was necessary to be sure they had an opportunity to learn this lesson.

When you speak in the Church, if your speech is not understood, your labor is useless. You are just “speaking into the air” - that is, your speech will be dissipated in the air, without conveying any meaning to any person. There is a noise or sound, but no meaning. Gifts that are used for such purpose are worthless. Indistinguishable sounds are not to be desired, or sought after, for all the reasons listed in this passage. The gifts that enabled believers to communicate clearly divine Truth were far greater and should be more desired.

Many years ago, a friend and I exchanged pulpits one Sunday morning in an associational emphasis. Most other pastors in the association exchanged pulpits with someone else that same day. Later, my friend assured me that he had tried to say some things that would help me in my ministry in that particular church. That night one of the members offered a comment on the service: “You know that man who preached this morning told some interesting stories, but I

never did figure out what he was talking about.” Obviously, one can fail to edify without speaking in an unknown tongue!

14:10 - MANY KINDS OF LANGUAGES. *“There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is without meaning.”* These are not unknown tongues, but real languages that may be learned and spoken. There have been many languages since the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel, and today there are over five hundred languages and dialects in the world. No legitimate language is “without meaning” within its own community or language group.

14:11 - THE MEANING. *“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.”* Paul’s point is unmistakable. He is saying that if one is speaking in a language I do not understand, I will be to him as a foreigner. God’s purpose is communication, not confusion. Speaking in a foreign language, let alone an “unknown tongue” was worthless if there was no one to interpret.

This is a point we should give careful attention. Paul does not forbid speaking in a foreign language. He is trying to curb the inappropriate use of other languages by Corinthians believers who were boasting of the gift of tongues as though they were superior to other gifts - and those who spoke in the languages were superior saints. As a matter of fact, one might wonder if some of them preferred not to be understood! If people understood them they would have to be more careful what they said. Paul here is being inspired by the Holy Spirit to write to try to control the use of the gift of languages so as to promote the edification of the church. In the past fifty years many churches have been divided over the modern “tongue” movement. Divisions do not edify!

A BARBARIAN. The Greek (*barbaros*) means unintelligible sounds. Those who considered themselves civilized, it is said, accused those who spoke in a different language as barbarians who repeated the syllables, bar-bar-bar-bar. The Egyptians called all people barbarous who did not speak their tongue. The Greeks followed suit for all who were ignorant of Greek language and culture, dividing all people into Hellenes and Barbarians.

14:12 - ZEALOUS OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS. *“So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church.”* They did not have to be told to desire spiritual gifts, they were already “zealous” of them, especially the more sensational gifts. The Lord wanted them to use them to build up his church. Herein is the bottom line - as repetitious as it is: all gifts are given for the edification (building up) of the local church. This rule should never be forgotten. Those who use what they consider to be their spiritual gifts to divide or confuse a church have either misunderstood their spiritual gifts, or they received their spiritual gift from the great counterfeit.

14.13 - THEREFORE. *“Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.”*

By “therefore,” Paul concludes that he has stated the case. Spiritual gifts are given for the edification of the church. Tongues - as used in Corinth, not as used in Acts 2 - edify only the one using them, assuming that they are genuine gifts from the Holy Spirit. If anyone is going to speak in a language the audience does not understand he must interpret, or have an interpreter present.

The late Luther Hall, Director of Missions for the Northeast and Morehouse Baptist Associations (Louisiana Baptist Convention) was a very special friend for many years. He spent many hours in our home so often that when my younger son Mark was a preschooler he called Dr. Hall, “Papaw.” Once when I was moderating the annual meeting of the Morehouse Baptist Convention Dr. Hall gave a report on his recent mission trip to South Korea. Louisiana Baptists were partners with South Korean Baptists in an effort to evangelize that country. Dr. Hall was a very humorous speaker and on this occasion he was especially excited as he told about the overflow crowds that came to hear him preach. People would sit on the floor or stand for hours to hear the Gospel. He said, “When I stood up to preach and looked out at all those people who were so hungry to hear the Gospel — Have you ever tried to make a toad smoke a cigarette? When I was a little boy we used to put a cigarette in a toad’s mouth, and they would suck in the smoke but couldn’t blow it out, so they just kept getting bigger and bigger. If I had not had an interpreter I couldn’t have preached to those people, and if I couldn’t have preached I would have been puffed up like that toad.”

If these people did not have an interpreter, and could not interpret what they were saying, they should stop speaking in tongues. Emphases should be placed on communication and understanding rather than confusion or ecstatic speech that only attracts attention to the individual.

14:14 - PRAY IN A TONGUE. *“For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.”* He does not say that he prays in “a tongue.” What he is saying is that if he should pray in “a tongue” in a worship service it might be spiritually gratifying, but it would be intellectually “unfruitful.” Robertson writes, “My intellect gets no benefit from rhapsodical praying that may even move my spirit” [ATR]. Since praying in a worship service (or in private) in unintelligible tongues does not employ the mental faculties, it is better to pray (or sing for that matter) in a language everyone understands so that the gift may be used fruitfully.

MY MIND. The Gospel is simple, but deep. The Bible is a well so deep that no intellectual can fathom its depth, yet a fresh, clear spring from which even the most simple can drink to their satisfaction. However, we must never set the depth and the simplicity in opposition to each other. Throughout my ministry I have heard many people condemn preachers of the Gospel who have seminary degrees. “If God calls you, you don’t have to go to school to make a preacher.” One might say, “Brother Smith ain’t got no education, he’s a God-called preacher.” The comment reveals a lot more about the speaker than it does the one about whom he was speaking.

Christianity is not a mindless religion. In fact, Christianity is not a religion as the world defines religion. Religion has to do with man’s quest for God, his effort to appease an angry

god, or his effort to persuade some god to bless him. Christianity is a relationship based upon God's revelation of His redemptive love. It is not what we do for Him but what He does for us; it is not our quest for God, but His quest for us; not our choosing Him, but His choosing us. His love should be incentive enough for to make us want to learn all we can about Him. A total person involves intellect, emotion, and volition. There are some who major in emotions, others who major in intellect. God would develop the total person for His glory. The mind, though de-emphasized by some, is important.

I will bless the LORD who has counseled me; Indeed, my mind instructs me in the night" (Ps. 16:7).

"Examine me, O LORD, and try me; Test my mind and my heart"(Ps. 26:2).

"The mind of the intelligent seeks knowledge, But the mouth of fools feeds on folly" (Pro. 15:14).

"The mind of the prudent acquires knowledge, And the ear of the wise seeks knowledge" (Pro. 18:15).

"...And that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Eph. 4:23).

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5, KJV).

14:15 - THE OUTCOME. *"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."* The NKJV has "What is the conclusion then?" After carefully examining every facet of the issue, Paul concludes that he will both pray and sing "with the spirit" and "with the mind." Prayer is an intelligent exercise of the mind. Prayer may be, and often is an emotional exercise, but it is not limited to feelings. Paul used the intellect in prayer. The great missionary concludes that if he cannot pray in a language understood by the people present he will remain silent.

I WILL SING. There was ecstatic singing like the rhapsody of some prayers without intelligent words. Paul prefers singing that reaches the intellect as well as stirs the emotions. The Soloist who sings in Italian before an English only audience may be appreciated for talent and training, but the people do not understand the lyrics they profit little in the end. Speaking, praying, and singing that no one can understand will lose much of their value in church worship. The same principle applies to some of the "contemporary" music one hears today. The instruments used in Gospel rock and heavy metal contemporary music may be so loud that no one can hear or understand the lyrics. Extremely loud music not only drowns out the lyrics, it may be especially offensive to those with certain hearing problems. I also have a problem with what I would call cheap Gospel music which may be plagued both by weak theology and irreverent performance. On many occasions when I sought to follow the message in the song, members of quartets suddenly go into their comedy act with demonstrations of how low the bass can get or how long a member can hold a note - all to the jokes and applause of other members

of the group. That is one thing at a Saturday night “singing” (or as some say, “a sangin”), but very disturbing when it passes for a Sunday worship service.

Many believers at Corinth were actually reveling in ecstatic experiences. Paul reaffirms his own commitment both to pray and to sing with his mind (understanding), as well as with the Spirit. “Paul maintains that it is far better to proceed in prayer and song with understanding and points out that the accompanying leadership of the Holy Spirit is present” [BSB].

14:16 - OTHERWISE. *“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?”* “If you bless with the spirit” is the third class condition, showing that it is possible that one would. If one is praying and praising God (10:16) in an ecstatic prayer, the one who does not understand the ecstasy will be at a loss as to when to say “Amen.” In the synagogues the Jews used responses at the close of prayers (Neh. 5: 13; 8:61; 1 Chron. 16:36). “Prayer is not a duty someone else can perform for us. Rather, we must join with one who leads in prayer and praise, agreeing with his words, praying them from our own hearts, and saying aloud our responsive ‘Amen’ in assent, as was practiced among the Jews (Deut. 27:15-16; Neh. 8:6) and the early church (Justin Martyr’s *Apology*, 2.97)” [NCWB].

By the “ungifted” he may mean the unsaved, or he may have in mind the untrained believer. He does not say which here and one can make a case for either. The word points to the uninitiated, and may simply one who does not know the language spoken. What advantage is an ecstatic utterance no one understands.

14:17 - THE OTHER PERSON. *“For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not edified.”* God, Who understands the heart, will understand a prayer of thanksgiving and the one doing the praying is blessed, but no one else is blessed. The Bible Knowledge Commentary offers a summary of verses 16 and 17:

If it were true that one who possessed the gift of tongues would find his worship enhanced by the possession and use of the gift of interpretation (v. 15), it was certainly true that anyone listening to him who did not have the same gift could not empathize with the tongues-speaker. At least another person with the gift of tongues could identify with the exhilaration experienced in the exercise of the gift. However, a Christian with a different gift required intelligible communication if he were to gain any benefit from what was said and so have a basis for affirming his agreement by saying an **Amen**. But such comprehension did not exist if the tongue were not interpreted and so the brother was **not edified** [BKC].

14:18 - I THANK GOD. *“I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all...”* Paul does not deny, despise, or devalue the power of speaking foreign languages. He was indeed thankful that he could speak so many languages; but he felt that there were more valuable endowments than

this as we will see the next verse.

MORE THAN YOU ALL. Actually, it is “tongue” (singular), or language. Paul spoke in other languages more any of them! Is he condemning a gift with which he has been blessed more than any of the members at Corinth? Paul had, according to his own testimony, miraculously spoken to people in their own language when they did not understand the languages he spoke and he did not understand their language. God chose to give him the ability to speak in their own native language, just as the disciples had done at Pentecost.

Paul had learned more foreign languages than most of them, and he has been endowed with the gift of speaking in foreign languages he had not learned. In fact, he spoke in more languages than any of the people at Corinth who were boasting of their gift. Clarke’s comments point to the practical purpose in Paul’s endowment or gift:

He understood more languages than any of them did: and this was indispensably necessary, as he was the apostle of the Gentiles in general, and had to preach to different provinces where different dialects, if not languages, were used. In the Hebrew, Syriac, Greek, and Latin, he was undoubtedly well skilled from his education; and how many he might understand by miraculous gift we cannot tell. But, even literally understood, it is very probable that he knew more languages than any man in the Church of Corinth [CLARKE].

During that time there was a practical purpose in the gift of tongues. But there was a serious abuse of the more sensational gifts, especially when it came to speaking in tongues. Apparently the Scripture here restricts speaking in an “unknown tongue,” and places strict guidelines on speaking in “other tongues.” They not only do not edify, they may even have a negative influence on some.

14:19 - IN THE CHURCH. *“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.”* The Scripture here is not trying to prohibit private ecstatic expression, but it clearly does prohibit the general use of tongues in church worship services. Paul carefully discourages this irrational element in public worship. Notes in the Believer’s Study Bible offer a concise summary of the tongue issue:

On the Day of Pentecost the disciples spoke in tongues, and crowds recognized known languages (Acts 2:4-11). The tongues at Caesarea (Acts 10:46) and Ephesus (Acts 19:6) were also known languages as at Pentecost, since the same descriptive Greek word is used for them all, and Luke seems to recognize a continuity among the three events. In contrast, the tongues at Corinth were apparently not understood by anyone (14:2) without supernatural interpretation, and the speaker himself did not understand (14:14). The speaker alone was edified (14:4). Though Paul spoke in several languages, (glossa, Gk., 14:18) and would not have them forbidden (14:39), he emphasized that understood prophecy

was a much more useful gift (14:4, 19). He insisted that tongues should not be used in the church unless there was an interpreter (14:28), and then not more than three men (14:27) could do so, one at a time. Women were forbidden to speak in tongues or sit in judgment upon the prophetic utterances (14:31-35), but they could pray and prophesy in the assembly (11:5). Tongues were a sign to the Christ-rejecting nation of Israel (14:21, 22; Isa. 28:11, 12), and an authenticating gift for the infant church (Acts 2:7-11). In Corinth the interpretation of tongues was needed as a grace gift. Either the one who spoke in tongues, or another, could interpret, but only one interpretation was to be given (14:5, 27). If no interpreter was present, the one with the gift of tongues was to remain silent, speaking only to himself and to God (14:28) [BSB].

I have already referred to an interesting brochure written by popular Gospel Music personality, Joel Hemphill, who explained that he did not speak in tongues in a church service, but he did in private. A friend of his told me that the man and his extended families met periodically for “private services” in which they spoke in tongues. Some, they said, had been blessed with a “prayer language.” As I read the brochure I had some problems with his defense of tongues, even when practiced in a private service. I am, however, appreciative of the fact that, unlike some, Hemphill and his friends do not impose this on their church or their other friends.

Am I saying that all tongues ceased when the New Testament was completed? I do not know when God determined to end this gift which served Him so well, but at the same time was subject to much abuse. I do not believe it is a common gift of the Spirit today, and I do not believe the gift of prophecy (in the sense of foretelling future events) was a permanent gift. If God elects to give an individual either gift for a specific purpose He can do anything He chooses to do.

The question that invariably come to my mind when I hear people talking about these gifts is “Why?” Since God gives us the spiritual gifts He wants us to have, and since the ecstatic gifts are the lowest gifts, and since they do not edify the church, why should I beg God for these gifts rather than the ones that edify the Body of Christ?

14:20 - BRETHREN. *“Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature.”* The NIV renders it, “Brothers, stop thinking like children.” We should not skip over the word “brethren,” for we can be sure that it is used with a purpose in mind. Paul is appealing to them on the basis of a horizontal relationship - he is one of them. He does not command them in this matter, he does not dictate to them. He appeals to them on the basis of a personal relationship with them. When the modern Charismatic movement was in its ascendancy in the sixties and seventies, a friend and I discussed it over lunch one day. Commenting on the modern practice of tongues among various Christian denominations, he observed that the mainline denominations had not been effected by the older Pentecostal movement during the first half of the Twentieth Century, but they were having to deal with the Neo-Pentecostalism of the last half of the century. He expressed the opinion that some of the tongue speaking might be a hoax, some might be demonic, and some might be legitimate, in

which case, he added, “I call it baby talk. The Lord might use it in some instances to bring about an awakening in some denominations.”

DO NOT BE CHILDREN. Literally, cease becoming children in your thinking, as some evidently were doing. The believers who were boasting of their endowment with the gift of tongues in Corinth must have been shocked that anyone would think of them as immature, or childish. I visited with a pastor from Monroe, Louisiana who is involved with missions project in the Ukraine. The last time he was there they were surprised to find that some charismatic believers had come into the church in their absence and asserted a lot of influence on the church. They were trying to get the people to get rid of the pastor. They said he was not spiritual enough because he was not performing healing miracles. These people see themselves as super saints - but super saints who would be shocked if they were perceived as anything less than humble. This kind of thinking is, at best, childish and immature.

IN YOUR THINKING BE MATURE. “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Pro. 23:7, KJV). You are not going to straighten out one’s behavior until you straighten out his mind. Until people start thinking better they are not going to start acting better. Here we have an appeal to these believers to move on to maturity in their thinking - keep on becoming adults in your minds. This is needed today. Failure to solve problems before they reached the crisis stage has led to numerous splits in churches. The stress caused by those splits and the desire for peace in worship may be reflected in the names some have chosen for the new church that started from the split: Friendship, New Friendship, Harmony, Unity, Fellowship - not that all of them received their name for that reason.

The infatuation some of the Corinthian believers with tongues was for Paul another manifestation of their immaturity and worldliness (cf. 3:1-3). “This he hoped would change, especially in regard to an enhanced appraisal of prophecy and a recognition of the importance of this gift for the assembled church. His final words, contrasting prophecy and tongues (14:21-25), were intended to conclude the exhortation begun in verse 1” [BKC].

14:21 - IN THE LAW. “*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.*” The Law was an expression encompassing the whole Old Testament (John 10:34). Paul was specifically referring to Isaiah 28:11-12. “The point of the quotation is that if Israel would not hear the Lord through the prophets, they would not hear even when he spoke in foreign languages to them through foreign people. So, Paul is saying, why put so much stress on tongues?” [NCWB]

In the eighth century B.C. the “strange tongues” of the Assyrians was a sign to unbelieving Jews of coming judgment (Is. 28:11-12). In the same way tongues (languages) were a sign of the truth of Christianity in the early church and a warning to those who reject the Gospel. Warren Wiersbe has an interesting summary of verses 20 and 21:

Some suggest that the gift of tongues is a mark of spiritual maturity and of a deeper Christian life; but Paul says just the opposite. The Christians at Corinth were “babes in Christ” and “carnal” (3:1-4). They boasted of their “spirituality” (8:1-2; 10:12), yet had to be warned by Paul and taught in the most elementary manner. In 13:8-13, Paul explains that their passion for emotional spiritual gifts was a mark of infancy and not maturity. Mature believers have the Spirit and the Word and seek no emotional “crutches” to prop them up. Dr. M. R. DeHaan has an interesting view of 14:22 that backs up this teaching. He says that “them that believe” (v. 22) refers to spiritual Christians who live by faith in God’s Word, while “them that believe not” refers to immature believers without strong faith. God has to give emotional signs to immature Christians to bolster their faith, but the mature believer builds his life on the Word [WIERSBE].

14:22 - FOR A SIGN. “ *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.*” Is there not a contradiction between verses 21-22 and vs.16? See the reference to the “ungifted men” in vs. 23. Are the “ungifted” of vs. 16 and the “unbelievers” here one and the same? If all the “ungifted” were those who were also the “unsaved” there might seem, on the surface, to be a contradiction. Tongues were a sign to the unbelievers at Pentecost. However, at Corinth we have a different set of circumstances. Remember one important point: the Bible is very practical in dealing with such issues. Read this verse and accept what it says. What practical purpose could tongues serve at Corinth, and what purpose could they serve today?

Tongues, or ecstatic utterance, did not come into existence on the Day of Pentecost. Speaking in tongues was a common practice in pagan religions for centuries prior to this. To appreciate what the Scripture says is the First Epistle to the Corinthian church we need to keep certain things in mind. Part of the confusion about “tongues” may be traced back to the two different cases or types of tongues discussed in Acts and 1 Corinthians.

In effect, Corinthian ecstatic utterance was a poor imitation of the gift of tongues given by the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 at Pentecost. Verse 21 quotes Isa. 28:11, 12, which clearly has reference to the speaking of a diversity of known human languages. There follows an apparent contradiction between vv. 22 and 23. In v. 22, tongues are a sign “to unbelievers.” But in v. 23, “the uninformed” or unbelievers are likely to conclude that insanity exists in one who thus speaks in tongues. But there is no contradiction [BSB].

Verse 22 has reference to the actual gift of tongues as in Acts 2. At Pentecost the unbelievers heard the Gospel in their own languages and dialects and were both amazed and persuaded by the sign to turn to Jesus Christ. However, vs. 23 warns that “the exercise of the Corinthian imitation, which was only the frenzied concoction of sounds, would have an effect of repugnance on unbelievers (12:10). On the other hand, vv. 24, 25 extol the virtues of the gift of prophecy” [BSB].

We have in verses 21-25 a summary statement which began with the citation of a portion of Isaiah's prophecy against Israel (Isa. 28:11-12). To understand this summary we need to keep this background in mind. Because Israel refused to listen to God's message proclaimed by His prophets, Isaiah predicted that another message would come. This one would be delivered in a foreign tongue unintelligible to the Israelites, yet unambiguous (cf. 2 Kings 17:23). The Bible Knowledge Commentary (BKC) ties it together:

The foreign tongue symbolized God's rejection (cf. Deut. 28:49; Isa. 33:19), His disciplinary response to Israel's stiff-necked rebellion against Him (cf. 2 Kings 17:14; Acts 7:51). Foreigners instead of Israel became the temporary servants of God (cf. Isa. 5:26; Hab. 1:6; Matt. 21:43; Rom. 10:19-21), and their foreign tongue was a punitive **sign** to Israel of what had taken place. That seems to be the significance which Paul attached to tongues. As such, the primary arena for its exercise was **not** the company of **believers but... unbelievers** (cf. Matt. 13:10-15, on parables). Uninterpreted **tongues** had their place but not in the church where **prophecy** benefited **believers** (1 Cor. 14:3).

What should we conclude concerning the use of tongues in the church? Tongues show the power of God to the unbeliever, but the believer does not need such a demonstration. What the believer needs is to be instructed in the Word of God. John MacArthur uses the title, "Pastor/Teacher," a title which incorporates the general ministry caring for the saints and the preaching/teaching ministry in which the pastor fulfills the specific command of the Lord: "Feed My sheep."

14:23 - UNGIFTED MEN OR UNBELIEVERS. *"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?"* The lost ("unbelievers"), unacquainted with Scripture, will say that the Christians are raving mad (Acts 12:15; 26:24). The believer who is "ungifted" will know what these people are doing but will receive no edification from it. As a matter of fact, it may be very frustrating to him.

In Frank Peretti's book, *The Visitation*, Travis grew up in a Pentecostal church in which his father was pastor. Speaking in tongues was a regular part of the services. Upon moving to a new city he became involved with a group of young people who met in someone's home for ecstatic services. He observed many inconsistencies in that group and a number of things confused him.

After graduating from high school Travis traveled with a group that played Bluegrass, but not too well. By age twenty one he was enrolled in a Pentecostal Bible College in which he was subjected to strict rules administered in part by very stern officials. The young lady who would become his wife was the subject of frenzied prayer efforts for a time, and then ostracized by other students when she did not speak in tongues. Though fictional, one can sense the frustration Marian faced as she listened to all her tongue speaking friends speaking in tongues and praying for her to receive the gift. After graduation Travis became a youth minister and was once again subjected to tyrannical restraints by narrow-minded members. Once again Marian became the target of those who had never heard her speak in tongues. One can imagine what an unsaved

person would think if he walked in off the street only to hear a bunch of people speaking in some strange language - all at the same time.

If all began speaking in an “unknown tongue” the unsaved will see them as a congregation in need of group therapy. They might group such members with those who refuse medical help for their children and permit them to die, or with the snake-handlers.

Once when I was a child some of my mother’s friends invited her to attend a revival service in their church. Having little experience with their denomination, but anxious to support their ministry, she accepted - for the whole family. The service was conducted very much like ours until the very end - which seemed like a long time coming to me. The evangelist asked someone to lead in prayer. When I had been in church that long a prayer meant the “closing prayer” or benediction.

I was surprised when a number of people all began praying aloud. The prayer went on for a long time and the only thing I could really distinguish was “Amen.” Whatever I was hearing, it was well punctuated with amens! The first several times I heard “Amen,” I raised my head and opened my eyes only to discover that they were not about to stop. When we were finally able to leave, Mother would permit no criticism - none whatsoever! Possibly, she was concerned that our questions reflected an assumption that there must have been something wrong with those people.

When my brother James was about three years old, Mother took him with her to a friend’s church for a service. After some period of time various members - as they would say, “got the Holy Ghost.” A number of people were praying aloud at the same time, many began leaping around, jumping up and down, running around the building, and waving their hands, and some may have passed out - I do not recall all the details, but it was a very emotional and acrobatic exhibit. Mother was sitting there observing when James, standing next to her on the pew leaned around in front of her and began asking, “Mother, can you do that? Can you do that?” She tried to quiet him, but he continued, “Can you do that? Let’s me and you do that! You want to do that?” I do not recall that experience to mock or criticize, but to illustrate how confusing it might become.

In recent years American Christians have been hearing voluminous reports about what has been called by various names, including the Toronto Airport Movement, in which participants reach such a fevered pitch that they fall out of the pews onto the floor, roll over and park like dogs or laugh uncontrollably. Church members from all over the country have been going to visit the Brownsville Assembly of God in Pensacola, Florida, for two or three years, some taking bus loads for service. I have talked with some who were convinced they were for real - the Holy Spirit was the Power behind it. But I read a statement by one man who said, “I am a tongue-speaking Charismatic, but that scares me!” My purpose in relating this is not to condemn, but to point out the fact that most of the people who are going there already profess to be Christians. If, however, the average lost person walked in off the street, he might think these people had lost their minds.

Before dealing with tongues in a church, I sensed that I had to be totally fair with others and open the Holy Spirit. I had spent four years at Mississippi College, one of the oldest Baptist colleges in the nation, and one of the great academic institutions in the country. I followed this with three years at New Orleans Seminary. My Masters degree required 98 hours and included Greek and Hebrew. I knew hundreds of God-called preachers of all ages, some moderately liberal, but most were conservative. There were a few left-wing extremists and a few right-wing extremists - sorry, perhaps some think all extremists are on the right, thanks to the secular media. I was not aware of one of those men who had ever spoken in tongues. However, before I preached on the subject of tongues in the church I prayed as sincerely as I knew how, submitting to God and asking if he had any plans for me to engage in such activity.

I did not ask for this gift, I submitted to His will and placed myself at His disposal. I was soon convinced that He had no plans to give me this gift. As a matter of fact, I did not have a gift for learning other languages through my classes. I could make good grades, but it was hard work. I told friends I was struggling with four foreign languages at the same time” Greek, Hebrew, English, and History of Baptists under Dr. Claude Howe! The latter was the real nightmare.

14:24 - IF ALL PROPHECY. *“But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all...”* If all members who speak - not if they should all speak at once - the Holy Spirit will use the message to bring the lost person under conviction of sin. The speaker “is called to account by all” - he is held accountable for the message he preaches. Those who listen to one speak in a language known to all may search the Scripture as the saints in Berea did to see if what he preaches is Scriptural.

HE IS CONVICTED. If an unbeliever who knows little, or nothing of Christianity enters a service and hears one person speaking in a strange language he is not going to benefit from it, and he may leave frustrated and confused. If he enters and many people are speaking in strange languages he will wonder if they are mad. But if he hears the clear and certain Word of God proclaimed the Holy Spirit will be able to take that Word and focus it on his heart and mind in an effort to bring him under conviction of sin.

Another word for “convicted” is “convinced” - he will be convinced by what he hears from the Word of God. He will be convinced by what he hears and understands. Barnes offers the following commentary:

He will understand what is said; he will see its truth and force, and he will be satisfied of the truth of Christianity. The word here rendered “convinced” (δέξασθαι, *elengchetai*) is rendered “reprove” in John 16:8, “And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin,” etc. Its proper meaning is to “convict,” to show one to be wrong; and then to rebuke, reprove, admonish, etc. Here it means, evidently, that the man would be convicted, or convinced of his error and of his sin; he would see that his former opinions and practice had been wrong; he would

see and acknowledge the force and truth of the Christian sentiments which should be uttered, and would acknowledge the error of his former opinions and life. The following verse shows that the apostle means something more than a mere convincing of the understanding, or a mere conviction that his opinions had been erroneous. He evidently refers to what is now known also as “conviction” for sin; that is, a deep sense of the depravity of the heart, of the errors and follies of the past life, accompanied with mental anxiety, distress, and alarm. The force of truth, and the appeals which should be made, and the observation of the happy effects of religion, would convince him that he was a sinner, and show him also his need of a Saviour [BARNES].

Just for the mental exercise, think what might have happened if, as Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount, half the people present had begun to shout, standing and waving their arms, and falling out on the grass. I know someone would offer a quick defense - “I would never do that while Jesus was preaching;” or “Pentecost had not come.” Let me be quick to point out that preaching - I mean real preaching, is proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. When the God called preacher preaches in the power of the Holy Spirit, the believer who is filled with the Holy Spirit will both see and hear God! It is an awesome thing to see and hear God.

CALLED TO ACCOUNT BY ALL. The Holy Spirit will take all that is spoken and use it to bring the lost person under conviction of sin. He will use what the preacher says to cause the unsaved person to accept the fact that he is accountable to God (pass a “judgment” on his former life), understanding that he is under a sentence of death because of his sin. “What is said will be approved by his own conscience, and will have the effect to condemn him in his own view as a lost sinner. This is now the effect of faithful preaching, to produce deep self-condemnation in the minds of sinners [BARNES].

14:25 - SECRETS OF HIS HEART. *“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.”* There are sins in the heart of the lost person which only he knows, and he may need to be reminded. Other may know what he does, but may not even suspect what goes on in his mind and in his heart. The question may be asked, does this mean that his sins will be disclosed to others, or does it mean that they will be brought to his mind in order that he might come under conviction and repent? Clarke holds that it means the former:

As these, who were the prophets or teachers, had often the discernment of spirits, they were able in certain cases, and probably very frequently, to tell a man the secrets of his own heart; and, where this was not directly the case, God often led his ministers to speak those things that were suitable to the case before them, though they themselves had no particular design. The sinner, therefore, convinced that God alone could uncover the secrets of his heart, would be often obliged to fall down on his face, abashed and confounded, and acknowledge that God was truly among them. This seems to be the plain meaning of the passages before us

[CLARKE].

This may also denote the ministry of the Holy Spirit in focusing the individual's mind on the secret sins of his heart in an effort to bring him to repentance. "This is the work of the powerful Word of God (Heb. 4:12) as it is preached and taught. The Holy Spirit always works in connection with the Word. Like the woman of Samaria (John 4:19, 29), when one's sinful character is exposed, he or she will be convinced that the gospel is true, and that 'God is really there among you' [NCWB].

What should we conclude from verses 21-25 about the use of tongues or foreign languages used without an interpreter? It should be emphasized that we are dealing with known languages, not "unknown tongues" in this passage. If one utters unintelligible sounds - not a legitimate language - and then interprets, there is no way anyone can verify the interpretation. The Scripture does not deny the gift of languages, it acknowledges it. However, strict guidelines are put in place to try to prevent the misuse, abuse, and possible deception that might accompany it. Wiersbe offers an excellent summary under the caption: Tongues do not win the lost (vv. 22-25):

In Acts 2, God gave the apostles the gift of tongues that they might share the Word with the Jews at Pentecost. It was a sign to the Jews that God was at work, fulfilling Isa. 28:11-12. We find incidents involving tongues four times in Acts, and each time they give evidence to Jews present that God is working: (1) Acts 2; tongues are evidence to the unbelieving Jews at Pentecost; (2) Acts 8; evidence to the believing Jews that the Spirit had come upon the Samaritans; (3) Acts 10; evidence that the Spirit had come upon the Gentiles; (4) Acts 19; evidence that the twelve Ephesian men had received the Spirit. But tongues would never reach the unbeliever for the Lord, especially the confusion of tongues that existed at Corinth. It was another Babel! Far better that the unbelieving visitor should hear a message from the Word, something he can understand, and then make his decision for Christ, than hear a confusion of messages he cannot grasp [WIERSBE].

5. The Regulations For the Use of Gifts, 14:26-40

14:26 - WHEN YOU ASSEMBLE. *"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."* This is the bottom line - "When you assemble" points to the church worship service. It seems that there was, at least to some extent, a free participation in the service. It may be inferred from this verse, but that is not spelled out. What we do see is that the participation was not to the point of disorder.

There are two possibilities here. Some hold that these people were endowed with various gifts and that members participated freely in the services, each in turn. Others hold that all of

these people wanted to do whatever they did all at the same time. Clarke explains:

Dr. Lightfoot understands this in the following manner: When the congregation came together, some were for spending the time in psalmody; others in explaining particular doctrines; others in reading, praying, or speaking in the Hebrew tongue; others were curious to hear of farther revelations; and others wished to spend the time in the interpretation of what had already been spoken. This may be specious, but to me it is not satisfactory. It seems more likely that, when the whole Church came together, among whom there were many persons with extraordinary gifts, each of them wished to put himself forward, and occupy the time and attention of the congregation: hence confusion must necessarily take place, and perhaps not a little contention. This was contrary to that edifying which was the intention of these gifts [CLARKE].

Paul does not forbid ecstatic utterance here. But because of the immense potential for trouble surrounding glossolalia (speaking in tongues), certain limitations are placed upon the practice. In this passage he sets down the following rules:

- (1) let all things be done for edification (v. 26).
- (2) no more than three may speak during a service (v. 27).
- (3) this must be in turn, that is, one at a time (v. 27).
- (4) there must be an interpreter (vv. 27, 28).
- (5) women are never to speak in tongues (v. 34).
- (6) everything is to be done decently and in order (v. 40).

14:27 - IF ANYONE SPEAKS IN A TONGUE. - *“If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and one must interpret...”* The emphasis here is not on prohibition but control, order, and communication. Each speaker should speak “in turn” and then wait for another to interpret before going on. Missionaries attend language schools to learn the language of the people to whom they will minister. From time to time visiting ministers will be asked to preach. Before speaking he will be given instructions on how to speak so that the interpreter can interpret for him.

BY TWO. Not more than two or three might speak with tongues at each meeting - and then only if there is one to interpret. Apparently, only one was to interpret - certainly no more than one at a time. The point is not that God would not give differing interpretations to different people, but listeners could only follow one at a time. Just as the Holy Spirit gave certain persons the miraculous ability to speak in a foreign language, so He also gave certain individuals the ability to interpret it.

14:28 - IF THERE IS NO INTERPRETER. *“But if there is no interpreter, he must keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God.”* The “if” expresses the third class condition - there may be an interpreter, and there may not be one. The repetition shows the

importance of the interpreter. Paul seeks to limit or control tongue speaking; he does not prohibit it, but insists on this one practical condition.

KEEP SILENCE IN CHURCH. If there is no interpreter he is not to speak in tongues even once in the church. He is not prohibited from speaking to God privately - neither he is not commanded to do so. Robertson explains, “He is not even to speak in a tongue once. He can indulge his private ecstasy with God” [ATR].

14:29 - LET TWO OR THREE PROPHETS. “*Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment.*” Only two or three should speak in tongues in a service - never at the same time, but in turn, and not at all if no interpreter is present. Prophesying here might have included psalms, teaching, and exhortation (vs. 26). “Dr. Lightfoot thinks that the meaning of the place is this: Let one sing who has a psalm; let another teach who has a doctrine; and let a third exhort, or comfort, who has a gift of that kind” [CLARKE].

LET THE OTHERS PASS JUDGMENT. Two possibilities must be considered: Does “others” mean other members of the congregation, or others especially endowed with the gift of discernment?

Certainly, all members present would need to judge as to whether or not what they heard was of God (was it Scriptural?). There were, however, specially endowed persons, persons with the gift of discernment, who were equipped to judge that which was spoken. Clarke writes:

It appears to have been taken for granted, that a man might pretend to this spirit of prophecy who was not sent of God; and therefore it was the duty of the accredited teachers to examine whether what he spoke was according to truth, and the analogy of faith. For the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets; every man’s gift was to be judged of by those whose age, experience, and wisdom, gave them a right to decide. Besides, though the person who did speak might do it from an impulse of God, yet, if he was not sufficiently known, his testimony ought to be received with caution; and therefore the aged prophets should judge of his gift, lest false doctrines should slide into the Church [CLARKE].

But all these provisions were based on practices in the Jewish synagogues. It was customary for them to object, interrogate, judge, and refute that which was determined not to be sound.

“Let others pass judgment” does not violate the teachings of the Lord: “Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned” (Luke 6:37). Nor does it contradict the directions in the Epistle to the Romans: “Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather determine this--not to put an obstacle or a stumbling block in a brother's way” (Rom. 14:13). Believers must, however, discern whether or not what they say is of the Holy Spirit. The saints in Berea were commended for searching the Scripture daily to see if what Paul and Silas preached was true. God expects

His children to prayerfully distinguish between truth and error.

14:30 - IF A REVELATION. *“But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent.”* The directions here are practical. Christianity is neither mindless nor impractical, regardless of how the enemies of the Cross seek to portray it. If a revelation is from God it is given for a purpose and that purpose will never be known unless it is expressed in an orderly manner. The Bible Knowledge Commentary suggests that:

A prophet might have received a **revelation**, probably in a vision or dream, sometime prior to the meeting of the church at which he subsequently related it. However, a prophet might also experience a revelation during the service. If such occurred, a prophet in the midst of speaking should draw his message to a close to let the other gifted member speak. Whatever the Corinthian services were, they were not dull [BKC].

ANOTHER WHO IS SEATED. Assuming that the pattern of teaching in the Synagogue was followed in the church, those who were teachers sat on a particular seat, in a prominent place, from which they might address the people. They would need to be both seen and heard. They did sit to teach, as Jesus sat and taught the people in the synagogue. If a person said, “I have just received a particular revelation from God,” then they should “let him have the liberty immediately to speak it; as it might possibly relate to the circumstances of that time and place”[CLARKE].

QUESTION. Does this mean that today if one senses a direct revelation he should interrupt the pastor to share his revelation with the congregation? Without a doubt, there are some who would answer this question in the affirmative, but there is just one problem here. In preparing for the service the man God called to be pastor, the man the Holy Spirit has been leading all week in preparing the sermon, is now delivering that sermon under the influence and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Should he not finish it? On more than one occasion when someone felt compelled to offer the pastor some assistance the results have been either meaningless, or at worst embarrassing.

Once the New Testament was completed, printed, and circulated, the need for direct revelations would diminish incrementally if, as we read in Chapter 13, tongues and prophecies were to cease. Today we need to be sensitive to the leadership of the Holy Spirit in making an application of the Word of God in our lives. We cannot overemphasize that great truth. At the same time we must be very careful about extra-biblical revelations today.

14:31 - THAT ALL MAY LEARN. *“For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted...”* There was obviously a need for these words of instruction and correction in the church at Corinth. The gifts of God, the gifts of the Spirit, are given for the edification of the church, but there can be no edification where there is confusion. There may have been a number of people in the church with a gift of prophecy, and there might must have

been times when more than one announced that he had a revelation from God he must share with the congregation. Obviously, no one would profit if they all spoke at the same time. They must take turns, one speaking at a time. However, if one received a fresh revelation from the Lord, he should be permitted to speak as soon as possible. Each person should be given an opportunity to speak in an orderly manner.

SO THAT ALL MAY LEARN. I recently listened to two Baptist deacons express their frustration with the evening worship services in their churches. They both belong to very large churches - modern, sophisticated churches in university cities, not some little country church or "fundamentalist" church out in the boondocks. One referred to "the wave" which he had even witnessed at a morning service. The other said that he could not bear to sit through one of the services in which the pastor no longer preaches, but a worship leader leads in singing the same four word lines "eighty-seven times." On the aftermath of that I received e-mail from my sister in which she expressed her frustration with the new "saddleback" services her church has adopted in the Nashville area. This is a very large church that majors on contemporary and praise music. They have a very strong-willed pastor who seems to want to schedule all sorts of programs for Sunday services as a substitute for the sermon. Members have observed that he is the first preacher they have ever seen who does not want to preach! My sister, Linda, made the statement that she could tolerate the music for a while, but what she could not tolerate is the absence of "biblical preaching" in which members are taught the Word of God (expository preaching).

Unfortunately, to many church members, Christianity has very little to do with learning, and everything to do with feelings. Christianity is a relationship - first and last - and not a religion filled with warm fuzzy feelings, mysterious experiences, and mysticism. It has to do with what you are and what you are becoming, and not just what you do. Christianity is a relationship based on divine revelation. That which is revealed to us today is basically, what the Holy Spirit inspired ancient writers to write (Scripture). The divine Author has miraculously preserved the Scripture, and now He illuminates our hearts and minds that we might understand it and apply it.

The Corinthians boasted more of their spiritual gifts than any other New Testament church, yet they had more problems than any other church, as far as we know, and those gifts - or their attitude toward them - was a major source of their trouble. Even if every member had received the gift of prophecy, which was highly unlikely, no one would learn from anything if they did not speak "one by one." Furthermore, with everyone trying to speak at once there would be no opportunity to exhort others to respond to the message.

It is important for God's people to learn some things. God called me to preach the Gospel when I was thirteen years old, I was licensed at seventeen and ordained at nineteen. When I was a teenager there was a young fire-breathing evangelist out of North Carolina whom God was using to changing the face of evangelism in America. Evangelicals had no doubt that young Billy Graham was called of God and that God's hand was on his ministry. When I was at Mississippi College and New Orleans Seminary, there were often comments about those young preachers

who were trying to be the next Billy Graham - and while there were many reports of men like that, I personally saw very few. But they copied his style and studied his methods long before there ever was a Billy Graham School of Evangelism.

Since Billy Graham, we have seen many different styles and a lot of different approaches to the preaching of the Gospel. I have often stressed that I know what is popular. I also know what the Lord called me to do. My call from God was, and is distinctive, though I did not fully understand that at first. I only knew that He set me apart for His ministry. There were many other things I might have done if God had not called me, but there was nothing else I could have done after He called me. I know what God called me to do. He said, "Feed My sheep." He did not say, "Entertain My sheep." He did not say, "Analyze My sheep." He did not say, "Traumatize My sheep." He called me to feed His sheep. That is what I have tried to do for the last forty years through expository preaching. God wants His people to learn through their own studies (2 Tim. 2:15) and He wants them to be fed through the preaching and teaching of the Word of God..

14:32 - SPIRITS OF THE PROPHETS. *"And the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets..."* One can only imagine what some people will make of this statement. Ryrie makes a valid point: "the spiritual activities of the prophets are under the full control of the prophets. No true prophet can claim a hearing on the ground that he is under a power over which he has no control" [RSB]. This point is very important! The prophet, whether foretelling future events or forth-telling divine truth, is not out of control. He does not surrender control of his own mind. Satanic possession may work that way but God does not. After checking with a number of commentaries I decided to quote two of them, Barnes and the BKC. Barnes writes:

The evident meaning of this is, that they were able to control their inclination to speak; they were not under a NECESSITY of speaking, even though they might be inspired. There was no need of disorder. This verse gives confirmation to the supposition, that the extraordinary endowments of the Holy Spirit were subjected to substantially the same laws as a man's natural endowments. They were conferred by the Holy Spirit; but they were conferred on free agents, and did not interfere with their free agency. And as a man, though of the most splendid talents and commanding eloquence, has "control" over his own mind, and is not "compelled" to speak, so it was with those who are here called prophets. The immediate reference of the passage is to those who are called "prophets" in the New Testament: and the interpretation should be confined to them.

It is not improbable, however, that the same thing was true of the prophets of the Old Testament; and that it is really true as a general declaration of all the prophets whom God has inspired, that they had control over their own minds, and could speak or be silent at pleasure. In this the spirit of true inspiration differed essentially from the views of the pagan, who regarded themselves as driven on by a wild, controlling influence, that compelled them to speak even when they were unconscious of what they said. Universally, in the pagan world, the priests and

priestesses supposed or feigned that they were under an influence which was uncontrollable; which took away their powers of self-command, and which made them the mere organs or unconscious instruments of communicating the will of the gods. The Scripture account of inspiration is, however, a very different thing. In whatever way the mind was influenced, or whatever was the mode in which the truth was conveyed, yet it was not such as to destroy the conscious powers of free agency, nor such as to destroy the individuality of the inspired person, or to annihilate what was special in his mode of thinking, his style, or his customary manner of expression [BARNES].

Paul apparently did not believe the **prophets** were any more restrained than their fellow members gifted in tongues. So he gave the prophets an instruction that was similar to what he gave the tongues-speakers (v. 28). **The spirits** referred to a prophet's spiritual gift, which did not **control** the gifted member, but he controlled it (cf. v. 30). If two or three prophets spoke in a particular service, others gifted and with something to say could do so on another occasion. The church was not a forum for personal pontification or self-glorification; it was a place where people were to be built up and God was to be honored (cf. 10:31-33). The service and those who took part in it should reflect the character of God. He is a **God... of peace**, not **disorder**, and His Spirit worked to produce the same fruit (Gal. 5:22) in believers' lives [BKC].

Edgar Cayse, the World War II era "sleeping prophet" claimed his revelations were from God, but the trances-like state in which he received his messages betray the occultic nature of his prophecies. He seemed very religious, and of course he was. His religion, however was of the devil, as clearly revealed in his teachings on reincarnation.

New Age (postmodern) prophets enter a trance-like state and become a channel for "spirit guides" who speak to them, revealing things they should have otherwise known (supposedly). Prophecies have been given, and books dictated by these spirit guides. These New Age seers supposedly have no control over their message, in fact they are under the control of their spirit guide. We know those spirit guides are not from God because both their message and their method violates Scripture. A lot of it is fake, but that which is supernatural, but not from God is from Satan. There are two possibilities here. First, these spirit guides are demons and those who are under their control are demon possessed. Second, if they are not actually under the control of the spirit guide, but faking it, they are probably motivated by greed. After all they can control themselves until a sufficient number of people have paid their money to witness them channel their spirit guide, who may tell them they are their own Christ!

14:33 - NOT A GOD OF CONFUSION. *"For God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints."* We must never be deceived by one who credits the Holy Spirit for his disorderly behavior in church. God is not the author of confusion, but two, three, or more, praying, teaching, preaching, or speaking in tongues at the same time is confusion.

God is not the author of such work; and let men beware how they attribute such disorder to the God of order and peace. The apostle calls such conduct *ἀέτατάοδίαόέα*, tumult, sedition; and such it is in the sight of God, and in the sight of all good men. How often is a work of God marred and discredited by the folly of men! for nature will always, and Satan too, mingle themselves as far as they can in the genuine work of the Spirit, in order to discredit and destroy it. Nevertheless, in great revivals of religion it is almost impossible to prevent wild—fire from getting in amongst the true fire; but it is the duty of the ministers of God to watch against and prudently check this; but if themselves encourage it, then there will be confusion and every evil work [CLARKE].

This is a fitting conclusion of his argument on the subject of tongues and prophecy. The immature believer and the backslider are far more easily caught up in religious confusion than those who are grounded in the Word of God. They are more easily seduced by cult groups - Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses have preyed on ignorant and carnal church members for over a century. But that is not the only danger. Those not grounded in Scripture are vulnerable to false doctrines and disruptive movements within a church or denomination. The modern Charismatic movement brought confusion to many churches, and all in the name of enlightenment. Paul sets down a guideline for us here: "God is not a God of confusion."

14:34 - WOMEN. *"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."* Concerning the role of women in the church, the N.T. clearly shows that women played a prominent role in the development of the church in the first century.

This obviously included prophecy and prayer (1 Cor. 11:5), teaching (Titus 2:4, 5), personal instruction (Acts 18:26), testimony (John 4:28, 29), and hospitality (Acts 12:12). However, the divinely assigned leadership in the home does not end on the doorstep of the church. When a woman chooses to marry, she accepts the responsibility of voluntarily "lining up under" (hupotasso, Gk.) her own husband (cf. Eph. 5:22, 23; Col. 3:18; Titus 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:1), not because the husband is superior ontologically, intellectually, physically, or spiritually but because he is given by God the assignment for headship (cf. Gen. 2:15-17; 3:16; 1 Cor. 11:3). This is the same way every believer is to submit himself to Jesus Christ, "lining up under" His lordship, even as Jesus subjected Himself to the Father (cf. 1 Cor. 11:3; Phil. 2:7, 8) [BSB].

KEEP SILENT. Is it not interesting that God inspired, not a husband but a bachelor to tell women to "keep silent" in the church? The same verb ("keep silent") was used about the disorders caused by speakers in tongues (verse 28) and prophets (30). For some reason some of the women at Corinth were creating a disturbance in the public worship both by their dress (11:2-16), and by their speech (in this passage). A comparison with 11:5 seems to indicate that it was probably prophetic utterances and speaking in tongues that Paul forbids women to do in church. Debate may continue until the Lord returns as to whether this prohibition applies to

other areas of worship or service.

The Greek term (*hesuchia*), translated “silence” here, may also be translated “quiet,” giving us a picture of a woman who patiently accepts God-assigned authority and leadership and seeks to make herself valuable to God (1 Pet. 3:4). The Believer’s Study Bible has a salient comment on this:

According to Scripture, women are not to assume the office of preacher/teacher in the church. However, women may teach as long as they do not usurp the place of leadership and authority of men in the church. Older women are specifically entrusted with the ministry of teaching younger women (Titus 2:3-5). “The injunction is based on the relationship of man and woman in the original creation (Gen. 2:18; 3:6)” [BSB].

In 1 Tim. 2:12, Paul wrote, “But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.” The First Epistle to Timothy was written sometime after the First Corinthians, so it would seem that Paul was dealing with a particular problem, as in that in the church at Corinthian, in which the women had usurped the leadership role and were, in effect, “lording it over” the men in the church. Commentary on this verse are particularly interesting. Here we will compare Clarke and Barnes. Clarke calls it a Jewish ordinance which prohibited women from teaching in assemblies. Rabbi Eliezer taught, “Let the words of the law be burned, rather than that they should be delivered to women.”

This was their condition till the time of the Gospel, when, according to the prediction of Joel, the Spirit of God was to be poured out on the women as well as the men, that they might prophesy, i.e. teach. And that they did prophesy or teach is evident from what the apostle says, 1 Corinthians 11:5, where he lays down rules to regulate this part of their conduct while ministering in the church... It is evident from the context that the apostle refers here to asking questions, and what we call dictating in the assemblies. It was permitted to any man to ask questions, to object, altercation, attempt to refute, etc., in the synagogue; but this liberty was not allowed to any woman. St. Paul confirms this in reference also to the Christian Church; he orders them to keep silence; and, if they wished to learn any thing, let them inquire of their husbands at home; because it was perfectly indecorous for women to be contending with men in public assemblies, on points of doctrine, cases of conscience, etc... All that the apostle opposes here is their questioning, finding fault, disputing, etc., in the Christian Church, as the Jewish men were permitted to do in their synagogues; together with the attempts to usurp any authority over the man, by setting up their judgment in opposition to them; for the apostle has in view, especially, acts of disobedience, arrogance, etc., of which no woman would be guilty who was under the influence of the Spirit of God [CLARKE].

Barnes, who held that this command is positive, explicit, and universal, did not begin

with the Jewish law, or synagogue regulations. He stresses that

There is no ambiguity in the expressions; and there can be no difference of opinion, one would suppose, in regard to their meaning. The sense evidently is, that in all those things which he had specified, the women were to keep silence; they were to take no part. He had discoursed of speaking foreign languages, and of prophecy; and the evident sense is, that in regard to all these they were to keep silence, or were not to engage in them. These pertained solely to the male portion of the congregation. These things constituted the business of the public teaching; and in this the female part of the congregation were to be silent. They were not to teach the people, nor were they to interrupt those who were speaking. It is probable that, on pretense of being inspired, the women had assumed the office of public teachers.

In 1 Cor. 11, Paul had argued against their doing this in a certain manner—without their veils 1 Cor. 11:4, and he had shown, that “on that account,” and “in that manner,” it was improper for them to assume the office of public teachers, and to conduct the devotions of the church. The force of the argument in 1 Cor. 11: is, that what he there states would be a sufficient reason against the practice, even if there were no other. It was contrary to all decency and propriety that they should appear “in that manner” in public. He here argues against the practice ON EVERY GROUND; forbids it altogether; and shows that on every consideration it was to be regarded as improper for them even so much as “to ask a question” in time of public service. There is, therefore, no inconsistency between the argument in 1 Cor. 11: and the statement here; and the force of the whole is, that “on every consideration” it was improper, and to be expressly prohibited, for women to conduct the devotions of the church. It does not refer to those only who claimed to be inspired, but to all; it does not refer merely to acts of public preaching, but to all acts of speaking, or even asking questions, when the church is assembled for public worship. No rule in the New Testament is more positive than this; and however plausible may be the reasons which may be urged for disregarding it, and for suffering women to take part in conducting public worship, yet the authority of the apostle Paul is positive, and his meaning cannot be mistaken; compare 1 Tim. 2:11-12 [BARNES].

Barnes’ positions would be very controversial in many quarters today. For that matter, Clarke’s position would provoke a heated debate among many who are accustomed to hearing women give reports and ask questions in business meetings, and make announcements and share prayer requests in worship services.

The point is that if anything has been said which a woman did not understand; or if on any particular subject she desired more an explanation, she should wait until she got home and ask her husband. At home she could discuss freely any issue without contributing to the confusion and disorder which apparently did arise from time to time in Corinth. Let us not forget

that in the city of Corinth there were temple prostitutes who were known by their dress, behavior, and reputation. God certainly did not want his children to be confused with them.

Because of the restriction placed on women here many people, the radical feminists, see the Bible as a sexist book. They judge the Bible by their own philosophy rather than the other way around. The Bible is the standard by which all things must be judged. The Bible is the inspired, infallible, inerrant Word of God, the perfect Word of the perfect God, truth without any mixture of error. That is a very narrow view. Absolutely! I am nearing retirement. I have already had a major heart attack. I will be standing before the divine Author of the Bible before long and if I have held too narrow a view He will set me straight. If, however, I am in error, I want to be sure it is on the side of the authority of the Word of God.

The Bible is clear on the subject of women in the church. But in order to appreciate what it has to say we must understand the whole message. The women at Corinth were a source of some of the confusion and the cause of some of the problems. Areas of concern were dress, morals, and spiritual gifts. Women had found freedom and dignity in Christianity they had never found anywhere else, but some of the women in Corinth were abusing that freedom. They were assuming the role God had assigned men in the Old Testament. They seem to have been at the heart of the tongue problem in that church, as they often have been in the modern church. The command to keep silent, however, is not restricted to speaking in tongues, as we will see in the following verses.

14:35 - LET THEM ASK THEIR HUSBANDS. *“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.”* I found in my notes on this verse that I made about fifteen years ago an interesting lead sentence: “This is a very difficult passage.” I wonder how many people have begun their study of this passage with that thought. Women have always been a vital part of the church. Certain women followed Jesus. Women were the first witnesses to the Resurrection of Christ. Women were sent to tell the Apostles of the Resurrection. Certain women held positions of influence and leadership in the early church. Paul concluded the Epistle to the Romans with a note of greetings: “Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks for my life,” (Rom. 16:3-4b, NKJV). Here, and in other places, Priscilla’s name comes before her husbands. In spite of that, Paul here (as in 11:6, 16) is talking about “what is proper in the church meetings, and he appeals to the practices of the other churches for support. He is also rebuking the Corinthians for their pride and independence, as if they alone had received the gospel, and were able to teach everyone else” [NCWB].

Many of the believers in most of the early churches were Jewish and some of the things Paul writes is written against that backdrop. At the same time it would be a mistake to limit all he has to say on this subject to Jewish believers or to tie it exclusively to Jewish culture. Yet, we must not discount the Jewish background. “The Jews would not suffer a woman to read in the synagogue; though a servant or even a child, had this permission; but the apostle refers to irregular conduct, such conduct as proved that they were not under obedience, 1 Corinthians

14:34" [CLARKE].

Ideally, women who study God's and are convinced that God wants them to assume this role in the church will teach younger girls and young women the Word of God so that the church will avoid the controversy which would almost certainly follow if a man in the church tries to silence women in meetings. There are many women who feel very strongly that men should serve as pastors and deacons, and furthermore, they do not want to hear a woman preach to them. They would prefer to have other women teach them in a Bible class - where they often excel - or lead in other services for women.

14:36 - THE WORD OF GOD. *"Was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only?"* What he is asking, in essence, is "Was Corinth the sole repository of the Gospel?" Did Gospel truth originate with the Corinthian believers? Or did they receive it from others? Was it from you that other Churches received the Gospel? Are you the mother Church? Are you the model for all other churches, the pattern for rules, and orders, and customs. The answer of course is that many other churches were founded before the church at Corinth. When there was a major problem concerning the how Gentiles were saved, Paul and Barnabas led a group from Antioch of Syria to Jerusalem to seek help in resolving the issue (The Jerusalem Conference of A.D. 51, as recorded in Acts 15 and Galatians 2). Paul was probably breathing a prayer of thanksgiving that all the other churches were not copying Corinth.

In verses 36-40 Paul stresses that "If any of you are spiritual" (vs. 37), he will show it by recognizing (obeying) "the Lord's commandments." Wiersbe is right: "The Spirit of God never works apart from or contrary to the Word of God, and nowhere is this principle needed more than in the area of spiritual gifts. We cannot be guided by somebody's subjective emotional experience, but we can be guided by the unchanging objective Word of God" [WIERSBE]. Note the basic principles for spiritual worship that Paul gives to the church:

- (1) The teaching and preaching of the Word takes precedence over everything else.
- (2) The church must be built up.
- (3) There must be nothing that would hurt the testimony before unbelievers.
- (4) There must always be self-control.
- (5) Everything must be done "decently and in order," following the Word of God.
- (6) Women are not to exercise authority over men.
- (7) There must be understanding before there can be blessing.

It is evident from Scripture that there was an informality about the meetings of the early church. We must avoid formality on one hand and fanaticism on the other. It is a fine line to toe. A planned service is not an unspiritual service, for the same Spirit can lead in the planning beforehand just as He can lead in the service itself. But even in a planned service, we must make room for the Spirit to lead, lest we grieve Him [WIERSBE].

14:37 - THE LORD'S COMMANDMENT. *"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.” What a test! Any person with a genuine gift of prophecy or the spiritual gift of discernment would know that this message was from God. God does not send mixed signals. One who boasted the gift of prophecy, or one with the gift of tongues, or one who was creating a disturbance would be quick to resent and refute these harsh words from Paul. However, he claims inspiration for this message.

Any spiritually minded person should know, and any genuine prophet would absolutely recognize the fact that what Paul is writing is the Lord’s Commandment. Obedience is certainly implied. Any one who is under the influence of the Holy Spirit he will recognize the Word of God. Every born-again believer is indwelt by the divine Author of all Scripture. If we are walking in the Spirit, yielding to every impulse of the Spirit, He will affirm that which He has inspired. There is no way a lost person will experience that affirmation. He may have a genuine conviction that the Bible is the Word of God - as a matter of fact he may have fewer doubts than many preachers of this generation. But the Holy Spirit does not indwell him to affirm the commandments of God. Sadly, there are Christians who seem almost as blind to the truth as a lost person. Those are believers who are walking in the flesh and not in the spirit.

14:38 - NOT RECOGNIZED. *“But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.”* If one does not recognize this Epistle as the Word of God, he “is not recognized?” The question is, by whom? By God, or by other believers? Is Paul saying that any member who does not recognize Paul’s words (as the Word of God) should not have his own words accepted? It is possible that this means that if a member of the church read, or heard this letter read, and did not accept it as the Word of God, the church should not let him speak or teach - they should not recognize him (as in a business meeting?). However, the probable meaning is that is that Paul is saying that after all this time if one does not recognize this epistle as the Word of God, let him continue in his ignorance. The missionary will no longer try to persuade him. This points to one who deliberately rejects the authority of Paul’s instructions. He says, “let him be ignorant” (not recognized). It would be a waste of words to try to convince him if he was determined to ignore Paul’s teaching.

14:39 - THEREFORE. *“Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues.”* He has made his point (“therefore”), and as their brother in Christ (“my brethren”) they should not forbid any believer from speaking in other languages, but they should impose the guidelines set down in this epistle on the practice in church services.

DESIRE TO PROPHECY. If anyone is seeking, or praying for the gifts of the Spirit, let him pray for the higher gift that will enable him to teach the Word of God to those who are ignorant of it. This is the most valuable gift, because it is the most useful gift of the Spirit.

DO NOT FORBID TO SPEAK IN TONGUES. Clarke writes, “Let every gift have its own place and operation; let none envy another; nor prevent him from doing that part of the work to which God, by giving the qualification, has evidently called him” [CLARKE]. There

was a genuine purpose in the gift of languages, especially at this time in the history of the church. Christians often came into contact with lost people who could not speak or understand the language of the believer. God empowered some of his believers with the power to speak to that person in his own native language, just as the believers did at Pentecost. Even in that period, the Holy Spirit, Who gives the gifts, sought through this epistle to encourage the gifts that promoted the edification of the church, and at the same time, He set specific restrictions on the use of the lesser gift (tongues) so that they would not be used to promote confusion and so that the gifted party would not boast of his gifts.

Why do some people pray for, long for, and beg for the lesser gift of languages when the greater gifts (faith, hope, and love, Ch. 13) are available to all believers? Is it that they are the most dramatic gifts? Is it that they believe this gift, more than any other will affirm their salvation, of their sanctification? A good rule of thumb is to make yourself available to God and let Him equip you as He sees fit.

14:40 - ALL THINGS. *“But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner.”* By “all things” Paul may well be including prophesying, speaking in tongues, the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, the conduct of women, and anything else involved in their meetings.

IN AN ORDERLY MANNER. An orderly procedure is the only way to have true Christian freedom. This is not a wimpish appeal to this very difficult subject, it is a powerful conclusion and as such it should always be kept before the people of God. God is not the God of confusion and impulsive speech. He is totally secure in His nature, His character, and His position. Therefore, He does “all things properly and in an orderly manner,” and the fact that He expects that of His children should be no surprise to anyone. This “properly and in an orderly manner” rule should be applied to all matters of the church. We should apply it to every aspect of church services. To summarize, Paul lays down a two-fold solution to the abuses of tongues by some at Corinth: (1) give proper importance to prophecy and (2) regulate the use of tongues.

The Holy Spirit gifts people in such a way as to bring order out of chaos. Sadly, we are seeing more and more examples of situations today in which groups within some churches seemed driven to bring chaos out of order. In the name of evangelism, key leaders in some churches have determined to impose a new worship style on their church and when they meet with resistance they create a separate “traditional” service for those who are uncomfortable with it.

Change is not necessarily bad, nor is it automatically good. I have spent my entire ministry trying to get some members of churches to make some changes, but the changes I have promoted were along sound biblical lines. Today, in the name of evangelism, churches are being divided, often by a pious pastor who seems intoxicated with his own success - which he justifies by the “scoreboard” (additions, baptisms, attendance). In some cases there have been reports of

a pastor or an evangelist leading younger members in mocking and ridiculing older members. Youth are taken into a business meeting by a staff member for a block vote against “traditional” members.

After listening for some time to some of the actions taken by the staff of one church in their implementation of “The Purpose Driven Church,” it seemed to me that the purpose was to drive the older people out of the church. Some have concluded that they should give the “traditional” members a service on Saturday evening and get them completely out of everything on Sunday. They still, however, expect them to pay the bills!

Whatever the church does, it should be done in an orderly manner. Manipulation, misdirection, and misinformation are not of God. Arrogance, strife, lying, and backbiting to not glorify God. Power plays, conspiracies, and betrayals to not honor Him. But those things are going on in the name of Jesus Christ! Tragically, many young people have been used as tools to usurp control of a local church. If those young people are hurt, even if they are not taught sound doctrine, they may end up out of church, and those injured people will be hard to reach in the future.

“But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner.” This is not an afterthought! It should be one of the guiding principles in the work of the church. It is also consistent with the fruit of the spirit in believers (Gal. 5:22-23).

VII. THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION, 15:1-58.

A. The Importance of the Resurrection - 15:1-11.

“Having dealt with the unifying spirit, constituting the body of Christ, and with the un failing law of love governing the actions of all members of that body, the apostle now comes to this great subject of the resurrection” [Morgan: 183] (Morgan, G. Campbell, *The Corinthian Letters of Paul*, Revell, Old Tappan, NJ, 1946, pp. 247). We must keep in mind the Corinthian background. While the epistle was intended for the church universal, it was sent first to this particular church in a pagan culture to deal with specific issues, including questions the members had asked in an earlier letter to Paul, as well as issues dealt with in reports Paul had received.

The purpose of this chapter is found in verse 12: “How say some of you that there is no resurrection?” Some were not just saying that Christ was not raised from the dead. Like the Sadducees, they were denying the fact of the resurrection of the dead (which, of course, would include the resurrection of Christ). Paul moves on to “the subject of resurrection in the abstract in a marvelous manner, in one of the most wonderful passages in all literature” [Morgan: 183].

Morgan writes, “The glory of our Christianity is that it never views life as being complete in this world” [MORGAN: 182]. But is there proof of the resurrection of Christ? There are three proofs (which outline verses 1-11).

- (1) Verses 1-2 - The Gospel offers proof of the resurrection.
- (2) Verses 3-4 - The testimony of Scripture.
- (3) Verses 5-11 - The witnesses to the actual resurrection.

It is not clear that the subject of resurrection was included among the questions in the Corinthians’ letter to Paul. But, somehow he had learned that some members of the Corinthian church were denying the doctrine of resurrection as he had taught it to them. He deals with this subject in some detail. Or better yet, the Holy Spirit, Who is the divine Author, knew about this heresy and inspired their missionary friend and founder of the church to reveal divine truth to them.

15:1 - I MAKE KNOWN. *“Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand...”* At least one commentary sees the words, “I make known to you” as a reproach, and after thinking about it, it is hard to argue the point - considering all the other problems at Corinth. “This phrase is somewhat reproachful, for it should not have been necessary for Paul to remind the Corinthians, who thought they were so spiritual, of the basic facts of the gospel on which their faith rested (Gal. 1:11)” [NCWB].

THE GOSPEL WHICH I PREACHED. There is nowhere a more concise working definition of the content of the Gospel anywhere in Scripture. The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ are said to have been “according to the Scriptures” (vs. 3). These events, so essential to the Gospel story, not only occurred at the time, place, and in the manner described in Scriptures, but also for the purpose and with the results described in Scriptures (this is history, not fiction or myth). “He died in our place, satisfying the demands of God’s holiness. He rose bodily from the grave. Through personal faith in Him, we can be delivered from eternal punishment in hell and live eternally in His presence. The content of our proclamation is the Word of God (2 Ti 3:14--4:2)” [DSB].

Jesus Christ is “the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow” (Heb. 13:8). God the Father is immutable (“I change not”). The Third Member of the Trinity is One with the Father and Son - three in Person, One in essence. Those who were spiritual (14:37) recognized that which Paul wrote as the Word of God. Scripture never changes, it never needs to be updated or amended. Those who had heard Paul teach on the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ had been taught the truth as revealed by God the Father. If they had forgotten that lesson, this Scripture should have been accepted as authoritative.

15:2 - BY WHICH YOU ARE SAVED. *“By which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.”* Paul had proclaimed to them the complete Gospel (vs. 1), including the resurrection. They were saved when they responded to the Gospel he had preached to them. How do we know Paul preached the resurrection? There is no salvation apart from one’s belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Paul wrote to the Roman church:

That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and **believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead**, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation (Romans 10:9-10, emphasis added).

The Gospel Paul had preached in Corinth (2:1-2) had not changed; but he feared that just as there had been dissension in the church concerning the message of Christ crucified and its implication for believers, the same was happening with regard to the message of His resurrection.

As the former message was an essential element in the Corinthians’ experience of ongoing salvation (the pres. tense of the verb **saved** focuses on sanctification), so was the latter. To reject bodily resurrection eviscerated “the gospel” and made faith **vain** (*eikeô*, “without cause” or “without success”; cf. vv. 14, 17) because it had an unworthy object (cf. 15:13, 17). Believing the gospel includes holding **firmly** to belief in Christ’s resurrection. Unless one holds firmly, his belief is “in vain”; cf. Matt. 13:18-22) [BKC].

Your salvation, Paul is saying, depends your belief in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ - this belief is indispensable to your salvation (see Mark 16:16.) Paul here shows the importance of this doctrine.

In every respect it demanded their attention. It was that which was first preached among them; that which they had solemnly professed; that by which they had been built up; and that which was connected with their salvation. It does not mean simply that by this they were brought into a salvable state (Clarke, Macknight, Whitby, Bloomfield, etc.), but it means that their hopes of eternal life rested on this; and by this they were then “in fact” saved from the condemnation of sin, and were in the possession of the hope of eternal life [BARNES].

IF YOU HOLD FAST. This is in the condition of the first class, assumed to be true. He assumes that most of them held fast to the doctrine he had taught them.

UNLESS YOU BELIEVE IN VAIN. This is a condition of the first class - that would be the case if Christ had not been raised from the dead. If Jesus had not risen, their belief in Him would have been in vain - that is, everything else they might have believed about Him would have been meaningless.

15:3 - I DELIVERED. “*For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures...*” The NKJV has, “For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received...” The word “first” here is used, not in the same sense of time, but of importance. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is not a secondary or incidental doctrine, it is essential and primary. That which Paul had preached which was “of first importance” includes the following facts (vv. 3-4):

1. Christ died.
2. He was buried.
3. He was raised.
4. He appeared to His disciples (Cephas and the twelve).

WHAT I ALSO RECEIVED. Direct revelation is claimed here just as it was about the institution of the Lord's Supper (11:23). Four facts are given in explaining the Gospel Paul preached. The four facts are presented by four verbs (died, was buried, hath been raised, appeared). To head off any charge of inconsistency in Paul's letters I will quote F. F. Bruce (*I & II Corinthians* in The New Century Bible Commentary, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1971, p. 262):

Paul uses the same two Greek verbs appropriate to the transmitting of tradition (*paradidomi* and *paralambano*) as in 11.23; this implies that the outline of the Christian message which follows was imparted to him by others, How then can such a statement be reconciled with Gal. 1:11f, where he solemnly affirms of the gospel which he preached: ‘I did not receive it (*paralambano*, as here) from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ?’ He must have distinguished in his mind the sense in which the gospel came to him by direct revelation from that in which it came to him by tradition. The contradiction is apparent, not real: both senses were equally true to his experience, by the apologetic or polemic requirements of the moment might lead him at times to emphasize the one to the seeming exclusion of the other. His explanation might be that the essence of the gospel, ‘Jesus is the risen Lord’, was communicated to him from heaven on the Damascus road; it was not human testimony that moved him to accept it. His own account agrees with Luke's, that as soon as he received this revelation he began to declare it publicly (Gal. 1.15-17; cf. Ac. 9.20:-22). But the historical details of the teachings of Jesus, the events of Holy Week, the resurrection appearances and so forth were related to him by those who had first-hand experience of them [BRUCE: 138].

Paul is not the source of the doctrines he had delivered to them, and he never regarded them as his own. Paul means that he had received these doctrines from the Lord Jesus by inspiration (compare the 1 Cor. 10:23, Gal. 1:2). Here he claims to be under the divine guidance, and to have received his doctrines from God.

CHRIST DIED. That is an historical fact - and much, much more. When Jesus Christ died on the Cross, God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself (Rom. 5:8).

FOR OUR SINS. His death was vicarious - He died for us - not for His own sins, but for ours (He had no sin). We refer to this as Substitutionary Atonement - Jesus died as our Substitute. The word Paul used means in behalf of, or instead of. In Rom. 5:6, Paul wrote "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly," and in Rom. 5: 8, we find, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." These verses and others hold that the Lord Jesus died as an expiatory offering on account of our sins.

They caused his death; for them he shed his blood; to make expiation for them, and to wipe them away, he expired on the cross. This passage is full proof that Christ did not die merely as a martyr, but that his death was to make atonement for sin. That he died as an atoning sacrifice, or as a vicarious offering, is here declared by Paul to be among the "first" things that he taught; and the grand fundamental truth on which the church at Corinth had been founded, and by which it had been established, and by which they would be saved. It follows that there can be no true church, and no well founded hope of salvation, where the doctrine is not held that Christ died for sin [BARNES].

ACCORDING TO THE SCRIPTURES. The Scriptures are accurate and applicable in all things to which they speak, as Jesus taught (Luke 22.37; 24:25); and as Peter pointed out (Acts 2.25-27; 3:35); and as Paul had done (Acts 13-.24f; 17:3). Clarke makes some interesting observations at this point, including the fact that it is not said any where in the Scriptures, in express terms, that Christ should rise on the third day;

but it is fully implied in his types, as in the case of Jonah, who came out of the belly of the fish on the third day; but particularly in the case of Isaac, who was a very expressive type of Christ; for, as his being brought to the Mount Moriah, bound and laid on the wood, in order to be sacrificed, pointed out the death of Christ; so his being brought alive on the third day from the mount was a figure of Christ's resurrection. Bishop Pearce and others refer to Matthew 12:40; 16:21; and Luke 9:22; "which two Gospels, having been written at the time when Paul wrote this epistle, were properly called by the name of the Sacred Scriptures." It might be so; but I do not know of one proof in the New Testament where its

writings, or any part of them, are called the Scriptures [CLARKE].

Did Jesus not prophesy that He would be raised the third day? Yes, He did. Yet, His closest followers did not understand those prophecies until after His resurrection, John being the first to believe at the open sepulcher. They would remember that His teaching, though not explicit, were prophetic. The other question Clarke brings up is the fact that no where in the New Testament is it called the Scriptures. Again, if he means explicit claims he may have a point, but in reality Paul claims this epistle to be the Word of God. Does Paul have in mind the epistle he was writing when he wrote to Timothy, “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good” (2 Tim. 3:16-17)? The doctrine is sound, whether the claim is made explicitly or not.

15:4 - AND THAT. *“And that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...”* It is interesting that the word “that” is used before each verb, showing each as a separate event.

HE WAS BURIED. The Gospels show this to be an important detail in the Gospel account. We often overlook it because of the importance of the Crucifixion and Resurrection. He was buried because He was dead. Jesus had not simply swooned, He was dead. The Roman executioners were masters of their trade. Because He was dead He was buried. The words, “According to the Scriptures,” probably points to Isaiah 53:9a (“And they made His grave with the wicked”). Burial emphasizes finality of death and emphasizes the reality of the resurrection. **HE WAS RAISED.** The perfect passive indicative is literally “He was raised,” rather than the KJV, “He rose.” “There is a reason for this sudden change of tense. Paul wishes to emphasize the permanence of the resurrection. He is still risen” [ATR]. “His burial is more closely connected with his resurrection than his death. Even at the moment when Christ died, the power of his inextinguishable life exerted itself (Matt. 27:52). For Christ, the grave was not a place where his body would decay, but the place from which he would come with new life” [NCWB].

ON THE THIRD DAY. We do not know whether Paul had seen either of the Four Gospels or not, but this fact is closely identified with the fact of the resurrection of Christ (Acts 10:40; Luke 24:46; Mark 10:34). He arose on Sunday morning following Good Friday. The main point here is that the Scripture taught that Jesus should rise from the dead. Barnes writes that “It is not of necessity implied that it was predicted that he should rise “on the third day,” but that he should rise from the dead. See the argument for this stated in the discourse of Peter, in Acts 2:24-32. The particular passage which is there urged in proof of his resurrection is derived from Ps. 16” [BARNES].

15:5 - HE APPEARED. *“And that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.”* Cephas is Simon Peter. This does not mean merely in a vision, but an actual appearance. Remember, there was the Cephas party in the church at Corinth. For the account of this special appearance to Peter, see Luke 24.-34. Ten appearances are recorded besides the one to Paul [ATR: 187].

Paul mentions only five of those ten, including the appearance to James (not given elsewhere). Paul's testimony that he had seen the risen Christ must have been convincing to those who knew him.

TO THE TWELVE. He uses "twelve" as a technical term to denote the Apostles. There were only ten were present on one occasion and eleven another time (Judas was dead and Thomas was absent when He first appeared to the Apostles (John 20:24). Peter and the others saw Jesus because He manifested Himself to them (He let Himself be seen by them).

THE APPEARANCES OF JESUS

IN OR AROUND JERUSALEM:

1. To Mary Magdalene, John 20:11-18.
2. To the other women, Matt. 28:8-10.
3. To Peter, Luke 24:34.
4. To the ten disciples, Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-25.
5. To the eleven (including Thomas), John 20:26-29
6. To those present at the Ascension, Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:4-11.
7. To the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, Luke 24:13-35.
8. IN GALILEE: To the disciples in Galilee, Matt. 28:16-20; John 21:1-24.
9. To 500, 1 Cor. 15:6.
10. To James and the Apostles, 1 Cor. 15:7.
11. To Paul on the road to Damascus, Acts 9:1-6; 18:3, 10; 22:1-8; 23:11; 26:12-18; 1 Cor. 15:8.

15:6 - HE APPEARED...FIVE HUNDRED. *"After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep..."* The Resurrection is unique to Christ - it is unique to Christianity. Ludicrously incredible claims were made by pagans for their gods, but there were no such wild mystical claims associated with Jesus Christ - unbelievers and liberals may have a problem with them today, but there were too many witnesses to the Resurrection of Jesus Christ for people to reject them. They might attribute the power to do the miraculous works to the devil but they could not deny that they happened. The strength of this witness to the resurrection lies in the fact that the majority of them were still living when Paul wrote this Epistle, approximately spring of A.D. 54 or 55, not over 25 years after Christ's resurrection.

There was no denying the resurrection - Jesus appeared to more than 500 of His disciples one time. Students of the Word agree that this probably occurred in Galilee, where Jesus had spent the greater part of his public ministry, and where he had made most disciples. The exact location of this appearance in Galilee, however, is not given and is therefore not known. Tours of the Holy Land have often taken tourists to various places and identified them as having to do

with the life or ministry of Christ. Reputable archeologists have accepted some and rejected others. Far more important than the location is the fact that these disciples were the ones who received the Great Commission from the risen Lord (Matt. 28:18-20).

What is most remarkable, aside from the appearance itself, is that the account of this appearance is omitted by all four Gospel writers. Why would they have omitted such remarkable proof of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus? We are simply not told, but this was not the choice of the human writer - surely one would have thought of it. That which was included was determined by the Holy Spirit. It is possible that the incident described in Matthew 28:16 is this prearranged meeting on the mountain in Galilee.

There might be a clue in Matt. 28:10, which will throw some light on this passage. After his resurrection, Jesus said to the women who were at the open tomb: "Go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me." And in 1 Cor. 15:16 it is said, "The eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them." Jesus had spent most of his public life in Galilee and made most of his disciples there. Word of His death, burial, and resurrection would have spread quickly through the region as pilgrims returned from Passover. It is reasonable, therefore, that these disciples would receive some public confirmation of the fact resurrection.

No doubt the eleven Apostles, upon their return to Galilee, would have told believers there that Jesus had told the women to tell them that He would meet them on a certain mountain. It is not surprising that among the multitudes who had followed him in Galilee there would be so great a number who would be drawn together by the report that the Lord Jesus, who had been put to death in Jerusalem, was about to appear to them. Perhaps the only surprise is that more were not there! Even the slightest rumor of His promise to appear to them would have been enough to bring these disciples together in anticipation of His appearance. "One thing is proved by this, that the Lord Jesus had many more disciples than is generally supposed. If there were five hundred who could be assembled at once in a single part of the land where he had preached, there is every reason to suppose that there were many more in other parts of Judea" [BARNES].

MOST OF WHOM REMAIN. Most of the more than 500, Paul says, are now alive, and can be appealed to as witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. "What more conclusive argument for the truth of his resurrection could there be than that 500 persons had seen him, who had been intimately acquainted with him in his life, and who had become his followers? If the testimony of 500 could not avail to prove his resurrection, no number of witnesses could. And if 500 people could thus be deceived, any number could; and it would be impossible to substantiate any simple matter of fact by the testimony of eye-witnesses" [BARNES].

BUT SOME HAVE FALLEN ASLEEP. Some of the more than 500 witness had already died, but most of them were still living and giving their testimony to the resurrection of Christ. "Fallen asleep" is the common expression employed in the Scripture to describe the death of saints, probably to portray:

- (1) The calmness and peace with which, they die, like sinking into a gentle sleep;
- (2) The hope of a resurrection, as we sink to sleep with the expectation of again awaking; (John 11:11; 1 Cor. 11:30).

The greatest of miracles associated with Christ and with Christianity must be verifiable, credible, and unquestionable - and it was to many in that day when sophisticated enemies of Christ would have done anything to defeat the story of the Resurrection - in fact, they tried and failed. One or two witnesses might have imagined they had seen the risen Lord. A handful of followers might have conspired for one reason or another to perpetuate the story. But there were too many eye witnesses, too many first hand accounts, and too many natural variations in the telling of the story for this to have been a conspiracy.

15.7 - HE APPEARED TO JAMES. *“Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles...”*

Since Paul identifies this individual only as “James,” we must choose between three men by that name: James, the son of Zebedee and brother of John, one of the twelve apostles; James, the son of Alphaeus, also an apostle; and James, the half-brother of our Lord, the true son of both Joseph and Mary. James the brother of John had been the first Apostle to face martyrdom in A. D. 44 at the hand of Herod and his henchmen. James, the son of Alphaeus would almost certainly have been so identified to the Corinthians if he had been the one intended. James the brother of the Lord was the only James who would have been so well known that no other identification would be necessary. The appearance to James is not recorded in either of the four Gospels - there was no reason for the repetition, and since the Holy Spirit inspired the reference here no other reference was necessary.

This explains the presence of the brothers of Jesus in the upper room (Acts 1. 14). He was not one of the Twelve, but he became the indisputable leader of the church at Jerusalem and of the Christian movement in Jerusalem and Judea. He was the author of the epistles which bears his name. It was also this James who wrote the letter expressing the opinion arrived at by Christian leaders at the Jerusalem Conference in A. D. 51. It was he to whom Paul went to report following the Third Missionary Journey, and obviously the one to whom Paul carried the “offering” that had been received from churches all over Macedonia, including Corinth.

Since Jesus appeared to His disciples over a period of 40 days following His resurrection, how do we know that He did not make appearances that are not recorded? Is it possible that the Scripture mentions only the more prominent instances because these were enough to substantiate the fact of his resurrection? We can only speculate. However, if it was necessary for us to know more we would have been provided with that information. Barnes speculates that

When Paul went there, after his return from Arabia, he had an interview with James (see Gal. 1:19, “But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord’s brother”), and it is highly probable that Paul would state to him the vision which he had of the Lord Jesus on his way to Damascus, and that James also would state to Paul the fact that he had seen him after he rose. This may be the reason why

Paul here mentions the fact, because he had it from the lips of James himself [BARNES].

TO ALL THE APOSTLES. Robertson holds that this appearance was to the eleven at the Ascension of Christ from Olivet [ATR]; while Barnes claims it was “perhaps the occasion at the sea of Galilee, recorded in John 21:14. Or it is possible that he frequently met the apostles assembled together, and that Paul means to say, that during the forty days after his resurrection he was often seen by them” [BARNES]. Clarke, who is often quoted by Barnes, suggests that “the apostles” here “including, not only the eleven, but, as some suppose, the seventy-two disciples” [CLARKE]. The New Commentary on the Whole Bible advances the theory that this simply means “many others besides ‘the twelve’ already enumerated (15:5)” [NCWB]. So who is right? Beats me! But, I have never been one to argue with A. T. Robertson, except in the area of Eschatology - and possibly here. The eleven apostles were definitely witnessed the Ascension were, but were they the only ones there? For example, some of the 120? We are not told, but since The angel addressed the witnesses as “Ye men of Galilee” (KJV), it is understandable that Robertson would conclude that this is the appearance to which Paul refers.

I checked with a number of sources, including dictionaries and the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE) without finding a reference to the witnesses to the Resurrection. The ISBE has a lengthy article on the Ascension, with emphasis on the fact that it was the culmination of the work of our Lord and a book by book discussion of the significance of the Ascension in the new Testament - that is, in the books in which it is mentioned [ISBE].

15:8 - LAST OF ALL. *“And last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.”* Paul was the last to see Him, and because He saw Him after the Ascension on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-6, 17), the saints in Corinth were well aware.

AS TO ONE UNTIMELY BORN. After all the other times in which he appeared to people; after he had ascended to heaven. With no knowledge of the original, the reader of an English translation might assume that Paul is acknowledging that the appearance to him on the road to Damascus was beyond the scope and frame of the earthly ministry, the death, burial, the Resurrection, and the Ascension, and therefore less significant than other appearances. He is not saying that since he was the last to see Him, and then only in a vision, it might not have carried the weight of other appearances. But this is in no way what he is saying. It is important that we understand what he really was saying - especially in this post-Christian, post-modern world of self-love, self-worth, and self-esteem. Get ready for this!

The Greek word Paul used actually means an abortion, one born prematurely. The word is found nowhere else in the New Testament. It is used here with shocking impact, but the meaning is that he “was ‘exceedingly unworthy;’ that was not worth regard; that was unfit to be employed in the service of the Lord Jesus; that had the same relation to that which was worthy of the apostolic office which an abortion has to a living child” [CLARKE]. The expression seems to have been proverbial, used to denote anything that is vile, offensive, loathsome, unworthy. Paul is saying that his visit from the Lord was not based on his merit, but on the grace of God

manifested toward one who was as worthless as the product of an abortion. It implies that Paul saw himself as a vile, evil, abominable as a persecutor of Christians, and enemy of Christ, and as unworthy to be an apostle. What does this say for the high self-esteem, self-worth, self-love philosophy so highly touted by pop-psychology today? Paul was more into high Christ-esteem! If you hold Christ in high esteem, you will not be preoccupied with your own esteem.

To Paul's knowledge, no such appearance had been granted to anyone else after his own experience; hence, he was last of all among those entitled to be called "Apostle." It seems that it was an essential requirement for an apostle to have seen the Lord, and to have received his appointment directly from Him. Paul appealed to this experience as a proof of his call to the apostleship. And it does not appear that, after this time, Jesus ever did make a personal appearance to any one.

HE APPEARED TO ME ALSO. As we have seen, the Lord appeared to Paul on the way to Damascus (Acts 9). This passage proves that the apostle Paul saw the same Christ, the same "body" which had been seen and identified by the others, or else his assertion would be no proof that he was risen from the dead. It was not his imagination, it was not even a "revelation" that he had risen; it was a real vision of the ascended Redeemer.

15:9 - LEAST OF THE APOSTLES. *"For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."* This is not mock humility here. In the first place, the Holy Spirit determined what would be included in this letter. In the second place, any one whose philosophy was, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is vain" (Phil. 1:21) - for one who longed to go home to be with his Lord - it is doubtful that he is doing anything other than expressing a deep felt conviction. In Ephesians 3:8, Paul calls himself "less than the least of all saints"; and in 1 Timothy 1:15, he calls himself "the chief of sinners." Yet under attack from the Judaizers he stood up for his rank as equal to any apostle (2 Cor. 11:5f, 23).

This does not refer to Paul's diminutive stature, as some have suggested. It may, however, suggest that in humility, Paul saw himself in comparison the original apostles, and even to James, as one who is as far from maturity as a believer as a premature baby is to a full-term infant. The verse following shows that this is the sense in which the word is used.

BECAUSE I PERSECUTED THE CHURCH OF GOD. Paul is not claiming to be the least of the apostles in call, character, or commission. He considers himself to be the least of the apostles because he is the only one who ever persecuted the followers of Christ, the only one who was ever the enemy of Jesus. This terrible fact haunted Paul like a nightmare for the rest of his life. One can imagine his closing his eyes at night and seeing the faces of terrified children whose parents he had dragged from their homes because they professed faith in Christ. His dreams may have been filled with their cries. He knew he had been forgiven, but he could not forget that he was the leader of the persecution of Christians in Jerusalem, and that he had initiated the effort to take that persecution to Damascus. It was on the way to Damascus that he had the dramatic encounter with the risen Lord.

15:10 - BY THE GRACE OF GOD. *“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.”* He had been saved by the grace of God, he was being sanctified by the grace of God, and he had been called to be an apostle by the grace of God. By the grace of God he ministered as no one else ever has for the Lord. His actual character and attainments; his successes and blessings; and even his trials were under the grace of God.

If masses experienced the grace of God and adopted the same attitude Paul did, it would put a lot of psychologists and mental health personnel out of business. Few are content to say, “By the grace of God, I am what I am.” This is sound mental health, but more to the point, it is sound spiritual health. I speak as one with a major in one of the social sciences (I have a major in Sociology and a major in Bible from Mississippi College, as well as two post-graduate degrees. During my four years at MC and three years at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary I also took classes in Christian counseling. One of the four areas of study for my doctorate was in Christian counseling. When I speak of pop-psychology, it is not the cry of a fanatic who knows nothing of Freud and Jung, but one who was trained in the social sciences, and one who has spent a lot of time actually counseling with various individuals. It is still my conviction that a right view of Jesus Christ will correct many of the problems with regard to one’s view of himself.

I LABORED EVEN MORE THAN ALL OF THEM. Is Paul bragging? Does he seek to exalt himself above all the other apostles after just claiming to be the least of them all? No, he is simply stating the fact as inspired by the Holy Spirit, Who has never varied from His purpose in inspiring Paul to write this Scripture. Paul was simply stating facts to which the record in the Book of Acts will attest, and which the thirteen epistles of Paul will affirm. He had tremendous energy and used it wisely. He was unmarried and had no family obligations. He was simply a servant of Christ, but one used by the Lord as no one else has ever been used.

15:11 - SO WE PREACH. - *“Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.”*

Remember at the beginning of this epistle how Paul had to deal with divisions in the church over leaders - they were divided over loyalty to Peter, Paul, Appolos, and “Christ.” In addition, the Judaizers and certain other Jewish believers challenged Paul’s apostleship. He was not one of the original Twelve, they reasoned, so his word did not carry as much weight as a word from one of them. His response was that it really does not matter who the preacher was as long as people believed. “In the final analysis it was not the messenger but the message which was important (cf. 1:18-4:5), and in that regard the apostolic message was that the crucified Christ became the resurrected Christ, which message Paul did **preach** and the Corinthians **believed**” [BKC].

This is what should matter to both preachers and hearers. This is Paul’s philosophy of ministry and it should be ours. Preachers and hearers today should understand that there is a reason for counting nickels and noses in evangelism, and that purpose is not to glorify the preacher or to glorify a particular church or denomination. It should be used as a barometer to

enable us to see where we are, and a compass to show us where we need to go.

One wonders what some modern pulpiteers would do if they had ever experienced the “success” of George Whitefield, whom God used to turn England and America up-side down for the glory of God and pave the way for the ministry of John Wesley. His preaching to twenty thousand people in an open field baffled the mature, Oxford trained ministers of the Church of England. Whitefield and Wesley were friends who had their differences over certain theological points, but resolved them for them for the sake of the Gospel. It seems to me that as he was growing in favor with the people of England and disfavor with the church, he was anxious to share the field with Wesley and others, thus expressing the same philosophy Paul expresses here. Wesley, by the way, was frustrated for two years or more by his failures, and discouraged by fear that he did not personally know Christ. And indeed, he did preach for more than two years before he was saved, but God was not blessing his preaching during that time. He was totally baffled by the response of England to the preaching of Whitefield. After all, Wesley was thirty-six years old when the twenty-three year old Whitefield was preaching to incredibly large crowds and seeing phenomenal results. Wesley’s knowledge of the Scripture seemed far superior to Whitefield’s, but Whitefield knew Christ and Wesley did not.

B. Consequences of Denying the Resurrection, 15:12-19.

15:12 - THAT HE HAS BEEN RAISED. *“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?”* If the complete Gospel had been preached to them - and it had - then the Resurrection had been both preached and taught. Furthermore, they professed to have believed the Gospel. Paul’s question springs naturally from the proof of the fact of the resurrection of Christ (verse 1-11) and the continual preaching which Paul here assumes by using the condition of the first class - “if” here assumes it to be true. They had heard the Resurrection preached over and over.

HOW DO SOME AMONG YOU SAY. One can put only so much emotion into print, but can you not imagine the intensity and force of these words if he had spoken them to them? I can imagine the fire in his eyes and the power of his voice. “Some **among you** say there is no resurrection of the dead” implies that there were professing Christians in the church who denied the resurrection. Many today deny the miracles of the New Testament. Paul’s answer to those who deny the resurrection is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Everything else hinges on that fact.

Paul is no doubt incredulous. How could any believer deny the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

"Conceivably they thought that the respectable Creek belief in the immortality of the soul was perfectly adequate, and that the idea of the resurrection of the body was an embarrassing Jewish handicap to the progress of the gospel in the Gentile world" [Bruce: 144].

I had heard about Louisiana when I was growing up at Sledge, Mississippi, and toured New Orleans on my Senior Class trip at the end of my final year in high school. I began seminary in 1959 and did mission work in New Orleans. I have spend most of my adult life in north Louisiana, and believe me, I have become acquainted with Louisiana politics. I had heard about the Longs, and followed the career of former governor, Edwin Edwards (convicted in 2000 for numerous federal crimes), but I was not prepared for the statement he made about the Resurrection. Edwards often visited black churches when he was campaigning. But once when asked about the Resurrection he repeated the ridiculous “swoon” theory - Jesus was not really dead, he just fainted, and revived in the cool tomb during the night! However, those who were most determined to stop any such claim at the time were unable to refute the evidence for the resurrection of Christ.

Years ago I heard Dr. Leo Eddleman, who had been President of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary when I was a student there, say that a professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem had made the statement that, based on the evidence, he would have to say that Jesus was raised from the dead. That does not mean that he accepted Jesus as Messiah. What it means was that he found the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth to be irrefutable.

15:13 - BUT IF. *“But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised...”*

“Paul turns the argument around with tremendous force” [ATR]. His point is valid - if there is no such thing as a resurrection of the dead, then Jesus was not raised, and without His resurrection there is no salvation. The resurrection of Christ is both the proof of and the hope of a resurrection for believers.

15:14 - IF CHRIST HAS NOT BEEN RAISED. *“And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain.”* This is a condition contrary to fact, but to follow the argument of the previous verse, if there is no resurrection at all, Jesus was not raised from the dead, and if “Christ as not been raised,” both Paul’s preaching **and** their faith were in vain. If the skeptics refuse to believe the fact of Christ’s resurrection, they had nothing on which to stand.

15:15 - FALSE WITNESSES. *“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.”* To follow his logic, if in spite of the fact that there were no resurrection, he preached a resurrection anyway he would be a false witness.

15:16 - IF THE DEAD ARE NOT RAISED. *“For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised...”* I had a professor who was fond of saying, “It goes without saying...”, to which some of his students concluded, “It could have gone without saying!” In reality, all Paul is doing here is repeating the argument he has already made. Rabbinical scholars were not afraid of repetition or concerned that they might be overworking the argument.

15:17 - IF CHRIST HAS NOT BEEN RAISED. *“And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.”* Little, if any commentary is needed. If Jesus Christ had not been raised from the dead any faith in Him would be worthless.

YOU ARE STILL IN YOUR SINS. The death of Christ has no atoning value if He did not been raise from the dead. If he had not risen he would have been only a man and as such He could not have died for our sins. Paul is very clear in his Epistle to the Romans:

But what does it say? "THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, in your mouth and in your heart"--that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation (Rom. 10:8-10).

15:18 - ASLEEP IN CHRIST. *“Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.”* The Thessalonian believers wrote Paul when he was in Corinth on the Second Missionary Journey to ask him about those who had died in the Lord. He wrote them to reassure them that those who die in the Lord before the Rapture will not miss out on anything - “The dead in Christ shall rise first” (1 Thes. 4:16b). In this passage Paul approaches this from a different perspective. If there is no resurrection, then Christ could not have been raised, and if He had not been raised all those who have died in Him have perished.

15:19 - IF WE HAVE HOPED. *“If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.”* If our hope is limited to this life, we will have denied ourselves what many people call pleasure of this life, and we have no hope of happiness beyond. The Epicureans argued for this position to justify their indulgence in the pleasures of the world. “Paul makes morality turn on the hope of immortality. Is he not right? Witness the breaking of moral ties today when people take a merely animal view of life” [ATR]. One wonders what Robertson would say about moral conditions today!

C. The Christian Hope -- 15:20-34

15:20 - CHRIST HS BEEN RAISED. *“But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.”* We have seen the negative side of the coin, now we will be shown the positive side. In fact, “Christ has been raised from the dead,” and he lives as “the first fruits of those who are asleep.” This is the logical (and triumphant) conclusion at which one must arrive after all the points Paul has made in the argument. For more on “the first fruits” see also verse 23. In Colossians 1:18, Jesus is the “first born from the dead. A few others had been raised from the dead, but they had to died again (the widow’s son at Nain, Eutychus), but not Jesus.

ASLEEP. This is a beautiful picture of death, not to be interpreted as soul-sleep. It is from the Greek word (*koimaumai*) from which comes our “cemetery.” Since Jesus was raised, His people will be raised - as surely as the first fruits guaranteed the coming harvest, so surely does His resurrection guarantee theirs. “This analogy may have come the more readily to Paul’s mind if he is writing between Passover (5:7f) and Pentecost (16:8): the presentation of the first fruits soon after Passover inaugurated the seven weeks which terminated at Pentecost (Lev. 23:15ff)” [BRUCE: 145].

15:21 - BY A MAN CAME DEATH. “*For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead.*” By the first man, Adam, came death, but by the second man, but by the another man, Jesus (the second Adam), came the resurrection of the dead. All hope of a resurrection from the dead rests in Jesus Christ, and in Him alone.

15:22 - IN ADAM. “*For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.*” In Adam all die, but “in Christ all (believers) will be made alive.” All who die, die in Adam, but all who will be made alive will be made alive in Christ.

15:23 - EACH IN HIS OWN ORDER. “*But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming...*” The word rendered “order” means “to arrange” - thus, each in his own division or rank.

AT HIS COMING. The Greek word is *parousia*, a technical word for the arrival or visit of the king or emperor. Secular use of the word can be traced from the Ptolemaic period but Paul, as he often did, adopted it for Christian usage. Paul is only discussing those that are in Christ (3:23; Gal. 5:24) and so says nothing about judgement here (1 Thes. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23). We find that in other passages. For the order of events associated with “His coming,” see the commentaries by this writer on First and Second Thessalonians.

15:24 - THE END. “*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.*” Keep “at his coming” (vs 23) in mind as we think of the end, or consummation of the age (Matt. 13:39p 49; I Peter 4:7).

WHEN HE HANDS OVER THE KINGDOM. The “when” is indefinite as to time, but certain as to God’s plan.

TO THE GOD AND FATHER. The Kingdom belongs to Him - to “The” God and Father. There is not other. There is coming a day when Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, will turn over the kingdom, made up of all believers, to the Heavenly Father.

WHEN HE HAS ABOLISHED. This is the Aorist subjunctive - “whenever He shall abolish.”

The time is coming when Jesus Christ, the Agent of Creation (John 1:1), will bring about the consummation of this age, including the end of all worldly “rule and all authority and power.

“All” includes worldly human power, the authority of nations, and the spiritual powers of darkness. This means all forms of power opposing the will of God. Robertson points out that is the “constative aorist tense covering the whole period of conflict with the final victory as climax” [ATR]. Robertson and many other outstanding Christian educators of his day were Postmillennialists, and while few Southern Baptists would give that view any support today, all who are in Christ have been blessed by his resurrection and will be blessed in His return.

15:25 - HE MUST REIGN. *“For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.”* He **will** reign. But this says “He **must** reign,” and He must reign both to consummate the victory and to fulfill the purpose of God. This points to a the millennial reign of Jesus Christ. The debate over details surrounding the return of Christ and all end-time events has often been very heated. In fact, the debate often throws more heat on the subject that light. We will have to go to other passages in the New Testament to see the broader picture. One might infer from what Paul says here that he had taught them more when he was with them for eighteen months on the Second Missionary Journey.

15:26 - THE LAST ENEMY. *“The last enemy that will be abolished is death.”* This is a free translation. Literally, it is “death (note article, and so subject) is done away, the last enemy.” For more than forty years I have stood with families at the grave side of loved ones. I have tried to offer words of comfort when death came, I prayed with the family, and often lead in the funeral service. I am keenly aware of the fact that death is the enemy. I am just as much aware of the fact that Jesus has won the victory over death. I became far more aware of significance of this when I had a serious heart attack and found myself lying in a bed in intensive care for many days. Before my by-pass surgery, I was reminded of the risks involved in the surgery. What a joy it was to be in that situation and face it without fear, knowing that Jesus Christ has abolished death for me.

One morning Dr. T. J. DeLaughter came into our Old Testament class and told us about greeting one of the janitors, and older black man. Dr. DeLaughter had said, “Good morning. How are you this morning?” The janitor replied, “I’s jest fine. I been born twice, I’s died once, and I aint never gonna’ die agin.” Dr. Delaughter said, “That may not be the way we express it in the classroom, but he was exactly right.”

15:27 - FOR HE HAS PUT. *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.* For “He” we should supply God as the subject (Ps. 8:7). See also, Hebrew 2:5-9.

BUT WHEN HE SAYS. Here Christ must be supplied as the subject if the reference is to his future- and final triumph.

ALL THINGS ARE PUT IN SUBJECTION. He Who started it, He Who has sustained it, is the very One who will come again to “put all things into subjection to Him.” This is the

promise to which we must look when it seems that evil prevails and that evil men often are not called on to give an account in this world. The proud, arrogant dictators - Hitler, Stalin, Mao, Castro, and Hussein - will all be brought under subjection. God is in no hurry because He is not threatened. He can do anything He wants to do whenever He chooses to do it. In His time all things will be brought under subjection to Him.

15:28 - WHEN ALL THINGS ARE SUBJECTED. *“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.”* When all things are subjected to Jesus, He in turn will subject all things to God the Father, Who had Himself subjected all things to the Son.

THAT GOD MAY BE ALL IN ALL. This points to the final goal of all God’s redemptive plans as Paul has so well stated in Romans 11:36: “For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.” The same language is used of Christ in Col. 3:11.

15:29 - BAPTIZED FOR THE DEAD. *“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?”* Even after centuries of study, this passage remains something of a puzzle. Many interpretations have been offered. Robertson claims that “over thirty have been suggested” [ATR]. Tertullian tells of some heretics who believed it means to be baptized in place of dead people (unsaved) in order to save them. Ryrie holds that it being baptized in the place of those who had died; i.e., new converts taking the place of older ones who had died. Baptism for the dead is a common practice among Mormons today. Southern Baptists were surprised to learn a few years ago that some well meaning Mormon had been baptized for the great missionary Lottie Moon. Footnotes in the Believer’s Study Bible may help:

Biblical doctrine should not be built on any verse as difficult and obscure as this one. Since baptism does not save us, being baptized in the place of those who are already dead cannot be of benefit to anyone. The interpretation of this difficult verse yields to an understanding of the Greek preposition *huper*. Usually, the word means "over" or "instead of." But there are times when the only interpretation possible is "concerning." In John 1:30 John the Baptist says, "This is He of [*huper*, concerning] whom I said...." The same applies here: the interpretation should be "concerning the dead." The idea is that Christian baptism concerning death and the promise of resurrection is a meaningless ordinance unless the resurrection is a reality. This interpretation certainly fits well with the context [BSB].

Regardless of the interpretation, Paul’s point is valid. Unless one believes in the resurrection of the dead what is the point of such a practice? Baptism of the dead is doctrinally a heresy, but some at Corinth may have been practicing it. But why would it have ever been considered if they had not believed in a resurrection from the dead?

15:30 - DANGER. *“Why are we also in danger every hour?”* Why did Paul ask this question? What did he have in mind? Which of the issues discussed places us in danger? Does he refer to baptism for the dead, the subjection of all things to God, the Second Coming, or the Resurrection? The context holds that we also, “as well as those who receive baptism which symbolizes death” [ATR] are exposed to danger. That was particularly true in the pagan culture in which Paul lived. The Epistles of Paul and Acts (chapter 19 especially) throw light on Paul’s argument. He was never out of danger, from Damascus to the last visit to Rome where he would be beheaded for the cause of Christ. In 2 Cor.1:8-10b, Paul wrote:

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; indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope.

15:31 - I AFFIRM. *“I affirm, brethren, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.”* Affirmation is essential to our peace of mind. It is a source of comfort to have the deeper things of God affirmed in our hearts and minds.

I DIE DAILY. Does he mean that he dies spiritually every day - that is, he dies daily to sin? There is no doubt that if anyone has every died daily to sin, Paul did, but that is not the subject here. To keep in the context, he is talking about physical trials, suffering, persecution, and threats of death. “Paul was exposed to so many physical dangers and to such violent attacks on himself and on his teachings that ‘daily’ is hardly an exaggeration” [RSB].

15:32 - HUMAN MOTIVES. *“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.”* The NKJV renders it, “In the manner of men.” If Paul had waged spiritual warfare for the wrong motives (i.e. in the flesh and not in the spirit), what would he have profited? He would have received all his reward in this world and none in Heaven.

I FOUGHT WITH WILD BEASTS. If it had served the Lord’s purpose to reveal to the details of his fighting with wild beasts at Ephesus this would have been a good place to reveal it. But of course, He did not. Those who argue for an Ephesian imprisonment for Paul, and Ephesus as the place where he wrote the prison epistles take the verb literally. There is in the ruins of Ephesus now a place called Saint Paul’s Prison. But Robertson points out that Paul was a Roman citizen and “it was unlawful to make a citizen a fighter of wild beasts” [ATR].

Shortly after this Paul wrote 2 Corinthians, but he does not mention such an unusual peril in the list in 2 Cor. 11:23f. Whatever this means, whether figurative or literal, it took place before Paul wrote 1 Corinthians. He wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus to deal with some of the

problems in the church at Corinth. He sent Timothy to try to resolve some of those issues, and then when that failed he sent Titus. When Titus did not arrive back at Ephesus before the end of the shipping season Paul set out for Macedonia where he met Titus, who was returning overland. Upon receiving a good report from Titus, he wrote the Second Epistle to the church at Corinth.

LET US EAT AND DRINK. He probably has Isaiah 22:13 in mind: “Instead, there is gaiety and gladness, Killing of cattle and slaughtering of sheep, Eating of meat and drinking of wine: ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we may die.’” This was the outcry of the people of Jerusalem during the siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrians. It was also the motto of the Epicureans. We must understand that Paul is not giving his view here, but that of people who deny the resurrection.

15:33 DO NOT BE DECEIVED. *“Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company corrupts good morals.’”*

Sin deceives: “For sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me” (Rom. 7:11). Satan deceives: “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” (2 Cor 11:3). The ego deceives: “The arrogance of your heart has deceived you” (Obadiah 1:3). You may deceive yourself: “For you have only deceived yourselves” (Jer. 42:20a). Others may deceive us, as here: “Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company corrupts good morals’”

BAD COMPANY CORRUPTS. This was obviously a current proverb. It is also a proverb we should keep before our children and young people today. When John, my older son was in law school he was active in the Christian Legal Society (CLS). I spoke to this group on two occasions and was blessed far more than they. Later I asked Andy and Lauri Brister to come to our church for a special service. Lauri gave her testimony and Andy delivered the message. Andy had been president of CLS, then Lauri, followed by John, and then his roommate, Lee Coltharp. A church member came by and remarked that he had always heard that you could judge an individual by the people with whom he associated. He added that the character of the people with whom John associated spoke well of him.

It works the other way too. You are judged by the company you keep and bad company still corrupts. I returned from a trip once to discover that a youth in whom I had placed a lot of confidence had been arrested. He had made a commitment to the Lord, but he had not totally dissociated himself from bad company. He told me that they had been to a movie one night and were walking home a few blocks away. Someone in the group suggested that they break into a record shop (or music store) and others picked up on it. After some discussion they broke into the store. My young friend told me that he refused to participate in the break-in or in a theft, but after standing outside for some time he became curious about what they were doing and went inside to see. He did not take anything, but when his friends were arrested one of the boys told the police that he had participated. He was arrested and released, pending trial. Was I naive to believe him when he said he had not participate in the burglary? I had spend a lot of time in

jail and prison ministry at the time and I had learned to question anything I heard June 13, 2000. I did believe my young friend - I knew he was telling me the truth because we had that kind of relationship. Also, this was rather mild compared to some of the things he told me! The next time he saw the boy who had turned him in he hit him and did some serious damage to his face. He was in real trouble this time.

I have talked with many young people about associating with the wrong people. People judge you by the company you keep and that is bad enough. But when you associate with the wrong people you are at risk. Bad company corrupts. The "Threshold Psalm" deals with this every issue:

Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper. The ungodly are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the ungodly shall perish (Psalm 1, NKJV, emphasis added).

15:34 - SOBER MINDED. *"Become sober-minded as you ought, and stop sinning; for some have no knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame."* Paul calls on those who were being deceived by ungodly people and ungodly doctrines to "Become sober-minded." This was a clarion call to wake up, as from a state of drunkenness. They were not in danger of becoming intoxicated - they already were inebriated - they needed to sober up, or become sober-minded. The world may love a clown, but the Kingdom of God is advanced by sober-minded servants.

STOP SINNING. You do not tell someone to stop doing what he is not doing. They were sinning. They are not told to avoid sin, but to stop sinning. This is a message America needs to hear today - America needs to stop sinning. But more to the point - and this is the sad part - the church needs to heed this command. We are not going to see the nation stop sinning as long as sin is rampant in the church.

Unfortunately, Americans are quick to confess to "doing something stupid," or "making a dumb mistake," very reluctant to say, "I have sinned." Americans have swallowed moral relativity hook, line, and sinker. We saw it during the impeachment hearings in which charges against President Bill Clinton were under consideration. The man's sins stagger the imagination, both in volume and in depravity, yet to the mind-numbed masses who take their cue from the media (which being of the world, is at enmity against God), the greater sin was in those who condemned Clinton's sins. Not only did the president commit many and serious sins, millions of professing Christians either condoned what he did, or at best refused to judge him - "what he does in his private life is none of our business," they claimed.

What is needed is a confession of sin in the manner of David, who cried out to God:

Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; According to the greatness of Your compassion *blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity* And *cleanses me from my sin.* For I know my transgressions, And my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, I have sinned And done what is evil in Your sight, So that You are justified when You speak And blameless when You judge (Ps. 51:1-4, emphasis added).

NO KNOWLEDGE OF GOD. This is ignorance of God, or practical agnosticism. Some take pride in their ignorance, wearing their ignorance of God's Word as a badge of distinction. It reminds one of those who admit, "I am a Christian," then quickly add, "But I'm no saint." The person who says that may not know that in the New Testament the words Christian and saint are often used synonymously. He is announcing to the world that he is religious, but he is not going to make a fool of himself over religion. In either case he is manifesting a pronounced ignorance of God, and when it comes to ignorance of God, ignorance is not a blissful state. He is at great risk of being bliss-tered!

D. The Resurrection Body, 15:35-50

With verse 35, Paul begins the second part of this discourse, the second division of this chapter. He will answer objections to his arguments on the resurrection and deal with the manner in which the dead are raised.

15:35 - HOW ARE THE DEAD RAISED? *"But someone will say, "How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?"* One objection some have to the resurrection might simply be the incomprehensibility of it. It is indeed foolish to reject what God tells us on the basis that we do not understand it. I do not understand electricity, but I never hesitate to turn on the lights when I enter the room. If one waits until he understands how the body will be raised, we will perish in ignorance, only to awaken in hell where there is conscious, eternal torment.

There are two questions in this verse, The first is: In what way or manner, or by what means is the body raised? The "Someone" who was asking this question might well have been a false teacher, or false apostle, who was planting this thought with a subtlety that would be effective in causing doubt among the Greeks, who prided themselves in logic and reason. Their thinking was somewhat different from the Jews. They wanted to know "How is it possible that the dead should be raised? After all, when they die the body decays (dust to dust).

Skeptics today are more aware of all the cells, the amino acids, the DNA, and the various systems that make up the human body. Following death the body, unless embalmed, decays and the molecules of that body are scattered and "recycled" time and time again. How can all those

molecules, once they are scattered all over the world, ever be brought back together? What about those martyrs who were burned at the stake - how shall all the particles which composed their bodies be recollected and re-organized? What about those who were devoured by the beasts of the Roman arena, lost and sea and eaten by the fish of the sea? What about those who died in times past and were buried in a shallow grave to become fertilizer for plants. How are all those elements drawn back together and reorganized - remolded into a human being? Paul will answer this objection 15:36-38.

Paul knew what the skeptics were saying. He was a master at going to the heart of the matter in dealing with adversaries - adversaries he knew were there, even if they had not been identified to him. "How are the dead raised?" This is still one of the great objections to the resurrection of our bodies. Granted that Jesus rose from the dead, for the sake of argument, these skeptics refuse to believe in the possibility of our resurrection. Scientists are still asking, "how" of the miraculous. Paul has an astounding answer to that objection. Death itself is the way of resurrection as in the death of the seed for the new plant (verse 36f). Jesus taught, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12:24).

WITH WHAT KIND OF BODY? "Kind" denotes the form, the shape, the size, the composition of the new body. This is the second question and it further shows the difficulty of the first. The first body perishes. Will that body be raised? No, it is a corruptible body that dies, and an incorruptible body that is raised. Gene pools, environment, medical care, diet, and exercise all impact the earthly body. It is vulnerable to heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and countless other diseases, not to speak of the myriads of syndromes - I even heard a lady call the host of a radio talk show asking for help after hearing only a part of a spoof commercial about people with "shaky leg syndrome," a term the host assumed had facetiously coined. This lady insisted that for those who suffer with "shaky leg syndrome," it's not funny!

One can only imagine the questions that came to mind as "someone" planted seeds of doubt among the believers at Corinth. How will all the elements of the first body be brought together into the new body? Will the new body have the same composition, the same organization, the same needs as the old? Will those who die in old age here be aged there? Will the youth who dies in an accident be young in Heaven? Will the tiny infant who dies mysteriously in his crib be an infant for all eternity? Will Joni Earickson Tada really be able to walk in Heaven? What kind of nourishment will we need in Heaven? "All these and numerous other questions have been asked, in regard to the bodies at the resurrection; and it is by no means improbable that they were asked by the subtle and philosophizing Greeks, and that they constituted a part of the reasoning of those who denied the doctrine of the resurrection. This question, or objection, the apostle answers 1 Cor. 15:39-50 [BARNES].

It may seem that Paul actually deals with the fact of the resurrection rather than the "how" in the following verses. He will deal with what kind of body we will have, and in doing so he contrasts the earthly body with the heavenly body. The resurrected body is incorruptible.

Paul has more to say on the subject in 15:38-54. Suffice it to say, it will be the perfect body for the perfect environment in which we will live.

As we move into the second part of this chapter we will keep in mind the objections to the resurrection “someone” has raised, or might raise. What shall be the nature of the resurrection body?

1. The question is stated, 1 Corinthians 15:35.
2. It is answered: first, by a similitude, 1 Corinthians 15:36-38; secondly, by an application, 1 Corinthians 15:33-41; and thirdly, by explication, 1 Corinthians 15:42-50 .

15:36 - THAT WHICH YOU SOW. *“You fool! That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies...”* Paul’s language is severe (“you fool!”), but justified by the implication that the objector prides himself on his perspicacity and astuteness. In plant life, death precedes life, death of the seed and then the, new plant. In the vernacular, anyone with one eye and half sense knows that. “Belief in the Resurrection was like belief in seedtime and harvest. Neither could be completely understood but both were real. As a plant which sprouted from a seed was directly linked to it but remarkably different from it, so too was the relationship of a natural and a resurrection” [BKC]. It was not uncommon for Paul, or Jesus either for that matter, to illustrate a theological point with a natural phenomenon, in this case the germination of a seed and growth of a plant.

The person who had objected to the resurrection on the grounds that he could not understand it really was foolish. It was foolish to refute the resurrection, when the same difficulty existed in an undeniable fact which fell under daily observation. The same difficulty may be started about the germination of grain. Let us suppose that we could find a man who never seen a grain of wheat . We show it to him and tell him that we can put into the earth where it will die and decompose, and from that from the decayed kernel or grain there would spring up a slender, green, tender shoot which would then grow into a strong stalk which would in time produce hundreds of similar grains of wheat. Would these facts not be as hard to believe to him as the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. When he saw the grain of wheat buried in the ground, knowing that it would soon decay, would he not have a problem understanding the connection between that process and the production of similar grain? Are not all the indications that it will be totally corrupted and destroyed?

So it is with the resurrection of the dead. The dead body does decay and it has not power within itself to raise itself. God so created the grain of wheat so that when all conditions are right it will germinate, and God is the power behind the resurrection of the body. This is a general analogy, and as such it should not be stretched too far. As with a parable or a metaphor, there is a basic lesson and we should avoid trying to over work it.

UNLESS IT DIES. See John 12:24. The point is that “The main body of the grain decays

that it may become food and nourishment to the tender germ.. Perhaps it is implied here also that there was a fitness that people should die in order to obtain the glorious body of the resurrection, in the same way as it is fit that the kernel should die, in order that there may be a new and beautiful harvest” [BARNES].

15:37 - YOU DO NOT SOW. “*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.*” Our new bodies will be different from our present ones, but we will retain our identity. We will still be recognizably ourselves, just as a particular kind of seed always turns into the same kind of plant (Phil. 3:21). Jesus had used the same example of a seed being sown in death and then coming forth in resurrection, to tell his disciples that it was necessary for him to die before he could put on his glorified body and reproduce his new life in many (John 12:24). “Thus, death is the entrance-way not merely to revivification or reanimation but to resurrection, regeneration, and spiritual reproduction” [NCWB].

The new body is not yet in existence, but only the seed. If you want an oak tree you plant an acorn, not a tree. The passage is rich in metaphors. “We sow seeds not plants (bodies). The butterfly comes out of the dying worm” [ATR]. The farmer plants one grain of wheat which then produces many other grains of wheat. The new grains are not the same grain that was sown, they are new grains raised from the one planted. They will, or course, be the same kind of grain and they will show an intimate and necessary connection with that which was planted - in fact if you could lay them side by side the human eye could not distinguish between them. If those who were rejecting the resurrection could not see this, there is little wonder that Paul found them to be foolish.

It is implied here that the body which will be raised will not be the same in the sense that the same particles of matter shall compose it, but the same only in the sense that it will have sprung up from that; will constitute the same order, rank, species of being, and be subject to the same laws, and deserve the same course of treatment as that which died; as the grain produced is subject to the same laws, and belongs to the same rank, order, and species as that which is sown. And as the same particles of matter which are sown do not enter into that which shall be in the harvest, so it is taught that the same particles of matter which constitute the body when it dies, do not constitute the new body at the resurrection [BARNES].

15:38 - GOD GIVES IT A BODY. “*But God gives it a body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own.*” The farmer plants a seed, just as we planted cotton seed when I was growing up on the farm in the Mississippi Delta, near Sledge. Each Spring we planted seed we had bought, or seed saved from the harvest the previous Fall. My father never worked on Sunday, but in late April or early May it was not uncommon to see him walk out into a field near our house on Sunday afternoon and look for signs of germination - he was looking to see if the cotton was “coming up.” If no plants had broken through the surface, he would take our his pocket knife, open it, and ease it down into the drill on top of the row where the line of seed had

been planted, and very carefully ease the knife to one side and lift just a little crust of soil to expose a seed or two. If there was enough moisture he would see a little root coming out of the seed, reaching down in to the ground - a good sign. He would be pleased if, at the top of the seed, he found a very tender little shoot or stem. In a few days it would be coming up, a stem with a crook at the top. Before long there would be two leaves, and then four. As weeks passed the plant would grow into chest- high wooded plant with squares, blooms, and bolls. Before long the plant would be covered with open bolls of cotton. We planted a small seed in the Spring - never full grown stalks. If we wanted a cotton plant we always planted cotton seed. The cotton plant was, in a sense, in the seed. God is the designer, cause, and power behind what happens when the seed germinates and develops into a new plant. Just as God created the different species of plants and arranged for each plant to produce new plants of the same kinds, God will give each of us individual bodies, "appropriate and suitable to us, substantially the same as our present bodies, but completely glorious and beautiful" [NCWB].

Even under the microscope, the life cells or germ plasm may seem almost identical, but the plant is quite distinct. You may plant one hundred acorns and get one hundred oak trees; the acorns all looked like acorns, but the trees will all vary each from another, if only slightly. Today we know that DNA can be used to identify individuals as surely as fingerprints, and in many cases DNA tests are superior - fingerprints may not be clear.

15:39 - ALL FLESH. *"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."* This verse and the verses that follow answer the question of 1 Cor. 15:35: "with what bodies do they come?" The point here is, that there are many kinds of bodies, and they are not the same flesh - Human bodies are different from animal bodies,

yet they partake of different qualities, forms, and properties; and that, therefore, it is not absurd to suppose that God may transform the human body into a different form, and cause it to be raised up with somewhat different properties in the future world. Why, the argument is, why should it be regarded as impossible? Why is it to be held that the human body may not undergo a transformation, or that it will be absurd to suppose that it may be different in some respects from what it is now? Is it not a matter of fact that there is a great variety of bodies even on the earth? The word flesh here is used to denote body, as it often is. 1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Cor. 4:11; 7:1; Phil 1:22, 24; Col. 2:5; 1 Pet. 4:6.

The idea here is, that although all the bodies of animals may be composed essentially of the same elements, yet God has produced a wonderful variety in their organization, strength, beauty, color, and places of abode, as the air, earth, and water. It is not necessary, therefore, to suppose that the body that shall be raised shall be precisely like that which we have here. It is certainly possible that there may be as great a difference between that and our present body, as between the most perfect form of the human frame here and the lowest reptile. It would

still be a body, and there would be no absurdity in the transformation. The body of the worm; the chrysalis, and the butterfly is the same. It is the same animal still. Yet how different the gaudy and frivolous butterfly from the creeping and offensive caterpillar! So there may be a similar change in the body of the believer, and yet be still the same [BARNES].

Paul has used the metaphor from the plant world, and now he turns to the animal world to show the great variety there is in the animal kingdom. The apostle makes a valid point here which all Creationists appreciate. Variety exists within a species, but there is no evolution from one "kind" to another. Palaeontologists have examined millions of fossils and they have access to billions, yet they have not produced the first intermediate stage fossil (a missing link).

Humans did not come from monkeys, any more than humans, apes, and monkeys all descended from a common ancestor. The theory of evolution has not been proved scientifically. The simple fact is, neither evolution nor creation can be conclusively proved scientifically for the simple reason that neither can reproduce creation in through a laboratory experiment and/or observation. At some point both Creationists and evolutionists must make a decision based on faith - faith in the available evidence.

A number of years ago Dr. Demitri Kusnetsov, was a young scientist in the old Soviet Union. He had earned three heavyweight degrees, including the M. D. and doctorates in bio-chemistry, and nuclear science. At age 32 he was decorated as one of the two top young scientists in the Soviet Union. He was also on the faculty of the largest evolutionary university in the world, the University of Moscow. One day Dr. Kusnetsov picked up a copy of the book, *The Biblical Basis of Modern Science*, by Dr. Henry Morris. He was so impressed with what he read that he decided to test it by all three disciplines in which he had an expertise. After careful examination of the evidence he concluded that the available evidence supports special creation. He received permission to set up debates between evolutionists and Creationists at the University of Moscow. Six years after becoming an advocate of special creation he became a Christian. Special creation demands a Creator! Kusnetsov now heads up an institute for Creation Research in Russia.

This verse supports the Genesis account of creation in that it stresses that humans, fish, and animals are of different protoplasm - different flesh. This is not the primary purpose of this statement here - this is simply a fact Paul stated to support an argument. But it would not be any more true if this was the subject of this passage.

15:40 - HEAVENLY BODIES. - *"There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another."* The NKJV has, "There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another." "Celestial" is rightly translated "heavenly" in the NAS. It denotes things that are heavenly, or things existing in Heaven. Paul, having noted the animal world and the plant world, now turns to celestial bodies, rising higher in the range of his

argument than terrestrial bodies. He has shown differences in bodies here on earth in plants and in the animal kingdom, and now he calls to our attention like differences to be seen in the heavens above us.

At this point we need to consider a question: Is Paul speaking of the differences between the earthly human body and the body the believer will have in Heaven, or is he comparing bodies on earth with bodies like the sun, moon, and stars in the universal “heavens”? Some commentaries state that “heavenly” or “celestial” means the sun, moon, planets, and stars, while earthly means bodies of humans, animals, and birds on earth. If that is the case, are we not comparing apples and oranges?

After all, the earth is one of the planets. Clarke, for one, disagrees:

The apostle certainly does not speak of celestial and terrestrial bodies in the sense in which we use those terms: we invariably mean by the former the sun, moon, planets, and stars; by the latter, masses of inanimate matter. But the apostle speaks of human beings, some of which were clothed with celestial, others with terrestrial bodies. *It is very likely*, therefore, that he means by the celestial bodies such as those refined human bodies with which Enoch, Elijah, and Christ himself, appear in the realms of glory: to which we may add the bodies of those saints which arose after our Lord’s resurrection; and, after having appeared to many, doubtless were taken up to paradise. By terrestrial bodies we may understand those in which the saints now live (emphasis added) [CLARKE].

Emphasis was added in the above quote to stress that this is a speculation. At least, he is not comparing apples and oranges. The two bodies are consistent within the context of this verse, but when we go on to the next verse one may wonder if Paul does not, indeed, have in mind the sun, moon, and stars.

BUT THE GLORY OF. Glory denotes excellence, beauty, and magnificence. There is beauty in the earthly body - the human body is “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Ps. 139:14, KJV). There is a glory of the heavenly bodies that is distinct from the glory of earthly bodies. However, if the comparison is between the earthly body and the resurrection body, the reference is to the “celestial body, that in which Christ now appears, and according to which ours shall be raised, (Philippians 3:21), will exceed the excellence of this beyond all comparison. A glory or splendor will belong to that which does not belong to this: here there is a glory of excellence; there, there will be a glory of light and effulgence; for the bodies of the saints shall shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father [CLARKE].

15:41 - ONE GLORY OF THE SUN. *“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.”* This is a beautiful illustration of Paul’s point. The scope of this verse differs from that in verse 40. Stars differ in magnitude and brilliance. In the previous verse Paul says, that there was a difference between the various classes of bodies; between those in Heaven and those on earth. In this verse he says

that in even among the heavenly bodies themselves there are differences. They not only differed from those on earth, but they differed from each other. The sun was more splendid than the moon, and one star more beautiful than another.

Therefore, it should not be surprising that the bodies of the saints in Heaven which differ from the bodies of the saints on earth, shall also differ from one from another in Heaven, just like the difference in the splendor of the sun, the moon, and the different stars. “Though all shall be unlike what they were on earth, and all shall be glorious, yet there may be a difference in that splendor and glory. The argument is, since we see so great differences in fact in the works of God, why should we doubt that he is able to make the human body different from what it is now, and to endow it with immortal and eternal perfection” [BARNES].

The space age is more aware of this today than ever. I have before me as I write pictures taken through the Hubble telescope of stars, clouds, and other bodies in space. The captions on the pictures I downloaded include “Clouds of Glory,” the resultant and colorful display when a young star ejects jets of material back into interstellar space, creating shock waves that heat the gas and produce beautiful colors. More beautiful than anything on the artist’s palette is a picture of the small spiral galaxy NGC 7742, entitled “Sunny Side Up.” There is what appears to be a large yellow yoke in the center, with a swirling spiral of colorful material surrounding it. The Cartwheel Galaxy looks like a wagon wheel, with a bright hub and comet-like clouds circling it at nearly 700,000 mph.

As viewed from the earth even with the natural eye there are noticeable differences in the brightness of heavenly bodies. The sun has one degree of brightness, the moon another, and the stars have varying degrees of brilliance. They differ from each other in both brightness and in beauty. Astronomers and astro-physicists, aided by telescopes that could not have been imagined even one century ago (certainly not in the first century), have broadened our understanding of outer space. For example, we now hear that there are billions of stars in the Milky Way Galaxy, and some say that for every star in our galaxy there is another galaxy. Others are now claiming that there is a galaxy for every human being who has ever lived on Earth.

Our eyes and our finite minds may be in awe of the heavens on a clear, cold December night, but we cannot possibly imagine the panorama of spectacular colors, shapes, and movements spread out before the Creator every day. People travel great distances to see the Christmas lights in many parts of the nation each year. I used to take groups of young people to see the floats on Deer Creek in Leland, Mississippi. Now I enjoy driving through Kiroli Park and the Tupawec subdivision in West Monroe, Louisiana, every December. I love the spectacular display of lights, but I can hardly imagine the spectacular display of lights and colors God has enjoyed since creation.

IN GLORY. Glory is a major theme of the Scripture, a subject about which Bible students show more awareness and awe than study and investigation. The Shekinah glory of God is an important Old Testament theme. Jesus is seen as the glory in Jams 2:1. There is a special glory

associated with the resurrection body. There is little wonder that God's creation is filled with glory and all that glory is a tribute to the glory of God.

15:42 - SO ALSO IS THE RESURRECTION. *“So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body...”* Paul now applies his illustrations to his argument about the kind of body we shall have after the resurrection. He does it through a series of marvelous contrasts that gather all his points together. He shows how the earthly and the risen beings differ in duration, value, power.

SOWN A PERISHABLE BODY. If you have ever lain on an examining table in the emergency room of a hospital and listened to a doctor say, “You have just had a heart attack and it was a big one,” you understand that this is a perishable body. It is “sown” in death, like the seed (vs 37).

In my youth I worked alongside a man who may have been, pound for pound, the strongest man I have ever known. My father, Joe. B. Sanders, was only about five-six and weighed about one fifty to one sixty. He had a deep chest, broad shoulders, and powerful arms. He could easily lift a section from a rail road track we used to weigh down a disk or harrow, press it with one hand, lower it and touch his nose with it, and then push it back up and throw it. It weighed about what he weighed. On his thirteenth birthday he cleared a five hundred pound weight at a saw mill. As a young man he was one of a very few in our area who could back up to a platform and pull a five hundred pound bale of cotton over onto his back and take it and set in on a truck. Everyone who knew him said he was the strongest small man they had ever seen. He never put on a show, but on occasions I think he wanted to test himself.

When he was fifty years old he watched some young people doing push-ups. I don't know if they asked him or he just told them the he thought he could still do that. When he got into position he asked an adult to sit across his back - then he started doing push-ups! I observed that powerful man, my hunting and fishing companion, my father and friend, with whom I worked on the family farm. He was not only strong physically, he was possibly the strongest man emotionally I have ever known. He had a very good mind, and the talent to do things that constantly amazed us. He was gifted mechanically, he could “fix” about anything on the farm, whether it meant wiring a house for electricity, to repairing his first television, welding parts that most people would have to replace, or inventing a farm implement, or adapting a John Deere cotton picker to fit a more modern tractor. My father was my hero in many ways, but I watched strokes and heart attacks destroy his body, tax his emotions, and eventually rob his mind of its powers.

In August of 1996, I moved from one machine to another in my gym. I tested my left shoulder, which I had injured several years earlier, and it felt good. I got on the bench press machine (because of the shoulder I did not work with free weights) and pressed two hundred pounds ten or twelve times. Since I felt strong and there was no pain in the shoulder, I tried 250, then 300, and finally 360. Right then I set a goal - I would press 400 pounds on my sixtieth

birthday! I had pressed 100 pounds seventy-five times on my fifty-fifth birthday, but this was a greater challenge. Ten days later I was in ICU at Glenwood Hospital. A little over two weeks later, after by-pass surgery, I was given a ten pound limit when I left the hospital. I have not lifted over 200 or 250 pounds since. If I overdo it I run into skeletal problems where my chest was “wired” back together.

I am very well acquainted with a perishable body. I look forward to an imperishable body. Having read testimonies from Joni Erickson Tada, I would be surprised if she did not long for that imperishable body.

RAISED AN IMPERISHABLE BODY. The resurrection body goes through a complete change as compared with the body flesh - like the plant from the seed. It is related to it, but it is a different body of glory. Just a few minutes ago (at noon on June 14, 2000), I called Mrs. “Boots” Hicks Dean, my high school English teacher to ask about her health. She has waged a long battle against cancer. She told me that she has urged her family not to worry about her because, “At this age one thinks about death, and I am ready for it.” She has not given up, but she is prepared for death because she is absolutely confident of the joy that awaits her when she shall receive “an imperishable body.”

15:43 - IT IS SOWN IN DISHONOR. *“It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power...”* Sown in dishonor” How so? What is death but the penalty for sin? At death the human body is “sown” (buried) in the grave where, away from the view of the living, it begins the process of decay - embalment notwithstanding. Stripped of its glory and power, it is consigned to the disgrace and ignominy because of sin.

RAISED IN GLORY. The word translated “glory” means dignity, splendor, honor, excellence, perfection; and is used here as denoting the combination of all those things which shall rescue it from ignominy and disgrace. The resurrected body is a body of great glory (a glorified body). The body is sown in dishonor and corruption, but raised in honor, and glory and blessed by God, Who removes the curse. All that dishonors the earthly body is removed so that the new body bears a resemblance to the glorified body of Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:21). “It shall be adapted to a world of glory; and everything which here rendered it vile, valueless, cumbersome, offensive, or degraded, shall be there removed. Of course, every idea which we can get from this is chiefly negative, and consists in denying that the body will have there the qualities which here render it vile or loathsome” [BARNES].

SOWN IN WEAKNESS. The weakness of the body is demonstrated by its submission to death. “The principles of dissolution, corruption, and decay, have prevailed over it; disease undermined it; and death made it his prey” [CLARKE]. The physical body, because of the Fall, is subject to many frailties, weaknesses, and diseases which will eventually lead to death for each person. One person may die from a heart attack at age thirty and another at age ninety, depending on various factors. From time to time someone will announce, “Most people in my family live a long life. We must have good genes.” Genes do make a difference, but no one has genes that will exempt him from the fatal consequences of sin. Even the healthiest person can be

brought down by any one of a countless number of diseases or maladies.

My father-in-law once told me that his father, Elmo Turner, was a young six-five, two-hundred, forty pound giant (for his day) :without an ounce of fat on him.” Yet he caught pneumonia and died before the introduction of “miracle drugs.” Miracle drugs have only extended life, often maintaining a better quality of life, but at times only prolonging suffering and misery.

RAISED IN POWER. Death can never - will never - conquer this new body. Paul wrote to the Philippians:

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself (Phil. 3:20-21).

“Power” here does not mean power comparable to the power of God, yet the power is of God. We will not be either gods or angels in Heaven. We will not be endowed with supernatural “physical” strength. This does not mean the power to perform supernatural feats. It simply denotes antithesis of the word “weakness.” We will never again be subject to disease; fatigue, and the frailties of the flesh; no more overcome by the attacks of sickness; no more subject to the infirmities and weaknesses which it experiences in this world. Jesus has revealed that in Heaven God “will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be *any* mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away” (Rev. 21:4, NAS).

15:44 - SOWN A NATURAL BODY. “*It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.*” The natural (from *psuchikos*, pertaining to the soul or mind), as opposed to the spiritual nature of man. Because *psuche* has so many meanings it is often difficult to translate. “‘Natural’ is as good a rendering as can be made, but it is inadequate, for the body here is not all *psuche* either as soul or life” [ATR]. Definitions range from the simple and concise to the elaborate. First the simple:

Lit., “a soulical body” (see Rotherham’s *Emphasized Bible*), a body shaped in its organism of flesh and blood to suit the human soul [NCWB].

This word, “natural,” denotes properly that which is endowed with “animal” life, having breath, or vitality [BARNES].

Clarke has a more elaborate definition, which for some reason calls to mind the friend who once explained that if you ask his wife the time she will tell you how to build a clock. So it may seem here:

An animal body, having a multiplicity of solids and fluids of different kinds, with

different functions; composed of muscles, fibres, tendons, cartilages, bones, arteries, veins, nerves, blood, and various juices, requiring continual support from aliment; and hence the necessity of labor to provide food, and skill to prepare it; which food must be masticated, digested, and refined; what is proper for nourishment secreted, brought into the circulation, farther elaborated, and prepared to enter into the composition of every part; hence growth and nutrition; without which no organized body can possibly exist [CLARKE].

RAISED A SPIRITUAL BODY. The spiritual body (*pneumatikos*, denoting a spiritual body, spiritual things) is different from the natural body. But the resurrection body is not wholly *pneuma*. The “spiritual body” has some kind of germinal connection with the “natural body.” You will recognize your friends and loved-ones in Heaven. Its development is glorious beyond our comprehension, but not beyond the power of Christ to perform (Phil. 3:24). The force of the argument remains unimpaired though we cannot follow it fully from this side. The thought is beyond us. The NCWB states that the spiritual body is

a body wholly moulded by the Spirit and suitable to the Spirit. This body will meet the needs of man’s spirit and be its faculty for life and expression, just as the natural (soulical) body met the needs of man’s soul (or, personality) and provided man a faculty for living and expression [NCWB].

IF THERE IS. This is the condition of the first class, assumed to be true. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

15:45 - THE FIRST MAN, ADAM. “So also it is written, “*The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL.*” *The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.*” This is quotation (from the first part of Genesis 2:7) is taken verbatim from the translation by the Septuagint, except that the apostle has added the words “first” and “Adam.” This is done to designate specifically whom he meant. The meaning of the phrase “was made a living soul” is, was made a living, animated being; a being endowed with life. Is there a difference between the soul and the spirit? The Bible tells us, “Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (Greek, *psuche*, soul). This is the first Adam, the Adam of the Garden of Eden, the Adam of the Fall. The *psuche* is the soulish part of man (the intellect, emotions, and volition (mind, feelings, and will).

We may think of the soul as the intelligent, emotional, and volitional part of the person, or even the immortal part - the part which reasons, thinks, remembers, is conscious, is responsible, and is accountable. “The Greek and Hebrew words, however, more properly denote that which is alive, which is animated, which breathes, which has an animal nature.... And this is precisely the idea which Paul uses here, that the first man was made an animated being by having breathed into him the breath of life Gen. 2:7, and that it is the image of this animated or vital being which we bear, 1 Cor. 15:48” [BARNES]. Both Moses and Paul would agree that in addition to man’s being endowed with animated life, he was also invested with a rational soul, an

immortal nature. But that is not the primary idea expressed here.

THE LAST ADAM. The last Adam, Christ, became both a living soul, and “a life-giving spirit,” not just a living spirit but a spirit who makes others alive (cf. John 5:21; 6:57; Rom. 8:2, 11). In Romans 5:12-19, Paul calls Jesus the “second Adam.” The last Adam, Christ, “exemplifies the heavenly spiritual body (15:22) which those who belong to Him (v. 23; cf. 2:15) will likewise assume at His coming from heaven (cf. Phil. 3:20-21). The full harvest will be like the firstfruits (1 Cor. 15:23; cf. Col. 1:18). First the seed must die; then the spiritual body will emerge” [BKC]. Jesus Christ became human, the only perfect human ever. He, the crown of humanity, has the power to give us the new body.

When Jesus Christ was resurrected, He was glorified *and* he became spirit (*pneuma*). It appears that when he arose the indwelling Spirit penetrated and saturated his body so as to constitute his entire being with spirit. William Milligan, the author of an English classic on Christ’s resurrection, said that the risen Christ is spirit (*pneuma*). In that work (*The Resurrection of Our Lord*), he wrote:

[T]he condition of our Lord after His Resurrection was viewed by the sacred writers as essentially a state of *pneuma* (spirit). Not indeed that our Lord had then no body, for it is the constant lesson of Scripture that a body was possessed by Him; but that the deepest, the fundamental characteristic of His state, interpenetrating even the body, and moulding it into a complete adaptation to and harmony with His spirit, was *pneuma*. In other words, it is proposed to inquire whether the word *pneuma* in the New Testament is not used as a short description of what our Lord was after His Resurrection, in contrast with what He was during the days of His humiliation upon earth [NCWB].

Paul identified the risen Christ with the Spirit (Rom. 1:3, 4; 8:2, 9-11; 2 Cor. 3:17, 18), but this does not mean the Second Person of the Trinity became the Third Person, as in the heresy of Modalism. The NCWB, speaking of the resurrection of Christ and the change it brought about in him, quotes one Gaffin (without further documentation):

Christ (as incarnate) experiences a spiritual qualification and transformation so thorough, and endowment with the Spirit so complete that as a result they can now be equated. This unprecedented possession of the Spirit and the accompanying change in Christ result in a unity so close that not only can it be said simply that the Spirit makes alive, but also that Christ as Spirit makes alive [NCWB].

15:46 - THE SPIRITUAL IS NOT FIRST. “*However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual.*” Paul uses simple logic, we are born a natural being, we are born again a spiritual being. In this world we have a natural body, in the next we will have a spiritual body. We have natural bodies before we receive our new resurrection bodies, just as Adam came

before Christ. “Although Adam was created to live forever (if he had eaten of the tree of life), he became mortal because of sin. Yet his created body was not the glorious spiritual body we will receive. Adam received his life to become ‘a living soul’; he was not ‘life-giving Spirit’ [NCWB]. The physical body comes before the spiritual body.

QUESTION: Is Paul overworking this point? Not at all. The Jewish religious leaders discussed these issues all the time. Some commentaries note that the Jews speak frequently of the Spirit of the Messiah; and they allow that it was this Spirit that moved on the face of the waters, Genesis 1:2. And they assert that the Messiah shall quicken those who dwell in the dust.

15:47 - THE FIRST MAN. “*The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.*” The first man, Adam, was made of the dust of the earth, he was natural. The second man, Christ, is from Heaven. Christ had a human (*psuchikon*) body, of course, but Paul makes the contrast between the first man in his natural body and the second man in his risen body. Paul saw Jesus after His resurrection when he appeared to him from Heaven. As we have already seen, He is coming again from Heaven.

15:48 - THE EARTHLY. “*As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly.*” This corresponds with the “dust of the earth.” Though it may seem to us that Paul belabors the point, he follows the simple rabbinical method of teaching. All people are of the earth.

AS IS THE HEAVENLY. This denotes Christ in His ascended state (1 Thes.4:16; 2 Thes. 1:7; Eph. 2:6, 20; Phil. 3:20f). The Father is the “Heavenly Father,” and the son has ascended to the “heavenly place.” Though, not stated here, the Son is the heavenly Lord and Savior.

1:49 - IMAGE OF THE EARTHLY. “*Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.*” There is no universalism here. Attaining the resurrection body does not depend upon our own efforts, nor is it automatic for all people. What the Scripture is saying is that in this life we are in the flesh, in the next believers will bear a heavenly body. We occupy a physical body here but we will occupy a glorified body in Heaven.

15:50 - FLESH AND BLOOD. “*Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.*” Since flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, there must be a change by death from the natural body to the spiritual body. “In the case of Christ this change was wrought in less than three days and even then the body of Jesus was in a transition state before ascension” [ATR]. The resurrected, but not yet ascended Christ ate food and He could be touched, yet He passed through closed doors. Paul does not base his argument on the special circumstances connected with the risen body of Jesus.

E. Victory Through Christ, 15:51-58

15:51 - A MYSTERY. “Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed...” Paul does not claim to have explained everything or answered all questions concerning the resurrection life, the hows, whys, and so forth. He has simply drawn a broad parallel which opens the door of hope for all believers. He has answered many questions, but there are still mysteries. A mystery in the biblical sense is something once unknown but now revealed.

WE WILL NOT ALL SLEEP. Not all of believers will die. Some will be alive when Jesus comes again. Paul does not say that he or anyone else then living would be alive when Jesus returns. He simply groups all believers with the words, “we will not all sleep.” For a more detailed discussion of this subject see this writer’s studies on First and Second Thessalonians in the Bible Notebook series. Paul had already written to the Thessalonians what he had no doubt taught the Corinthians:

In 1 Thes, 4:13-18 (NAS) he wrote:

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, *about those who are asleep*, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that *we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep*. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and *the dead in Christ will rise first*. Then *we who are alive* and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so *we shall always be with the Lord*. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

WE WILL ALL BE CHANGED. Both living and dead saints, shall be changed and receive the resurrection body. “Although not all believers will die before the parousia, all of them, living as well as dead, will have to be changed to conformed to the conditions of the resurrection age” [BRUCE: 154]. When the Lord returns the dead in Christ shall rise and be caught up to meet Him in the air, and believers living at the time on the earth will be caught to meet them in the air. They will be “changed” (receive the resurrection body) and we will for ever be with the Lord and we will forever be with one another.

15:52 - IN A MOMENT. “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.” “In a moment” is from *en atom*. This was a scientific word for atom which was considered indivisible at a time when we knew anything about protons and electrons. So Paul says, in an atom (that is, an indivisible point of time), believers shall all be changed. “In the twinkling of an eye; as soon as a man can wink; which expressions show that this mighty work is to be done by the almighty power of God, as he does all his works, He calls, and it is done. The resurrection of all the dead,

from the foundation of the world to that time, and the change” [CLARKE]. Jesus will appear and instantly, “in the twinkling of an eye...we will be changed.”

AT THE LAST TRUMP. See 1 Thess. 4:16; Matt. 24:31. The designation of this trumpet as the “last” one may simply refer to its ushering in the end of the present world-order (see also Rev. 11:15f). The trumpet, as in the Old Testament, signaled the appearance of God (cf. Ex. 19:16). “It is the last blast for the church because this appearance shall never end (cf. 1 Cor. 13:12). (There is no basis for posttribulationists equating this trumpet with the seventh trumpet in Rev. 11:15-19. The trumpets in Rev. pertain to judgments during the Tribulation, whereas the trumpet in 1 Cor. 15:52 is related to the church)” [BKC].

We read in Matthew 24:31, “And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.”

This trumpet will be the last one to blow following the others mentioned in Revelation 8:6-11:15 (see also Isa. 27:13). A trumpet was used to call people together for solemn celebrations and worship. This last trumpet will call all God’s people to His presence, both the living and the dead.

15:53 - THIS PERISHABLE. “*For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.*” He has already touched on this (15:42). The old body is perishable (corruptible, KJV), the new is imperishable (incorruptible). “Put on” is like putting on a garment. Since flesh and blood cannot enter the glory of Heaven this change is necessary.

15:54 - THIS PERISHABLE. “*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.”*” Both the living and the dead will exchange the temporal and imperfect for the eternal and perfect (cf. 13:10). For those who are in Christ, the power of death will be removed forever.

IS SWALLOWED UP. Here we have the timeless use of aorist tense. Death is no longer a victor. This is the final overthrow of the awesome enemy, the king of terrors.

Although death still has power over our bodies, Christ has already defeated death for us so that we need no longer fear it. Paul quotes from Isaiah 25:8 to express the triumph we can experience even now, and the glorious fulfillment we are looking forward to when at the resurrection we have complete victory over death. The expression **Death is swallowed up in victory** in Hebrew means “Yahweh will swallow up death for ever” (cf. Jer. 3:5; Lam. 5:20). Christ has conquered death so that it shall never more regain its power (2 Cor. 5:4; Heb. 2:14, 15; Rev. 20:14; 21:4) [NCWB].

15:55 - O DEATH. “*O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?*” Here “Paul changes Hades in the LXX (the Septuagint, Hebrew sheol, Hosea 13:14)

to death. Paul never uses Hades” [ATR]. It is almost as though Paul is taunting death at this point.

“O death” is a triumphant exclamation in view of what the Lord reveals about His plans for death.

It is an exclamation in which every believer can join as he, or she contemplates the glorious truth that a complete and final victory has been won over this great enemy of mankind. Barnes captures something of the significance of this victory:

It is a triumphant view which bursts upon the soul as it contemplates the fact that the work of the second Adam has repaired the ruins of the first, and that man is redeemed; his body will be raised; not another human being should die, and the work of death should be ended [BARNES].

Barnes waxes eloquent as he continues:

Nay, it is more. Death is not only at an end; it shall not only cease, but its evils shall be repaired; and a glory and honor shall encompass the body of man, such as would have been unknown had there been no death. No commentary can add to the beauty and force of the language in this verse; and the best way to see its beauty, and to enjoy it, is to sit down and think of DEATH; of what death has been, and has done; of the millions and millions that have died; of the earth strewn with the dead, and “arched with graves;” of our own death; the certainty that we must die, and our parents, and brothers, and sisters, and children, and friends; that all, all must die; and then to suffer the truth, in its full-orbed splendor, to rise upon us, that the time will come when DEATH SHALL BE AT AN END. Who, in such contemplation, can refrain from the language of triumph, and from hymns of praise? [BARNES].

STING. The word is used in Rev. 9:10 of the sting of locusts, scorpions. At this point that vile, evil serpent death will have lost its poisonous fangs forever.

15:56 - THE STING OF DEATH. *“The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law...”* Robertson quotes C.A.A. Scott: “Death employed Sin to stab for itself an opening into human nature” [ATR]. There would have been no death without sin and no sting without death. The idea expressed here is that sin is the cause of death.

It introduced it; it makes it certain; it is the cause of the pain, distress, agony, and horror which attends it. If there had been no sin, people would not have died. If there were no sin, death would not be attended with horror or alarm. For why should innocence be afraid to die? What has innocence to fear anywhere in the universe of a just God? The fact, therefore, that people die, is proof that they are sinners; the fact that they feel horror and alarm, is proof that they feel themselves to be guilty, and that they are afraid to go into the presence of a holy God. If this

be taken away, if sin be removed, of course the horror, and remorse, and alarm which it is suited to produce will be removed also [BARNES].

THE POWER OF SIN. How can the power of sin be the law? Does the law not seek to prevent sin? In reality, law cannot prevent sin, it can only sentence those who break the law. The law of God forbids all sin and sentences those who commit transgressions to both temporal and eternal death. Sin receives its binding power from the law. “The law curses the transgressor, and provides no help for him; and if nothing else intervene, he must, through it, continue ever under the empire of death” [CLARKE]. See Romans 4:15; 5:20; 6:14; Chapter 7; Gal. 2:16; 3:1-5:4 for Paul’s thoughts which are only briefly outlined here. In man’s unrenewed state, he cannot obey God’s holy law. The reign of death rests on the power of sin, but when sin is overcome, death loses its terror (Rom.. 5:12, 20).

15:57 - THANKS BE TO GOD. *“But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Paul rejoices in the triumph through Christ over sin and death as in Rom.. 7:28.

We must give thanks to God for only He could conquer death and remove its sting. Only God could defang the serpent and He did so by placing His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, on the Cross. On the Cross, Jesus delivered Satan his death blow. The serpent may be writhing, wriggling, threatening, and striking at the children of God, but he has already received his death’s blow - and the day is coming when we will be cast into the lake of fire where he will be confined forever. Thanks be to God!

15:58 - THEREFORE, MY BELOVED BRETHREN. *“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.”* Every word is inspired by the Holy Spirit, and as such is significant. “Therefore” tells us that the inspired writer has stated his case and presented his argument, and now he will make an appeal based on what he has written. “My beloved brethren” assures them that, in spite of the rebukes and reprimands, he is still their brother in Christ and he loves them. Paul, the former narrow minded Pharisee now uses the term “my brethren” for both Jews and Gentiles.

BE STEADFAST. Literally, Keep on becoming steadfast (unshaken). “Let the skeptics howl and rage. Paul has given rational grounds for faith and hope in Christ the Risen Lord and Savior” [A’IR].

It is God’s purpose for all His children to be steadfast, unmoved, and unshaken by fear and doubt. This chapter provides additional basis for faith and courage to overcome fear and anxiety. The ministry of the Holy Spirit in our sanctification will produce steadfastness. Faith produces steadfastness. James wrote, “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” Endurance here might be translated “steadfastness.”

ABOUNDING IN THE WORK OF THE LORD. Paul's doctrinal arguments are practical. The best answer to doubt is work. This does not mean work for our salvation, but the work of salvation. We are saved by grace, through faith, "unto good works" (Eph. 2:10). Work is not the root of salvation, but the fruit.

YOUR TOIL IS NOT IN VAIN. Believers are blessed here and now, but the greatest rewards are reserved in Heaven for those who are kept by the power of God unto salvation (1 Peter 1:3f). The Christian may be a child of God, but he is also the servant of God, and as such he will not only do good works, he will toil (labor) for Him. The work may be exhausting at times but there is always rest in the Lord. George Whitefield once said, "I am often tired in the work, but never tired of it."

Paul's doctrinal declarations led to practical directives and this chapter's conclusion was no exception. The Corinthians were urged to **stand firm** in the apostles' teaching (v. 2), unmoved by the denials of false teachers (cf. Eph. 4:14). This certainty, especially concerning the Resurrection, provided an impetus to faithful service (cf. 1 Cor. 3:8; Gal. 6:9) since labor **in the resurrected Lord is not** futile (*kenos*, "empty"; cf. 1 Cor. 15:10, 14, 17, 30-32) [BKC].

VIII. Practical and Personal Matters, 16:1-24

A. The Collection for the Saints in Jerusalem , 16:1-4.

Various Christian denominations have followed different courses in their commitment to the Great Commission. Many independent churches are mission minded, others struggle to survive. Southern Baptists implemented a missions program in 1925 to involve thousands of churches and millions of church members in an effort to spread the Gospel throughout America and around the world. The Cooperative Program recognizes the fact that each Southern Baptist Church is autonomous; each church determines what percentage of its budget it will contribute to the cooperative missions effort. No denominational agency has any authority over the local church - all agencies exist to support the local church, not the other way around. No individual has authority over any local church - they are simply denominational servants.

In addition to the monthly contributions, all members are exhorted to supplement missions with three special offerings: the State Missions Offering, a North American Missions Offering, and the International Missions Offering. The 1999 Christmas Offering for International Missions goal for Southern Baptists is 125 million dollars, all of which goes directly to the mission field.

Southern Baptists adopted a program of cooperation based in part on this missions

offering to which Paul refers in this chapter. At the very least, it is patterned after it to some degree. All churches were asked to contribute to the relief of suffering saints in Jerusalem. Sadly, the Christian movement began with Jerusalem as the center, but with the fall of Jerusalem in A. D. 70, God shifted the headquarters for missions and evangelism to Antioch of Syria, and from there westward until Rome became the center for the spread of the Gospel. In time, the Gospel spread to Europe where great mission support centers were established in France, Germany, and England. The center for the spread of the Gospel continued the shift to the west until America became the base for missions support.

Southern Baptists leaders, on the national level (SBC) set goals for the support of missions and implement plans to reach those goals. State conventions adopt budgets and promote offerings for the support of state missions, North American missions, and International missions. I have served on the Executive Board of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, representing first Bayou Macon Baptist Association and then Concord Association and in that capacity helped adopt budgets and recommend programs. In June, 2000, I was elected to the Board of Trustees of LifeWay Christian Resources, formerly the Sunday School Board. In this capacity one can get an overview of ministries that would amaze the Apostle Paul: literature and support material for more than 40,000 churches, Holman Bible Publishers, Broadman Publishing, and LifeWay Christian Book Stores to mention a few. I was saved in a mission church when I was twelve years old. I was educated in Southern Baptist institutions. From my vantage point, I would state without any hesitation that we are not perfect, but at the same time the Lord has blessed and used us, primarily (in my opinion) because missions has been a primary commitment as well as one of the bonds that holds us together.

Many people have expressed their amazement that year after year budgets are met, missions offerings increase, and the number of missionaries increase. No one can assess any church one cent! It is all voluntary. Through various publications Southern Baptists promote missions, and through SBC publications and state Baptist papers report missions news and recognize churches that excel in missions support, but no individual or agency can dictate to a local church anything, including the level of commitment and participation in various mission endeavors. I was the recipient of some of the recognition a number of years ago when I was pastor of a church that was usually second or third in the state in percentage giving to the Cooperative Program. We also co-sponsored two missions in south Louisiana. My picture appeared on the back two million church bulletins with notes about what the church was doing, and there was a longer article in *The Baptist Program* about what we were doing for missions. The local church had determined the amount of support it believed God would have them give to missions without outside influence.

The North American Missions Board (SBC) presently starts 1500 new churches each year in the United States and Canada. Trusting churches to continue their support NAMB has set a goal of starting 60,000 new churches in the next 20 years, more than doubling the 48,000 churches and missions that exist today, bringing the total to more than 100,000 by 2020.

What does this have to do with First Corinthians? Everything. We simply follow the

model set forth in Scripture. God calls missionaries to go to various places. He motivates individual members in local churches to give money to support them. There is one part of the model we do not follow. Paul worked with his own hands to support himself and his companions, always insisting that he had a right to be compensated fairly and insisting that churches support their ministers. Southern Baptist missionaries make significant sacrifices as it is. We want them to receive a decent income, to afford medical care, to educate their children, and to be able to live with dignity in retirement.

16:1 -COLLECTION FOR THE SAINTS. *“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also.”* Paul has dealt with reports he had received about problems in the church at Corinth and answered questions they had sent to him. Now he turns to a subject very dear to his heart, the collection for the saints in Jerusalem (see 2 Cor. 8 & 9 for more on this). The introduction of this subject may seem rather abrupt, but the Corinthians knew what he was talking about, and they were lagging behind other churches with their part of the offering. It is possible that they had mentioned it in their letter.

THE CHURCHES OF GALATIA. Paul had invested a tremendous labor of love in the churches of Galatia. His Epistle to the Galatians is a great doctrinal epistle, though in part a combative one. I have stated that the churches gave voluntarily, but here Paul says, “as I directed the churches of Galatia.” Those churches were autonomous churches at the time. Paul asked them to contribute to the offering, and then under his apostolic authority directed them as to the handling of the money.

SO DO YOU ALSO. This was a major offering, and a very important one. Great care had to be taken to protect the money and even greater care would be required in taking it to Jerusalem as the amount increased. Still greater care was needed in giving an account to the churches that had given the money. A man who refused pay for his labor so that he would not compromise his work would be very sure that there were witnesses on hand to report that all the money was turned over to James in Jerusalem for distribution among the needy saints.

Paul had given directions to the churches in Galatia concerning this offering. Now he gives the Corinthians the same directions. They had promised a long time before this that they would raise the money (2 Cor. 9: 10; 9: 1-5). They had lagged behind, but it was time for them to catch up on their pledges. The irony of it was that the members in this church had been the ones to start this offering in the first place.

16:2 - ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK. *“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.”* Having been rebuffed, rejected, and finally persecuted by the non-believing Jews, and hounded by the Judaizers (believers who insisted on circumcision of Gentiles), Paul had ceased to observe the Old Testament Sabbath and, we must assume, under the direction of the Holy Spirit began to observe the first day of the week, Sunday, as the Lord’s Day.

PUT ASIDE. The text means do it systematically, keep on doing it - put it aside and save it. There had been enough time to get the offering together, but the church that initiated the offering had become slack in giving. So, Paul tells them to bring the offering each Sunday according to their own ability to give (“as he may prosper”). This was a special offering, not their regular tithes and offerings. What Paul is advocating here is the systematic giving to this offering in addition to systematic tithing. This is the New Testament pattern (systematic giving) - they were to bring the offering to the storehouse (the church), they were to bring it on Sunday, and they were to give as God had blessed them.

When I became pastor of West Side Baptist Church, Bastrop, LA in 1965, I became acquainted with a number of faithful believers who were especially faithful in the stewardship of money. They brought their tithes and their offerings, and if they had to be out they sent their “envelop” with their tithes in it. Jesse Crosby and his family were faithful members. I loved this family, but I appreciated Jesse even more after one of our deacons told me about the day Jesse and his wife, Lucille, joined the church on promise of a letter from another local church.

When Jesse and his wife walked down the aisle Jesse not only gave the pastor his hand, he handed him seven envelopes! When asked for an explanation he stated that after a long time and much prayer they had felt led to leave their old church and become a part of another in the area. They had visited around for seven weeks, and each week they prepared their envelopes just as though they were going to their own Sunday School. So, when they joined the church they brought their tithes for seven weeks with them. Asked later why he had not just waited and written a check for the total amount after he joined another church, he said, “That is the Lord’s money and I didn’t want to take a chance on spending any of it.” Whether joking or not, Jesse understood the spiritual wisdom of systematic giving of tithes. He was a faithful steward.

AS HE PROSPER. This rule for giving is also found in 2 Cor 8:10. This was no communist society - from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs. Communist societies assess and take what they determine to be one’s ability to give, and like good socialists, they determine what everyone needs and how they will supply it (socialists in politics practice this all the time to try to keep themselves in power - it’s called tax and spend).

Paul wants the collections to be made before he comes. This was a reasonable request. He did not need to be involved with this the whole time he was there when there so many critical problems at Corinth. Furthermore, if they had the offering when he arrived, visitors and lost people who knew about what was going on at the church would not accuse him of begging for money. I do not like the way some of the televangelists “beg for money.” At the same time, biblical stewardship must be proclaimed by every preacher of the Word.

The tithe is the Lord’s. Ten per cent belongs to Him, and no one should boast of giving what already belongs to God. You can only give an offering after you give the tithe. New Testament stewardship goes beyond that. You are bought with a price when you receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. You belong to Him and everything you have belongs to Him. So, New

Testament Stewardship means that you make a practice of bringing the tithe to the Lord's house on the Lord's Day. You will also bring offerings as God has enabled you to prosper. Then you will use the rest in a manner that reflects your awareness that it all belongs to God, as you belong to Him. Under no circumstance must you spend any of the balance on anything that would dishonor the Lord. Apply the WWJD principle - What Would Jesus Do?

16:3 - WHOMEVER YOU APPROVE. *“When I arrive, whomever you may approve, I will send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem....”* Wisdom in dealing with financial matters in the Lord's work is essential and Paul, either through wisdom or the leadership of the Holy Spirit, takes every precaution to be sure their contributions would be used properly and that an accounting was made by some of their own members - ones they chose. “When I arrive” shows that they could count on his next visit - their raising the offering for the suffering saints in Jerusalem was an urgent matter and it should not be delayed. Furthermore, when he arrived his time should not be spent doing what they could do before he arrived.

I WILL SEND THEM WITH LETTERS. The NKJV follows the KJV. “And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem.” The NIV has, “Then, when I arrive, *I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve* and send them with your gift to Jerusalem” (Emphasis added). If the NKJV is the better translation here is in essence saying, “Whomever you approve through official action I will send (or take) with your gift to Jerusalem.” There is one thing we may be sure of: Paul would let others handle the money (2 Cor. 8:16-20). It is interesting that no names from Corinth appear in Luke's list of Gentiles who accompanied Paul to Jerusalem (in Acts 20:4). Remember that the messengers of the churches went along with Paul to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4f). He was wise to insist on messengers to accompany him with the offering. Ministers cannot be too careful with money.

TO BEAR YOUR GIFT. It is interesting that the word translated “gift” is the word (*charin*) is grace, as in 2 Cor. 8:4-7. This was a grace gift.

16:4 - IF IT IS FITTING FOR ME. *“...And if it is fitting for me to go also, they will go with me.”* This is the condition of third class, it may be possible, but it might not be. No doubt this is the reason he said, “I will send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem.” He wanted to go, but if prohibited, he would send those who were approved to take the offering to Jerusalem. Of course, we know that Paul did get to go to Jerusalem, and when he went he walked into a lot of trouble - but not blindly, for the Lord had prepared him for it.

B. Paul Plans to Visit, 16:5-9

16:5 - WHEN I COME. *“But I will come to you after I go through Macedonia, for I am going through Macedonia...”* Paul is writing from Ephesus. He would wait for Titus to return from Corinth, but we learn later that Titus he did not arrive before the end of the shipping season, Paul and his companions left for Macedonia where they met Titus, who was returning the long

way - by land. Corinth was in the southern part of Greece, Macedonia in the north (where Thessalonica and Philippi were located).

16:6 - PERHAPS I WILL STAY. *“...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.”* He could not be certain at the time of the writing, but he did stay in Corinth for three months (Acts 20:3) probably the winter.

WHEREVER I MAY GO. Paul was not making his own plans, the Holy Spirit was making them for him. His work was too important for him to make his own personal travel plans. As a matter of fact, he had to flee from a conspiracy in Corinth. Luke wrote, “And there he spent three months, and when a plot was formed against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia” (Act 20:3).

16:7 - TO REMAIN WITH YOU. *“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.”* Often ministers are asked to return to a previous pastorate for a funeral, wedding, or a reception, and when this happens he thinks of all the people with whom he wants to visit. What usually happens is that he will only have time to greet them and he leaves feeling disappointment that he could only speak “in passing.” Paul might well have known by this time that this would be the last time he would see them, so he wanted to spend more time with them. He loved the church and sensed that he was needed for an extended period.

IF THE LORD PERMITS. Condition of the third class (not yet determined). Paul did everything according to the Lords will.

16:8 - PENTECOST. *“But I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost...”* He longed to see the Corinthians but he would delay leaving Ephesus until after Pentecost. He is writing in the Spring before Pentecost. Apparently the uproar by Demetrius caused him to leave Ephesus early (Acts 20:1).

16:9 - A WIDE DOOR. *“...for a wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.”* He gives the reason for his decision to wait until after Pentecost before leaving Ephesus: there was a wide door open for evangelism and ministry. The door was standing wide open at last after three long years there, (Acts 20:31) and he wanted to take advantage of the great opportunity.

MANY ADVERSARIES. Many foes were lining up against him. Observe that Paul mentions these as a reason for staying in, not for leaving, Ephesus! He had great courage and faith. Read Acts 19 to see the opposition from Jews and Gentiles, with the opposition mounting daily under the lead of Demetrius the silversmith. Yet, Paul leaves suddenly. He hints at the reason in 1 Cor. 15:32 and 2 Cor. 1:8f.

C. Exhortations, Greetings, and Benedictions, 16:10-24

16:10 - IF TIMOTHY COMES. *“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..”* We find in Acts 19:22, that Paul sent Timothy with Erastus from Ephesus to Macedonia. He was planning to send Timothy on to Corinth to try to help them resolve some of their problems. Evidently there was reason to fear that Timothy would not be treated well in Corinth, based on what we find in 4:17-20:

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. Now some have become arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. 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. For the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power.

One problem needs to be resolved. Here Paul says “if Timothy comes,” and in 4:17 he said, “I have sent Timothy.” Which is right? Paul’s plans were to send the epistle by Timothy, but he has other options. Actually, Timothy delivered the letter but failed to solve the problems. Some think Paul may have paid them a visit during his ministry at Ephesus, but there was no breakthrough until Titus visited them. Why was Titus successful where Timothy (and possibly Paul) had failed? Is it possible that his being a Gentile was a factor? Or was Titus that diplomatic? We are simply not given that information.

16:11 - LET NO ONE DESPISE HIM. *“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.”* See 1 Timothy 4:12, where Paul advises Timothy to conduct himself in such a way that people- would not despise him. Paul wanted to be sure that they respected Timothy. A church can crush a young minister in any number of ways. Forced termination is all too common today, and some of these men never get over it. Paul knew there were serious problems at Corinth, and while he was willing to send Timothy to help, he wanted to protect him.. Barnes suggests that

It is probable that some of the more wealthy and proud, some who valued themselves on their wisdom and experience, would be disposed to look upon him with contempt. On another occasion, he directed Timothy so to live as that no one should have occasion to despise him on account of his youth 1 Tim. 4:12; and he here urges on the Corinthians, that they should not despise him because he was a young man, and comparatively inexperienced. A minister of the gospel, though young, should receive the respect that is due to his office; and if he conducts himself in accordance with his high calling, his youth should be no barrier to the confidence and affection of even aged and experienced Christians. It should be rather a reason why they should treat him with affection, and encourage him in his work [BARNES].

I EXPECT HIM. Since Paul planned to stay longer in Ephesus, he sent Timothy to Corinth to deal with the issues and return with a report. The report was not good. Titus was then sent to them with plans to meet Paul later in Troas (2 Cor. 2:12). Paul stayed in Ephesus for a time but sent Timothy and Erastus on to Macedonia (Acts 19:22). Because of trouble in Ephesus Paul was forced to leave for Troas earlier than he had planned. When Paul arrived at Troas, Titus was not there, and he never showed up. It is possible that by the time Titus was ready to return to meet Paul, the shipping season was over. So, when Titus did not arrive in Troas in a reasonable amount of time, Paul went on to Macedonia. Titus met them in Macedonia, having traveled overland from Corinth. Upon receiving Titus' good report, Paul was inspired to write the Second Epistle to the Corinthians from Macedonia.

16:12 - CONCERNING APOLLOS. *“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.”* Robertson surmises that “Apollos had left Corinth in disgust over the strife there which involved him and Paul (1 Cor. 1-4). He had had enough partisan strife over preachers” [ATR].

The Corinthians had asked Paul a number of questions and he has been answering them in this epistle. Here Paul seems to be responding to the last of their questions, this one concerning the very popular Apollos. They had apparently inquired about the possibility of a return visit from him.. Paul said he had “encouraged him greatly” to visit them. However, the gifted Alexandrian had decided to stay on in Ephesus with Paul, for the time being. “Earlier in the letter, Paul had described himself and Apollos as fellow workers under God (1 Cor. 3:9). This verse bears eloquent tribute to the fact that Paul conducted himself not as a master but as a partner with others who labored in ministry” [BKC].

16:13 - BE ON THE ALERT. *“Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.”* What great admonitions for any Christian or any church. Christians must always be on the alert:

- (1) For opportunities to witness to the lost..
- (2) For opportunities to minister to those who need it.
- (3) For doctrinal heresies.
- (4) For temptations that will cause them to compromise their testimony.
- (5) For satanic attacks.

STAND FIRM. This especially relates to sound doctrine. Earlier, on the Second Missionary Journey, Paul had written from Corinth to the church at Thessalonica, “Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or by our epistle” (2 Thes. 2:15). He had already stated that the Thessalonians had accepted Paul's message as a message from God and the epistle he had send them was the Word of God. So, in reality he was urging them to stand fast on the Word of God. After all, that is the only source of sound doctrine. Some, however, might hasten to ask about extra-biblical revelations from modern day prophets or from the Holy Spirit. In the first pace, a good part of standing firm on the great doctrines of

Christ is an awareness of the fact that foundation for all doctrines is the Scripture.

But what if someone insists that they have a new revelation from God? They may insist that Jesus appeared to them in a dream or a vision, or even in person. In the first place the Bible was completed toward the end of the First Century and canonized very early in church history. We are warned against adding anything to or taking anything from the holy Scripture. In the second place, while God can do anything he wants to do, any claim that one has received an extra-biblical revelation would, from an objective standpoint, be very difficult to confirm.. You may tell me that God told you to attack the enemies of the Cross, but if your methods violate Scripture in any way I will know that God was not the source of your revelation.

Paul does not say that we are to hold an uncompromising attitude on the color of the carpet, pew cushions, or the foyer furniture. We stand fast in sound doctrine, in faith, in loyalty, hope. We must stand firm on the rock foundation of the Word of God.

ACT LIKE MEN. I love this one. What was David's appeal to Solomon? "Show thyself a man." I read an evaluation of a book about a movement for Christian men. The writer noted that this group was right in stating that the radical feminist movement in America had "sissified" men. The writer went on to assert his conviction that this particular men's movement had feminized some of the men in the movement. If some of the illustrations were true, the author had a point. For example, it is not traditionally a masculine thing for men to get together in small groups and confess their sinful thoughts, their pain, and frustration to one another. That is more a feminist thing.

Men, especially Christian men ,should be strong. Men should be masculine and women should be feminine. A feminized man or a masculinized woman can send false signals to children and young people. The world may like to think of Christians as weak, and even try to portray Christian men as something less than manly. Christians men need to help our society today to redefine what it means to act like men. A lot of worldly men do things Christians do not do - but then, so do dogs! It does not take much of a man to be immoral, profane, or vulgar, and it does not take much of a man to commit acts of violence. Animals commit violent acts all the time. It does not take a man to drink himself into a stupor.

A Christian man is one who stands firm on the Word of God. He studies it, meditates on it, and he applies in all relationships. A Christian man is meek, but never weak. He is more concerned with high Christ-esteem than high self-esteem. A Christian man is one who is strong in faith, strong in character, strong in sound doctrine.

16:14 - LET ALL THAT YOU DO BE DONE IN LOVE. This sets the standard for conduct and the guide for fellowship within a church. Every emotion, every word, and every action should be held up to this standard. "This direction is repeated on account of its great importance, and because it is a summing up of all that he had said in this Epistle; see 1 Cor. 13; 14:1. Here he says, that charity, or love, was to regulate all that they did. This was a simple rule; and if this was

observed, every thing would be done well” [BARNES].

16:15 - I URGE YOU. “*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)...*” This is an urgent appeal. Paul had baptized the members of the household of Stephanas himself (1:16). They were among the “the first fruits” of Achaia (Acts 17:34)), along with a few converts in Athens. They were the first fruits (or among the first converts of southern Greece). The first fruits were a reminder of a greater harvest to come.

DEVOTED THEMSELVES. The people of this household had devoted themselves to ministering to the saints. This is certainly a statement worthy of our consideration today. My mother did that! Every spring when she planted gardens, or had them planted, she did so with her neighbors and her pastor and his family in mind. She prepared meals, shared produce, and even bought clothes for a student pastor. The household of Stephanas, a noble family, appointed themselves to be ministers to the saints. that needed it (poor and needy). Personal ministry is still the only way to win the world for Christ. Evangelism and missions depend on it.

It is significant that Paul mentions that the members of the household of Stephanas were among those who assumed responsibility for the general welfare of the church.

Sometimes Paul appointed elders (Acts 14:23) but in this instance members of Stephanas’ household voluntarily took on the responsibility (cf. 1 Tim. 3:1). Paul recognized their position as ordained by God and urged others to **submit to them**. As an aside, it may be said that this text argues strongly against the view that infants were in view when a household was referred to. It is difficult to see how infants could be of **service to the saints**. One primary qualification for church leadership was a willingness to serve (cf. Matt. 23:11; Luke 22:26). To those who labored with this spirit, submission on the part of others in the church was due [BKC].

16: 16 - BE IN SUBJECTION. “*...that you also be in subjection to such men and to everyone who helps in the work and labors.*” The word Paul uses here seems to mean that you would show regard for those who help in the work of the Lord, that you would treat them with distinguished respect and honor for what they have done. This is the principle Paul would stress in the Epistle to the Ephesians. Rather than lording it over others, we should be willing to place ourselves in submission to the, especially “to such men and to everyone who helps in the work and labors.”

Jesus set the supreme example for His disciples when He washed their feet. The most lowly slave in a household was given the responsibility for washing the feet of family members and guests who arrive after a long walk, often on a dusty road in hot weather.

EVERYONE WHO HELPS. Not only should God’s people show respect for the ministers

of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, they should hold in high regard those who help those ministers of the Gospel in their “work and labors.”

16:17 - I REJOICE. *“I rejoice over the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have supplied what was lacking on your part.”* It was by these men that the Corinthian believers had sent the letter to the Paul in which they asked the questions he answers in this epistle.

Fortunatus is believed to have survived St. Paul; “and to be the same mentioned by Clement in his epistle to the Corinthians, sec. 59, as the bearer of that epistle from Clement at Rome to the Christians at Corinth” [CLARKE]. Stephanas is apparently the same person mentioned in the previous verses. “Probably he, as one of the oldest and most respected members of the church, had been selected to carry the letter of the Corinthians 1 Cor. 7:1 to Paul, and to consult with him respecting the affairs of the church there” [BARNES].

Paul was glad these men had come to him at Ephesus. He was overjoyed that these men whom he had introduced to the Lord, these men who were such close personal friends and had aided him in his work, had come to visit him. What joy faithful saints bring to the hearts of those who serve the Lord. These men may have taken this epistle back with them to Corinth.

WHAT WAS LACKING. Robertson explains, “Either ‘these filled up my lack of you’ or ‘these filled up your lack of me.’ Either makes perfectly good sense and both were true. Which Paul meant we cannot tell” [ATR]. They supplied what was lacking on the part of the Corinthians and Paul certainly reciprocated in ways too numerous to mention.

16:18 - THEY HAVE REFRESHED MY SPIRIT. *“For they have refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men.”* The same verb was used by Jesus in Matthew 11:28 for the refreshment offered by him to those who came to Him. Clarke’s comments help here: “They have been a means of contributing greatly to my comfort; and what contributes to my comfort must increase yours. This is probably the meaning of the apostle” [CLARKE]. They had refreshed Paul’s spirit through fellowship while they were there and through information they shared about the church. All the information was not pleasant, but Paul needed to be informed.

16:19 - THE CHURCHES OF ASIA. *“The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house.”* The word “Asia” here does not denote the whole continent which is now called Asia, nor all of Asia Minor, but rather the province of Asia of which Ephesus was the capital, which was a part of the Roman province of Asia (Acts 10:10). The Gospel spread rapidly throughout the region from Ephesus. The seven churches of Asia mentioned in Revelation were in this district.

AQUILA AND PRISCA. When the Jews were driven out of Italy, Aquila and Priscilla settled in Corinth, Paul stayed in their home and they all worked together, “both in tentmaking and in preaching the gospel in Corinth. Aquila and Priscilla would want to send greetings to

their Corinthian friends.” [NCWB].

THE CHURCH THAT IS IN THEIR HOUSE Paul had long before left the synagogue for the school house of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9). But Aquila and Priscilla opened their home for services.

“The church that is in their house” is literally, “an assembly in their house.” Because the next verse says “all the brethren” (i.e., the whole church in Ephesus), it seems likely that the assembly (*eccleôsia*) in Aquila and Priscilla’s home was an assembly of a certain number of believers in Ephesus, but not necessarily the entire number of saints.

When this couple was in Rome, a group of believers (also called an *eccleôsia*) met in their home. In the early period of the NT church, the believers in a locality could meet in one home (if their number was small enough) or in several. According to Neander, the entire church at Corinth met at Gaius’s home (see Rom. 16:23 and cf. 1 Cor. 14:23), and perhaps the entire church at Laodicea met at Nymphas’s home (see Col. 4:15 and comments) [NCWB].

16:20 - A HOLY KISS. “*All the brethren greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss.*”

The ancient patriarchs, and the Jews in general throughout the Old Testament period, were accustomed to kiss each other whenever they met. This was a token of friendship and peace with them, as shaking of hands is with us. Early Christians naturally followed this example of the Jews - many of these earliest members were Jewish believers.

16:21 - MY OWN HAND. “*The greeting is in my own hand--Paul.*” Paul stopped dictating at this point and wrote the remainder himself. This reminds us that a seditious and heretical letter had been circulated in Thessalonica under Paul’s name. When he was in Corinth on the Second Missionary Journey, he learned that after he sent his first letter to the saints in Thessalonica someone else had send a letter to the same church in which false statements were made. Either Paul’s name had been forged, or the claim was made that the letter was from Paul (2 Thess 2:2). In the Second Epistle to Thessalonica, he signed it in his own hand - apparently he expected them to know his signature. He wrote in 3:17, “The salutation of Paul with my own hand, which is a sign in every epistle; so I write.”

16:22 - IF ANYONE DOES NOT LOVE THE LORD. “*If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed. Maranatha.*” Barnes comments:

This is a most solemn and affecting close of the whole epistle. It was designed to direct them to the great and essential matter of religion, the love of the Lord Jesus; and was intended, doubtless, to turn away their minds from the subjects which had agitated them, the disputes and dissensions which had rent the church into factions, to the great inquiry whether they truly loved the Saviour. It is implied that there was danger, in their disputes and strifes about minor matters, of neglecting the love of the Lord Jesus, or of substituting attachment to a party in

the place of that love to the Saviour which alone could be connected with eternal life [BARNES].

ACCURSED. “Accursed” (anathema, Greek) means “set aside for judgment” (devoted to judgment). “O Lord, come!” is a translation of the single word “maranatha,” an Aramaic word which was probably used in prayer, expressing a desire for the Lord’s return. It may be translated either “until He comes” or, simply, “come.” They anticipated the immanent return of the Lord Jesus Christ. During those times of trials and persecutions they longed for it.

16:23 - THE GRACE OF THE LORD JESUS BE WITH YOU. After some of the stinging criticism included in this letter, Paul closes on a positive note. In light of their problems and in view of the steps needed to correct them, they were in need of the “grace of the Lord Jesus.”

16:24 - MY LOVE BE WITH YOU ALL IN CHRIST JESUS. AMEN. It may seem strange that Paul would add these words after writing, “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.” On the other hand, it may have seemed very natural to Paul.

We can easily conceive what the latter means: the grace of Christ is an active, powerful, saving principle; it is essential to the existence of the Christian Church that this grace should be ever with it: and without this grace no individual can be saved. But what could the love of the apostle do with them? Has it any meaning? I confess I can see none, unless it be intended to say, I love you; or, I continue to love you [CLARKE].

The Lord Jesus loved these believers and Paul loved the Lord Jesus Christ. The love he expresses for them is in “Christ Jesus.” What more can anyone add? Amen!

APPENDIX I

THE USE OF WINE IN NEW TESTAMENT TIMES

Johnny L Sanders, D. Min.

How popular is home wine-making? The question appeared recently in a weekly magazine. The answer was that every month, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms of the U.S. Dept. of the Treasury licenses a new 5,000 heads-of- households. The American Wine Society, a Hobby group, reports (1975) membership as 12,000 with a 30% annual increase. "Pop" wines, advertised so freely on TV, radio, magazines, and billboards, have contributed to a serious and growing problem among young people. People like to joke about the amount of beer consumed by servicemen but it is no joke to three million American veterans who are now alcoholics.

Alcohol is a major problem, but when one takes a stand against beverage alcohol, some "sleeper" comes up with the same old worn-out protest, "But Jesus drank wine! They drank wine at the Last Supper, didn't they? The answer is, "yes." Wine was

used at the Last Supper. But the answer to the implied question (Is not modern drinking the same as that practiced by the Jews at their feasts and social function?) is no. There is a difference.

An article by R. H. Stein, "Wine Drinking in N. T. Times" which appeared in the June 20, 1975 issue of "Christianity Today" (p. 9) is helpful in understanding the difference in wine drinking in N. T. times and modern social drinking. Stein pointed out that in ancient Greece wine was stored in large jugs called AMPHORAE. When used it was first poured into large bowls called KRATERS and mixed with water. From these kraters cups (KYLIX) were filled. It is important to note that before the wine was consumed it was mixed with water. The cups were filled from the kraters and not the amphorae.

The ratio of water to wine mentioned by ancient writers varied from 1 to 20 parts water to 1 part wine. Common ratios mentioned are: 2-1, 3-1, 4-1, 5-2 (the larger number represents the water). "Sometimes the ratio goes down to 1 to 1 (and even lower), but it should be noted that such a mixture is referred to as 'strong wine.' Drinking wine unmixed, on the other hand, was looked on as a Scythian or barbarian custom" (Stein).

Wine was not only a common beverage in ancient times. It was used for medical purposes as well as a solvent for medicines. Wine is mentioned often in ancient writings. Plutarch wrote, "We call a mixture 'wine' although the larger of the component parts is water." Writers simply called the mixture wine without explaining the ratio. But if straight wine or unmixed wine was intended it was called 'strong wine' or strong drink.

It seems reasonable to assume that the practice among the Jews was similar to that mentioned above. In several places in the O. T. a distinction is made between wine and 'strong drink.' In Lev. 10:8-9 we find the Lord addressing Aaron, "Drink no wine nor strong drink, you nor your sons with you, when you go into the tent of meeting..."

OTHER REFERENCES: (1) Num. 6:3; (2) Deut. 14:14-26; 29:6; (3) Judges 13:4, 7, 14; (4) I Sam. 1:15; (5) Pro. 20:1; 31:4, 6; (6) Isaiah 5:11, 22.

Both the Talmud and the 1901 Jewish Encyclopedia suggests that a mixture of three parts water to one part wine was customary. Therefore, it may be safe to assume that the wine used at the Last Supper was a mixture of 3 parts water to 1 part wine.

Yes, Jesus drank wine. Yes, the apostles drank wine. But no, the modern use of alcoholic beverages does not parallel the use of wine in N. T. times. "To consume the amount of alcohol that is in two martinis by drinking wine containing three parts water to one part wine, one would have to drink over twenty-two glasses" (Stein). There is a striking differences in modern social drinking and the use of wine in those days. In ancient times safe drinking water was often very difficult to find. Unfermented fruit juice would soon spoil and milk would sour. The only answer to a very acute problem was real, fermented wine. The wine helped purify the water and the water stretched the wine supply. When one took an extended trip the only safe, reliable drink was this mixture of water and wine. It was not only practical, it was essential.

Today safe water, coffee, tea, refrigerated milk and juices and cold soft drinks are available to most people whether at home or on the road. These drinks are not only safer than wine, beer and liquor, they are usually less expensive. Seldom does a family become destitute because of a father's addiction to coffee or tea. The same cannot be said of alcoholic beverages.

Lost men generally associate the drinking of alcoholic beverages with worldliness and sin. Many unsaved people can only be reached by one who lives a separated life. Any Christian who drinks beverage alcohol places his testimony in serious jeopardy and to deliberately jeopardize one's witness is a serious offense against God and the unsaved. Knowing this, the man who drinks is seeking the minimum in service and loyalty, and avoiding the maximum. Those who try to justify their drinking may often be trying to determine just how little they can do for God and still be called a Christian by others. It is easy to tell when someone is rationalizing to try justify compromise.

"If the drinking of unmixed wine or even wine mixed with a ratio of one to one with water was frowned upon in ancient times, certainly the drinking of distilled spirits in which the

alcohol content is frequently three to ten times greater would be frowned upon a great deal more" (Stein).

Habakkuk warns in 2:15, "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and maketh him drunken also..." On cigarette packages there is a warning: "The Surgeon General has determined that cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health." Should there not be an even stronger warning attached to alcoholic beverages?

"At the last it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder." Read Proverbs 23:29-32.

APPENDIX II

Notes on The Second Coming
Taken From

The Glory of Hope
A Study of 1 Thessalonians

By

Johnny L. Sanders

Teaching Concerning the Dead, 4:13-18.

4:13 - THOSE WHO ARE ASLEEP. *"But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope."* ...The believers in Thessalonica...had been taught that Jesus is returning for His saints. One question they were asking now was: **What happens to those who die before Jesus returns?**

In 1 Thess. 4:13-18, Paul provides us with a great written statement about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Since I am writing this for the layperson's use, let me stress up front that I am bearing in mind several things as I write. First, there is the **fact** of the Second Coming as stated in Scripture. Second, there is the **hope** of the Second Advent. Third there is the **time** of His return, which I certainly do not know any better than Jesus did when He was on this earth. Fourth, there is the fact that **many church members have been confused by what they have heard**, either from the pulpit or from television preachers. In answering their questions about those who die in the Lord before the return of Christ, Paul makes the following statements:

- (1) Christians should not grieve for those who die in the Lord as hopeless heathens do.
- (2) Those who die in Christ will be made alive, just as Jesus was raised from the dead.
- (3) Those who are alive at Jesus' coming will be preceded in the resurrection by the righteous dead.
- (4) The Christians who are alive at Jesus' coming will be gathered together with all the resurrected believers and will remain together forever.
- (5) Revelation of God's plan for the believer should be a great comfort to the saints who grieve for their loved ones when they die. For more on the subject, see 1 Cor. 15:20-28; 1 Thes. 2:19; 3:13; 5:23; 2 Thes. 2:1,8.

The use of the word "Asleep" (*koimomenon*) as a metaphor for death should not be construed as soul sleep. The use of the word "asleep" denotes what happens to the body at death, not what happens to the soul. More specifically, this points to the state (or condition) of the dead. In Jesus' story of the rich man and Lazarus, The rich man is already in hell and Lazarus is already in heaven. Paul makes it clear in 2 Cor. 5:8 that at the moment of death the believer ushered into the presence of God. Jesus' proclamation to the thief on the cross verifies this (Luke 23:39-43). "Paul is suggesting that death is like sleep for believers because (1) it is a temporary state, (2) it is a restful state, and (3) it is a state from which one awakes. Daniel 12:2 uses the same metaphor to speak of death and resurrection."¹

Prophecy of future events is not only scientifically unverifiable, it is confusing to many because it is subject to so many interpretations. Without a doubt, Paul had taught the Thessalonians about the return of Christ (Acts 17:7). What we do not know is whether some of them had misunderstood the doctrine, or if some had "willfully perverted the message, sowing fear in the people's hearts by saying that friends and relatives who had recently died would not share in the kingdom as would those that remained alive. This is the error that Paul tries to correct here (cf. 5:10)" [].

4:14 - JESUS DIED AND ROSE AGAIN. *"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus."* "If we believe" (literally, since we do believe) that Jesus died and rose again, then we must believe that when He returns all those who have died in the Lord will return with Him. The certainty of the believer's resurrection is His resurrection.

In this passage, 4:14-18, Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to expand what we may glean from the Gospels about Eschatology (the doctrine of last things, or end time events). Believers who die before Christ returns will not be denied every blessing promised by the Lord. On the contrary, they will be raised first before the believers who are alive at Christ' return are caught up to be meet Him in the air. Today, believers usually use the term rapture in referring to believers being "caught up" (vs. 17) to meet the Lord in the air when He comes for them.

The word rapture does not appear in the New Testament. The Greek word is translated

rapere in the Latin Vulgate, which gave rise in the nineteenth century to the word “rapture” among dispensationalists. There are three different positions on the rapture: Pre-tribulation, Mid-tribulation, and Post-tribulation disciples. Pre-tribulation adherents believe the church will be caught up to be with Christ at the beginning of the seven-year tribulation period (and thus seven years before Christ returns to earth). Mid-tribulation disciples believe the rapture will occur at the end of three and one-half years, and of course, Post-tribulation disciples insist that the church will go through the Tribulation before the rapture. Others see the rapture - if they even use the term at all - as occurring simultaneously with the return of the Lord.

Some definitions germane to this study should be helpful as we study this passage. Most believers, whether they have a clearly developed understanding of Eschatology or not, will fall into one of the following categories:

(1) PREMILLENNIALISM. This view holds that Christ will return to earth to establish an earthly, millennial kingdom and reign over it from an earthly throne. Once a student of the Word identifies himself as a premillennialist, some people will want him to be more specific, usually in reference to their view on the Tribulation. All premillennialists do not agree on many issues. Most Historical premillennialists believe the church will go through a literal tribulation period and that the rapture will occur at the same time that Christ comes in His glorious return.

(2) AMILLENNIALISM. Amillennialists, on the basis of their interpretation of the reign of Christ in Rev. 20, reject the idea of a literal thousand year reign by Christ on earth, in favor of an invisible kingdom of indeterminate duration. “Amillennialists believe the kingdom exists in a spiritual sense right now, and the next event on the prophetic calendar will be the return of Christ, followed immediately by final judgment” (MACARTHUR, John F., *The Second Coming*, Crossway Books, Wheaton, IL, 1999, pp. 239: 220).¹ Some amillennialists equate the rapture with a general resurrection and judgment without reference to a specific end time tribulation period. Other amillennialists believe the church will go through the tribulation period before being raptured. Still others reject the whole idea of a tribulation period in favor of the normal opposition to the Gospel and the occasional persecution to which Christians may be subjected. This view sees the reign of Christ described in Rev. 20 as an invisible, spiritual kingdom of indeterminate duration rather than a literal thousand years.

(3) POSTMILLENNIALISM. Generally, postmillennialists believe the church will go through the tribulation period before being raptured. Some postmillennialists see the nations turning to God in such a sweeping revival that when Jesus returns that He can simply begin His reign on earth with masses prepared for His rule. This view holds that the church through preaching (and possibly through political means) will establish the earthly kingdom of God. “Postmillennialists believe Christ will reign over a literal earthly kingdom, but most believe He will do so from a heavenly throne, after which He will return to earth and institute final judgment.”¹

(4) PRETERISM. According to this view, the Tribulation prophecies of Matthew 24 were fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. They interpret Matt. 24: 34 (“This generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place”) to mean that all the

prophecies of the chapter were to be fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70.

(5) **HYPER-PRETERISM.** This view is sometimes called full preterism or “realized eschatology.” Like the preterists, hyper-preterists build their whole case on a misinterpretation of Matt. 24. They insist that the reference to “this generation” means that “every last detail of Bible prophecy had to have been completed before the death of the people living at the time He (Jesus) spoke, and actually was fulfilled in A. D. 70, during the turmoil and political upheaval that ensued when Jerusalem was sacked by Rome and most of its inhabitants were slaughtered.”¹ Hyper-preterists believe that the universe in which we now live is the “new heaven and new earth” promised in passages like 2 Peter 3:13 and Revelation 21. “That mean this earth on which we now live is permanent. Sin and evil will never be finally eradicated from the God’s creation. Satan has already experienced as much defeat as he will ever experience. There is no tangible reality or physical existence beyond the grave. At death the believer simply becomes an eternally disembodied spirit , passing into the presence of God on a purely spiritual plane, with no hope of any future bodily resurrection. The souls of the wicked are similarly cast out of God’s presence in a disembodied state.”¹ Needless to say, this view runs into serious trouble when exposed to the light of passages like 1 Thess. 4:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:22-24; 2 Peter 3:10.

(6) **APOCALYPTIC VIEW.** I coined this as a distinct view - you will not see it in many, if any other lists. This view was popularized by certain seminary professors, including Dr. Ray Frank Robbins who wrote a commentary of Revelations in which he sought to follow the basic principles of interpreting apocalyptic symbols and images consistently throughout revelation. I sat under Dr. Robbins as he taught an “intensive” in Revelation right after he had spent a year in England studying under William Barclay and others. He was a very interesting teacher, always thoroughly prepared, and a master of abstract thought. My problem is that all he had to say about the role of Satan in end-time events went out the window when, under straight questioning, admitted that he did not believe in Satan’s existence. However great the moral lessons are that may be gleaned from Dr. Robbins’ approach, the view is shipwrecked on the rocky shores of biblical truth.

The rapture of the church (all true believers in Jesus) is the next great event in the redemptive plan and purpose of God. Summarizing the various aspects:

(1) At the return of Christ for His people, those who have died in Christ will come with Him (v. 14).

(2) Those who are still living at that time will not have the advantage over those who have already died in the Lord - answering the question which seems to have troubled the saints at Thessalonica, Paul stresses that those living at the time of the rapture will not “precede” the dead in Christ to heaven (v. 15).

(3) Those still living at the time of Christ's return for the saints will be “caught up” to meet Jesus

in the air and to be united with the saints who have preceded them in death. The word rapture “implies an immediate translation of believers, including the change of their bodies to a glorified state.”¹

4:15 - THE WORD OF THE LORD. *“For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.”* How did Paul know this? By “Lord,” Paul means Jesus, the risen Lord. But how did Paul receive it from Him? According to the New Commentary on the Whole Bible, it came “**by [in] the [a] word of the Lord**—i.e., ‘by virtue of a direct revelation from the Lord to me.’”¹ Without a doubt, it was by divine revelation. In writing to the Corinthian church he would later state that he had the gift of prophecy. Until the New Testament was completed there would be a need for someone through whom God would reveal divine truth.

UNTIL THE COMING OF THE LORD. Apparently the saints at Thessalonica believed that those who were alive at the time of Christ’s coming would have precedence over those believers who had already died. “Paul corrected this. Christians of all ages will rise at Christ’s return. Living Christians in every age should live in expectation of his coming (Matt. 25:13; Rom. 13:11; 1 Cor. 15:51; James 5:9; 1 Pet. 4:5, 6).”¹ According to this passage, not only will the souls of the dead in Christ return with Him (v. 14),

but their bodies will also be resurrected at His coming. The bodies of dead Christians will be resurrected immediately before living Christians are conveyed upward. Clearly Paul believed that he and his Thessalonian readers might well be **alive** when the Lord returned. He believed that the Rapture was imminent, that it could take place at any moment (cf. 1:10; 1 Cor. 7:29, “the time is short”; Phil. 4:5, “The Lord is near”). And this truth of imminency brought comfort (1 Thes. 4:18).¹

As I asked earlier concerning the general subject of Eschatology, what do we have to know about the Rapture? To be saved, we do not have to have any understanding of the subject at all, but once we are saved it should become very important to us. That does not mean that all will agree on the subject. Nor does it mean that all believers will advance at the same rate in their understanding of the subject. But all Christians should understand one thing - our position, and our knowledge of end time events, while important, must never jeopardize relationships within the Lord’s church. Be warned: the **Rapture of the church** should never cause a **rupture in the church**, or between believers, and that does not mean that we compromise. We may simply have to agree agreeably with those who do not understand the subject as we do. There is a second warning: There are church members who have gone to seed on the subject of the Rapture, but never seem to understand that they may themselves be the cause of a rupture in the fellowship.

4:16 - THE LORD HIMSELF WILL DESCEND. *“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the*

dead in Christ will rise first.” Jesus Christ now sits at the right hand of God in heaven (Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; Rev. 1).

A SHOUT. The Greek word connotes a shout of command, a war cry, or a signal shout. This time when Jesus comes, He is not coming as the Suffering Servant, but the King of Kings and Lord and Lords to begin His final battle for victory over Satan and the forces of evil.

VOICE OF THE ARCHANGEL. Only two angels are mentioned by name in the Bible, and Michael is the only one called an archangel. It is generally agreed that Gabriel, the angel of the Annunciation (Luke 1), is also an archangel. Michael is believed by some to be the archangel who will be sent to herald the return of Christ (Jude 9; Rev. 12:7). He had responsibility for guarding the people of God (Dan. 10:13). Many feel that Lucifer had been an archangel before being cast out of Heaven, a conclusion others would insist is forced. However, advocates of this view may answer that his command of the third of angels that rebelled and were cast out of Heaven supports their position.

THE TRUMPET OF GOD. A trumpet call accompanied God’s appearance when his people were called to convocation (Num. 10:2, 10; 31:6). Here it will be used to call them together at Christ’s return (Ps. 50:1-5; Matt. 24:31; 1 Cor. 15:52). See also, Exodus 19:16; Psalm 47:5. The trumpet is the third phenomenal signals associated with our Lord’s return. There are many questions that are not answered here. One commentary asks,

Who will voice the loud shout? Will it be Jesus Himself (cf. John 11:43), or the archangel Michael (Dan. 10:13; Jude 9), or another angel? Is this a literal trumpet call, or was Paul speaking figuratively in describing the call of God by which He will announce the Advent of His Son? (cf. 1 Cor. 15:52) These three phenomena may all refer to the same thing, but probably they are three separate almost simultaneous announcements heralding Christ’s return. Though one’s curiosity about these aspects of the Rapture is not fully satisfied in this passage, one thing is clear: Christ’s return for His saints will be announced from heaven forcefully and dramatically.¹

THE DEAD IN CHRIST WILL RISE FIRST. Thus, Paul answers the question that was causing these Thessalonian believers some anxiety. They anticipated the imminent return of Christ to receive His church, but while they awaited His return, many of their brothers and sisters in Christ were dying. What would happen to them? Where do they fit in the Resurrection? Here Paul reveal that deceased Christians will rise before the Christians who are still alive. Some believe “Old Testament saints will evidently be raised at the end of the Great Tribulation (Dan. 12:2), for the phrase “in Christ” refers exclusively to Church-Age saints. The bodies of the dead in Christ will **rise** before the living Christians are caught up to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thes. 4:17).”¹

As previously mentioned, a retired seminary professor once told me that there are those

who translate this, “The dead in Christ shall have risen first.” Robertson does not support this interpretation: “**First** here refers plainly to the fact that, so far from the dead in Christ having no share in the Parousia, they will rise before those still alive are changed.”¹ Translators of the most popular versions, agree to the letter with the New Revised Standard Version, “the dead in Christ will rise first.” A strict interpretation, then points to:

- (1) a return of Christ in the air.
 - (2) a resurrection of the dead in Christ.
 - (3) a rapture of living believers.
 - (4) a reunion with those who have died.
-