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say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.

36 If any one thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed, if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes; let them marry—it is no sin. ³⁷But whoever is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity but having his desire under control, and has determined this in his heart, to keep her as his betrothed, he will do well. ³⁸So that he who marries his betrothed does well; and he who refrains from marriage will do better.

39 A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. If the husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. ⁴⁰But in my judgment she is happier if she remains as she is. And I think that I have the Spirit of God.

7:17-24 Discomfiture: Some, after having become Christians, were discomfited about their circumstances. Some were apparently convinced that becoming a Christian meant circumstances should change along with changes in behavior. Paul has just discussed the matter that a marriage should not be broken up just because one spouse has become a Christian and the other has not. Wanting to reinforce this principle, Paul states: “Only, let every one lead the life which the Lord has assigned to him, and in which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches.” Paul does not forbid improving one’s circumstances, but he does make it a rule for the church-universal that a Christian is supposed to make the most of his circumstances, whatever they are (unless they are sinful). No violent changes in one’s day-by-day circumstances are to be made just because he has become a Christian. The Christian can glorify God in most every circumstance of life. This applies to one’s job, marital status, social status, or nationality. These circumstances are said by Paul to be “assigned” (Gr. *emerisen*, divided, apportioned) by the Lord. Indeed, the circumstances of our lives are regulated by the providence of God. We are citizens of a particular nation by the providence of God. We are surrounded by opportunities or lack of opportunities by the providence of God. But in whatever circumstance we find ourselves, we are to be content (cf. Phil. 4:11ff.). We are not responsible for our circumstances—but we are responsible for our attitudes and actions within those circumstances. It is often a temptation for the new Christian

to make violent changes in his circumstances or surroundings. He may want to quit his job, move from his neighborhood, break away from his social circle, and try to make a whole new set of circumstances—a whole new life for himself. But God wants the believer to be a believer in spite of and surrounded by his “assigned” circumstances. Paul states a number of analogies in order to illustrate his principle.

Strange as it may seem, some of the Jews in Corinth who had become Christians thought they should have the mark of circumcision *removed*. Jews who wanted to copy Greek ways in the Maccabean era instituted a process for removing the appearance of circumcision (see I Macc. 1:15; Josephus, *Antiquities*, 12:5:1). Others in Corinth, Christian Gentiles, thought they should submit to the rite of circumcision. The Judaizers in the earliest days of the church tried to make circumcision a dogma to be obeyed by everyone wishing to become a Christian (cf. Phil. 3:2; Acts 15:1ff.). “Circumcision” and “uncircumcision” are used frequently to symbolize Jewish and Gentile cultural habits. That may even be the case here. Paul certainly practiced many Jewish *morés* himself as a Christian. He did not violently renounce his Jewishness when he became a Christian. One should not divest himself of his nationality, his culture, or his physical circumstances (so long as they are not sinful) when he becomes a Christian. In whatever circumstance one is when called by the gospel to become a Christian—let him remain.

Again, if man finds himself in the circumstances of slavery when he responds to the gospel and becomes a Christian, he is not to take any violent or socially-destructive means to change his circumstances. Christianity stands for civil order. It does not condone anarchy in any form or for any reason. Jesus, under Roman rule, said: “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and unto God the things that are God’s.” Peter wrote, “Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do wrong . . .” (I Peter 2:13-14). Read what Paul said in Romans 13:1-7; remember the examples of Daniel, Nehemiah, and Esther; see what God said to the Jewish prisoners of war in Jeremiah 29:1-8. Of course the Bible teaches by precept that all men are created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights. God never intended that any man should be exploited or enslaved by another. But then God never intended that any man should live in a society that worships sacred cows and monkeys while millions of people starve to death.

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Yet, in slavery or freedom, in poverty or plenty, every man's first responsibility is to obey the gospel. Circumstances are irrelevant to faith and love for God. Paul says "never mind" about circumstances. The Greek phrase could be translated, "It must not matter to you" what your circumstances are.

Some commentators hold that the Greek sentence (7:21b) *all' ei kai dunassai eleutheros genesthai, mallon chresai*, should be translated: "And even if you become able to be free, rather remain as you are and use it." Others hold the translation should be: "But if you become able to be free, use the opportunity and become free." Since either translation might fit the grammatical construction, we must beware of being dogmatic as to its interpretation. On the one hand, the immediate context seems to demand the meaning: "Even if a Christian slave has an opportunity to become a free man he should remain a slave and make use of that lot in life to serve God." On the other hand, the *overall context of Christian morality* would seem to demand the meaning: "And every Christian slave who has an opportunity to become a free man should avail himself of this opportunity to use in the service of Christ." Paul certainly would not advocate any Christian slave running away from his master or using violent means to obtain freedom. Paul personally sent a runaway slave (Onesimus) back to his master (Philemon). But in this case both the master and the slave were Christians and Paul exhorted such brotherhood as would practically erase the distinction between slave and master. Paul did not usurp Philemon's right to have his bond-servant returned to his service. Wilbur Fields says in his commentary on *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, (College Press), "As Christians, we have come so far in our revulsion against slavery that Paul's attention to Philemon's legal rights as master seems to us more a violation of Onesimus' greater right to be free than a necessary preservation of Philemon's rights." The Christian should read the following on slavery (Deut. 23:15-16; Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:22-4:1; Titus 2:9-10; I Tim. 6:1-2; Eph. 6:5-9; and the entire book of Philemon). We should attempt to keep our subjective feelings about slavery at a minimum in trying to decide what Paul meant here. Paul is emphatic about the principle, "Every one should remain in the state in which he was called." He repeats it three times (7:17, 20, 24)! Verse 22 seems to reinforce this principle. But our interpretation of verse 22 will depend on our interpretation of verse 21. What Paul seems to be saying in all this is what we have said at the outset: God wants the

believer to be a believer in spite of and surrounded by his “assigned” circumstances. Whether a Christian is a bondservant or a freeman makes no difference—let him remain there with God (7:24).

Any person who becomes a Christian while a slave is set free from the bondage of sin by Christ. This is the only freedom that really matters for eternity. And any person who becomes a Christian while a freeman is in bondage to the Lord Jesus Christ and has no spiritual rights of his own. Christians belong to Jesus as purchased slaves. He is their Master. They are to do what Christ commands; they are to serve Christ. Christians are not to surrender control of their minds or actions to anyone but Jesus. Christ is the Christian’s only Master (see I Cor. 6:20). Paul is referring to the Christian’s need to keep from letting some external circumstance or some threat of a fellow man usurp the right of Christ to absolute ownership.

Biblical history documents a number of examples of men and women who served God in spite of difficult circumstances. Joseph, sold in slavery, unjustly imprisoned, became second ruler in Egypt; Daniel, taken to Babylon as a prisoner of war, became third ruler in Babylon and, later, in Persia; Esther, a maiden among the exiled Jews, became queen of Persia; Mordecai, Esther’s uncle, became a minister of the Persian government; Nehemiah, also of the Jewish exiles, became the king’s cupbearer. It is also significant that neither John the Baptist nor Jesus insisted that people change their occupations (soldiers and tax-collectors), residences or cultural traditions (so long as they were not sinful) as a requirement for discipleship. Peter did not require Cornelius to resign his commission as an officer (centurion) in the Roman army to become a Christian; Paul did not require Sergius Paulus (Acts 13) nor the Philippian jailor (Acts 16) to change their circumstances when they became Christians.

We must not miss the fact that the main subject being discussed by Paul in this context is *marriage*. He is stating a general principle and citing various areas of application—but the main application is to marriage. If a person becomes a Christian while married to an unbeliever, the new Christian is not to seek dissolution of the marriage. The Christian is free from such a marriage *only* if the unbeliever divorces the Christian. Paul suggests that by keeping the marriage intact, the believer is able to have such sanctified influence on both unbelieving spouse and any children to the marriage there exists the best possibility of turning the whole family to Christ. Biblical examples might be cited for this principle: Joseph married an Egyptian priest’s

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daughter (Gen. 41:45), retaining his strong faith and bringing up his children in the faith: Boaz married Ruth who was a Moabitess, and she became an ancestress of Christ; Rahab, a Canaanite harlot, married an Israelite (Salmon, Matt. 1:5), and became an ancestress of Christ; Esther, a Jewess, married a heathen emperor, and saved her people. Believers do not seek to reform individuals by social upheaval; they seek to reform society by converting individuals to Christ!

7:25-31 Distress: This paragraph plainly states Paul's primary purpose for advocating that it is well for the unmarried and the widows to "remain single" as he did (7:8). His primary purpose is *not* that celibacy is spiritually superior to marriage. Celibacy was enjoined in this apostolic reply to the Christians at Corinth in 56-57 A.D. *because of the stress-laden circumstances* coming upon Christians in the latter half of the first century. Persecution of Christians under Nero had already begun in 54 A.D. These persecutions continued for forty more years until they reached an intensity in 81-96 A.D. under Domitian that saw hundreds of thousands of Christians die. Simply because they were Christians, and would not worship the Roman emperor, people from all across the Roman empire were hunted down as conspirators and seditionists, enslaved and worked to death in mines and on galley-ships, starved to death by social ostracization, and slain by the thousands in gladiatorial games in Roman arenas. Practically all the writers of the New Testament predicted the "fiery ordeal" that was about to come (indeed, had already begun) upon first and second century Christians. Paul predicted the Jewish persecution, the destruction of Judaism, and the consequent distress upon Christians in Hebrews chapter 10, in II Thessalonians chapter 2, and in I Tim. 4:1-5; II Tim. 4:1-8. Peter predicted it in I Peter 4:12-19. John predicted and described it in Revelation chapters 1 through 20:6 (see *Twenty-Six Lessons on Revelation*, by Paul T. Butler, pub. College Press).

Paul addresses those who had never been married in verse 25. He uses the Greek word *parthenon* (almost always translated "virgin") translated "unmarried" in the RSV. Paul says there is no specific commandment of the Lord for his emphasis on celibacy. He gives his *judgment* (Gr. *gnomen*, understanding, mind) as one by the Lord's mercy appointed as trustworthy. *Judgment* is a better translation than *opinion* (RSV), and Paul is giving a judgment which should be heeded because the *Lord* has declared him trustworthy. It is apostolic

advice—not apostolic commandment—which his Corinthian audience, especially, would well have practiced. He had wisdom and revelation about their coming “fiery ordeal” which they did not have.

The phrase “impending distress” (Gr. *enestosan anagken*) might well be translated “present distress” (as in KJV). The Greek word *enestosan* is a perfect participle—a combination of *en* and *histemi*. It could be translated “imminent,” “right here,” or “at hand.” Paul was not talking of the end of the world. He had already cautioned the Thessalonians *not* to think of the Second Coming of Christ in connection with the impending distress coming upon first and second century Christians (II Thess. 2:1-12). Paul is suggesting unusual life-styles in view of imminently unusual circumstances much in the same way Jesus warned his disciples about their reactions to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. (Matt. 24:1-34; Luke 21:1-33; Mark 13:1-31; see *The Gospel of Luke*, by Paul T. Butler, pub. College Press). Paul’s understanding in the matter of marriage was that *in view of the imminent stresses or pressures* (Gr. *anagke*) a first century Christian should remain in whatever marital state he was. If the Christian was married, he should not seek to be free; if the Christian was not married, he should not seek to be married. That was wise advice for the exigencies of those times (or any similar times afterward), but only if the Christian is able to exercise sexual self-control (7:2, 9, 36).

In verse 28 Paul reassures the Corinthians that marriage is not a sin—not even if it is done against his wise advice about the imminent distress to come upon Christians. He goes on to point out that the distress to come will, of necessity, intensify the focus of married people on things of the world and perhaps divert their priorities away from pleasing the Lord. Those who went against Paul’s wisdom and married were going to have worldly (Gr. *sarki*, fleshly, physical) troubles. They would have to worry about another mouth to feed when as Christians they would be forced to starve; they would worry about seeing a beloved mate or child tortured to death in the arena. These anxieties and many others would constantly plague Christians during the great tribulation period of Roman persecution. Paul was trying to keep Christians from having to bear such burdens. The apostle reiterates that the “imminent distress” has “grown very near.” The Greek participle *sunestalmenous* is a perfect tense verb combined of two words, *sun* (together) and *sustello* (draw, contract, compact, tighten). The time of distress of which he had spoken earlier was almost there.

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Paul now gives admonitions directing attitudes and behavior in anticipation of the stressful times coming upon the Corinthian Christians. First, those who were married were to make certain their first priority was serving the Lord. The married Christians would have to prepare themselves to deny the very strong temptation to compromise their faith in Christ should harm be threatened toward a spouse or child. Paul is *not* saying that in times of persecution married people should neglect domestic duties or the responsibilities of marriage. He has just admonished married Christians not to neglect conjugal responsibilities (7:3-5). He wrote to Timothy (I Tim. 5:8) that anyone who does not provide for his own family has denied the faith and is worse than a heathen. Second, Christians must have the attitude that they will not mourn the loss of earthly things. They are not even to grieve the loss of loved ones as others do who have no hope (I Thess. 4:13). Paul reported that some Christians "joyfully accepted the plundering" of their property (Heb. 10:32-34). The apostle John predicted how the pagan world would mourn the loss of material wealth at the destruction of the Roman empire (Rev. 18:9-19). Third, Christians who might have occasion to rejoice in earthly circumstances should not do so, but should remember that worldly pleasures are transitory (see II Cor. 4:16-18; I Tim. 6:6-19). Fourth, those who make purchases should not do so merely to accumulate things. Whatever is purchased is only acquired in order to be used up in serving the Lord. Only that which is done to serve Christ will last for eternity. The Greek word *katechontes* would make the phrase read, let "those who buy be as those who do not consider their purchases as their possessions." Such earthly goods as a man has are not his—they are a trust, a stewardship from the real Owner of all things. Fifth, let those who use this world, use it sparingly. So long as Christians are residing in this world they must necessarily "use" certain parts of this world. They must eat to maintain the physical body, they must clothe that body, and there are certain earthly institutions with which they must be associated, but Christians are not to use this world any more than they have to while they serve God. The Greek word *katachromenoi* means, "much use, over use, using to the utmost." Christians are to consider themselves just pilgrims or temporary residents of this world. The Christian's permanent dwelling place is not here. He is not to settle down here—not to find security here. J. B. Phillips paraphrases, ". . . indeed their every contact with the world must be as light as possible . . ."

The reason for these five admonitions is this world is programmed for destruction. The word *form* (RSV) in the Greek text is *schema*; it is the word from which we get the English word *schematic*. It means, "a plan, an outline, a blueprint, a design." Everything in this present existence is designed to pass away. Even the institution of marriage is designed for this world only (Matt. 22:30). Men and women should not get so attached to anything in this *cosmic* (Gr. *kosmos*, world-order) scheme of things, not even to marriage, that they cannot serve God without compromise. Not only is this world programmed to pass away—it is presently doing so. The Greek verb *paragei* ("passing away") is present tense meaning action is presently going on. This agrees with Paul's statement in II Corinthians 4:16-18 that the "outer nature" (the physical) is wasting away while the "inner nature" (spiritual) of the Christian is being renewed every day. It is the invisible, spiritual nature that is permanent—the physical is transitory.

7:32-35 Deviation: The pressures of marriage, especially in distressing times of social upheaval, might make some Christians deviate from giving first priority to the Lord's will in their lives. Paul's desire in setting forth his wisdom about celibacy is that the Corinthian Christians not yet married may keep themselves free from divided loyalties. The word translated "anxieties" is *amerimnous* in Greek and means literally, *not divided in mind*.

The unmarried man separates his mind from other things and gives it to the things of the Lord. He is under no obligation to provide sustenance, safety and security for a wife. The unmarried man may concentrate all his faculties on being acceptable to the Lord. But the married man separates his mind from the Lord's service in order to concentrate on physical things that he may acceptably fulfill his obligations to his wife—and divided he is. The Greek phrase *kai memeristai* is translated by the RSV as connected to verse 33, "and his interests are divided." The best and most ancient Greek manuscripts indicate this translation is to be preferred over the KJV which translates it, "There is difference also between a wife and a virgin" making it the beginning sentence of verse 34.

The same attitudes may be found in the unmarried woman and the virgin (note: Paul distinguishes between *the unmarried* and *the virgin*; the unmarried probably referring to widows and women whose unbelieving husbands have divorced them; the *virgin* referring to those who had not yet been married). Unmarried women separate themselves unto the Lord, dedicating both body and spirit to Christ; but

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the married woman has to concentrate on many physical things in order to fulfill her marital obligations. There is nothing necessarily sinful in fulfilling one's marital commitments. Paul even exhorted husbands and wives to do so (7:3-7). But, he warned, stressful circumstances will always tend to intensify the temptation for a Christian married person to let priorities be diverted from the spiritual and focused on the physical. Martha (probably the wife of Simon the leper, see Matt. 26:6-12; Mark 14:3) was "distracted with much serving" (Luke 10:40), while Mary, the unmarried sister, sat at the feet of Jesus and chose the "best part," (see Luke 10:38-42).

So Paul's advice to these Corinthians, is, if they were presently unmarried (whether widowed, divorced or virginal), do not seek to be married. Paul's advice was for their own benefit. He had nothing to gain from thus advising them. Neither did he intend to restrict their freedom to make their own choice by claiming any personal authority over these Corinthian Christians. The English word *restraint* is from the Greek word *brochon* which literally describes "a noose, a slip-knot, a halter, by which animals were caught and tethered." They are not to think they are *tied* to Paul's advice. But if they are wise and if they want what is well-planned or in good form (Gr. *euschemon*), and if they want to be in a position to give *unencumbered* (Gr. *aperispastows*, undistracted, undivided) devotion to the Lord, they will do as Paul advises.

Consider how dangerous it would be to marry, just for the sake of appearances, someone whose idea of loyalty to Christ is not your own! God did not create us for marriage *at any price!* Paul gives three advantages of celibacy: (a) Freedom from troubles due to distressing times; (b) relief from anxiety about the things of the world on which a "bread-winner" must necessarily concentrate; (c) freedom from distractions in order to serve the Lord more fully and intently. These three attitudes may be achieved whether married or unmarried, of course, but with much less difficulty and with more time for the Lord when not married—especially if there are times of social distress like war, persecution, economic depression, etc. Remember, God forbade the prophet Jeremiah to marry (Jer. 16:1-4) because of the distressing times in which he lived.

7:36-40 Postscript: In these verses, the apostles make a brief summary of this whole dissertation on marriage in view of imminent distress.

The RSV has done an injustice to verse 36 in its translation. First, the Greek word *parthenon* should be translated *virgin*, and *not*

betrothed. The Greek word used specifically for *betrothed* is *mnesteuo* and is found in Matt. 1:18; Luke 1:27; 2:5. Second, the Greek phrase, *ean e juperakmos*, should be translated, "if she is past the apex of her puberty" or as the KJV translates it, "if she pass the flower of her age." The Greek word *huperakmos* is a combined word; from *huper*, meaning, *beyond*, and *akme* (English, *acme*), meaning, *apex*, highest point of anything, full bloom of the flower.

While the RSV translation makes it appear Paul is directing this last advice toward a *young man* acting in an *unseemly manner* (Gr. *aschemonein*, again the word is a derivative of *schema*, meaning, "not according to design or plan") toward the young lady to whom he is betrothed, the better translation would have Paul advising fathers in their attitudes toward virgin daughters well past the age of puberty. Young ladies of that age might be placed in great danger of succumbing to temptation to fulfill strong sexual urges illicitly should their fathers not permit them to marry.

Marriage customs of that century forbade the young maiden to make any arrangements for marrying a man. She could not even agree to marry a man without her father's approval. It was understood in that culture that the father made all the choices of a marriage partner for his daughter and all the arrangements. If the father said she could not marry—she could not marry! Paul is directing his trustworthy advice toward Christian fathers with daughters of marriageable age, who have reached sexual maturity and, perhaps, have shown signs of sexual desire about to get out of control (see verse 37).

The RSV translates the latter half of verse 36, ". . . if *his* passions are strong . . ." but the Greek text does not have a pronoun in this phrase—it has a 3rd person, singular, present subjunctive form of the verb, "is, or, to be." The pronoun is merely *understood*. It could just as well be understood to be *her* as it could be *his*. We believe verse 36 should read, in its entirety, thus: "If any father thinks he is behaving in any unseemly manner toward his virgin daughter, if *she is in* (present tense verb) the age of sexual desire, and the man (father) thinks she ought to marry, let the father do as he wishes; the father does not sin if he gives her to marry (Gr. *gameitosan*, give in marriage) a man." This certainly fits the following verses more accurately.

The father who is firmly established in his *mind* (Gr. *kardia*, heart), is under no necessity, for his wishes in this matter are under his own authority. If the father decides in his own mind to keep his virgin daughter from marrying, he will do well. The Greek words *thelematos*

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(will) and *exousian* (authority) should not be translated, as the RSV does, as *desire* and *control*. The RSV implies in its translation that Paul is talking about sexual desires under control, but Paul is really talking about a father's will or choice about his marriageable daughter being within his own authority and not someone else's.

Verse 38 should be translated, "So the man (father) who *gives* his virgin daughter *in marriage* (Gr. *gamizon*) does well, and the man (father) who does *not give in marriage* (Gr. *ho me gamizon*) will do better."

The apostle's final word on marriage is that Christians are to strive for God's highest ideal. That ideal is one man and one woman married until death separates them (see Matt. 19:1-9). This was God's ideal from the beginning of creation. But because man rebels against God and God's ideals, a lesser ethic must be enforced upon rebels. Laws of divorcement may be written to protect those who are divorced against their will. However, for Christians, God expects his ideal to be lovingly chosen, and practiced.

A wife is *bound* to her husband as long as he lives. The Greek verb *dedetai* (bound) is in the perfect tense and means that once bound, that binding is to continue. If the husband *dies* (Gr. *koimethe*, "sleeps"), the Christian woman is free to be married to whom she wishes, *only* (Gr. *monon*) in the Lord. Paul has already (7:10-16) discussed the hardships in a marriage where one person is a believer and the other an unbeliever. Now he insists that when a Christian woman (and it would also apply to a man) loses her spouse in death, she ought to limit her freedom to remarry to spiritual considerations. She should marry only a Christian. For a Christian to step into any relationship outside the will of God is not only to involve oneself in tragedy, and to jeopardize one's soul, but perhaps to bring sorrow into the whole Christian community and into the lives of a generation yet to be born. Christians are not to be mismated with unbelievers in any venture in life (II Cor. 6:14—7:1). In Paul's instructions to Timothy about the conduct of Christian widows (I Tim. 5:9-16) he urged the "younger widows" to marry. But Paul qualifies even that instruction with this answer to the Corinthians. It is better to remain single if marriage outside the will of God is contemplated.

To sum up, Paul answers the questions of the Corinthian Christians, who are facing "imminent distress," that it would be better for those spiritually strong who, by the grace of God, have their sexual drive under control to remain unmarried. All others should marry. They should marry "in the Lord." If a Christian's unbelieving

spouse divorces her she is "free" (to remarry) and if a Christian's spouse dies, she is "free." The married life is the norm. Celibacy is the exception, and in no way superior to marriage.

In all he wrote here to the Corinthians, Paul claims to have the approval of the Holy Spirit. The following comment on verse 40 is good:

He wanted to assure the Corinthians that he was not speaking from human bias and prejudice. That this danger existed is proved by the number of modern Christians who have accused him of just this vice. *I think* is probably to be taken as meiosis, a figure of speech which emphasizes something by saying less than is meant. Paul believed that his advice had been given under the guidance of the Spirit of God. This does not mean that it was advice for all people in all times. Under other circumstances wise and spiritual men have differed radically from the advice given in this chapter. It does mean that his advice was best under the circumstances then existing. The one point of permanent validity must not be overlooked. The decisions of Christians in all spheres of life should be made in the light of their primary devotion to God in Christ Jesus. If Christians in all ages would make their decisions in view of that which would be most helpful for them in serving the Lord, there would be fewer mistakes to regret.

Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians, pg. 126, by Fred Fisher, pub. Word Books, 1975

APPLICATIONS:

1. Biblical principles enunciated on the subject of marriage have the authority of God whether spoken by the married or the unmarried counselor.
2. Marriage is the only God-ordained relationship in which human sexual drives are to find expression and satisfaction.
3. If you want a happy marriage; do not neglect to afford your spouse all the physical satisfaction desired, along with love and the spiritual aspects of marriage.
4. The Holy Spirit of God not only approves of, but insists on, proper and regular sexual expression in marriage.
5. God's word warns that the human sexual drive is exceedingly strong.

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6. God's word warns against remaining unmarried too long.
7. Anyone married to an unbeliever should go to great extremes to preserve the marriage.
8. Christians married to non-Christians will at least afford the unbelievers in that household more godliness than they would get where there are no Christians in the family at all.
9. If divorce comes in the marriages of believers or unbelievers, Christians must be involved in finding and guiding the fallen to the highest possible good for the persons and the society. This will most likely involve remarriage of divorced individuals, both believers and unbelievers.
10. In "imminently distressful" times the advice of the Holy Spirit of God, through the wisdom of the apostle Paul, is, do not marry.
11. Christians may, and must, serve God in whatever circumstances they may find themselves.
12. Christians are *not* to insist on changed circumstances in order to serve the Lord.

APPREHENSIONS:

1. What provoked Paul to write this dissertation on Christian marriage?
2. Was Paul saying in verse 1 that men should never touch women?
3. Is relaxation from the temptation to illicit sexual expression the only reason men and women should marry?
4. What spiritual symbolism is to be found in human marriage?
5. Does the Holy Spirit, through Paul, *command* sexual regularity within marriage? Why?
6. Is celibacy a miraculous gift from God? What kind of gift is it? How does one know if he has this gift or not?
7. Could the "unmarried" of verse 8 be applied to those who had been previously married and then divorced?
8. Paul emphasizes that the human sexual drive is very strong—how strong?
9. What should Christians do who are married to unbelievers? What if the unbeliever divorces the believer? May a believer ever divorce a spouse? When? Why?
10. May a believer, having divorced, or having been divorced, remarry? Under what conditions?
11. Would a minister of the gospel *sin* if he solemnized the marriage

where one spouse has been previously divorced? Both spouses divorced? One prospective spouse is an unbeliever? Both are unbelievers?

12. Is divorce an unforgivable sin?
13. Would *enforced* celibacy produce the highest spiritual good in lives of individuals or society as a whole?
14. Should Christians really not try to change their circumstances in order to serve the Lord? What about Christian slaves?
15. Is the unmarried life preferable for anyone who wants to devote full attention to serving the Lord? For whom is it preferable?
16. Who should marry "in the Lord"?

Chapter Eight

THE PROBLEM OF CONSCIENCE (8:1-13)

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Why is Paul so antagonistic to “knowledge”—is he anti-intellectual?
2. Why were Christians having a problem with foods offered to idols?
3. If eating or not eating is irrelevant, why all the fuss?
4. Is it fair to hold me responsible for someone else’s weak conscience?

SECTION 1

The Principle (8:1-3)

8 Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” “Knowledge” puffs up, but love builds up. ²If any one imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. ³But if one loves God, one is known by him.

8:1a Provocation of Idolatry: Idolatry was a way of life. Greek cities were “full” of idols (Acts 17:16-34). In Corinth an inscription has been unearthed by archaeologists marking the location of a “meat market” in the probable vicinity of the temple of Apollo. The well of one of the shops along the south stoa has yielded a stone fragment reading, “Lucius, the butcher.” In Pompeii archaeologists have found a configuration of buildings including both a chapel of the imperial cult and a counter for the selling of sacrificial meat. In the ancient world it was almost impossible to secure meat which had not been offered to an idol. Some of the pagan temples appear to have provided auxiliary “clubrooms” which offered social dining as well as the more religious cultic meals. The cultic meals, according to William Baird, were held in recognition of a host of public occasions—marriage, victory in battle, honor to a hero. The prominence of such dining customs made it difficult for the Corinthian citizen to avoid sacrificial meat. When he was invited out to dinner, it was inevitably served as the main course. If his host were a devotee of Artemis, a successful hunt would be consummated by an elaborate banquet after the animal had been sacrificed to the patron deity. Could a Christian attend such a party? If he attended should he eat the sacrificial meat?

Please study Romans, chapter 14, in connection with I Corinthians 8, 9, and 10.

Hellenistic banquets were fabulous affairs. Petronius writes in *The Satyricon*:

Let's see, first off we had some roast pork garnished with loops of sausage and flanked with more sausages and some giblets done to a turn. And there were pickled beets and some wholewheat bread made without bleach. . . . Then came a course of cold tart with a mixture of some wonderful Spanish wine and hot honey. . . . Then there were chickpeas and lupins, no end of filberts, and an apple apiece. . . . The main course was a roast of bear meat. . . . It reminds me of roast boar, so I put down about a pound of it. Besides, I'd like to know, if bears eat men, why shouldn't men eat bears? To wind up, we had some soft cheese steeped in fresh wine, a snail apiece, some tripe hash, liver in pastry boats and eggs topped with more pastry and turnips and mustard and beans boiled in the pod and—but enough's enough.

Besides the Greek idols, the Roman emperors were attempting to insure allegiance by enforcing emperor worship. It was not participation in formal rituals of idol worship that bothered these Corinthians. That was strictly forbidden by apostolic command (cf. Acts 15:20, 29; I Cor. 10:14; II Cor. 6:16; Gal. 5:20; I Thess. 1:9; I Peter 4:3; I John 5:21; Rev. 9:20-21). But the worship of idols had so thoroughly saturated the culture of the first century everyone was brought directly into contact with it one way or another—even the Jews.

Practically every morsel of meat sold in public markets (I Cor. 10:25) of Greek and Roman cities had, in one way or another, been part of a sacrifice to an idol. There were public, formal worship services in pagan temples at which foods were offered; there were private, home services in honor of idols at which foods of all kinds were dedicated to the gods. So completely was this the case, the word in Hellenistic Greek "to sacrifice" had come to mean simply "to kill or to butcher." A native citizen of a Greek city like Corinth—especially if he were poor—would consider himself unfairly deprived if he were forbidden to participate in the public festivals at which idol sacrifices were served because it might be his only opportunity to eat meat for several months. These public festivals were probably held in the courts of the idol temples where tables were set up (cf.

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8:10; 10:14-22) for the public. The citizen of Corinth who became a Christian would have a very difficult time trying to continue social amenities among neighbors and relatives who were not Christian. It was a tradition practiced by many pagans to take some of their sacrificial animal's carcass home with them from the ritual and serve it on their own tables to friends and relatives.

Idol worship, feasting, and the immorality that went along with it were part of the very essence of Corinthian social life and culture. It was all part of everyday living. Some Christians easily settled the issue in their own minds. They knew, "an idol is no god." Actually, some non-Christians had also decided, philosophically, that idols were not gods. The Epicureans considered the worship of idols to be nonsense. One Hellenistic writer says of the gods that they "are far away, or they have no ears, or they do not exist, or they pay not the least attention to us." The Stoics, also, abandoned polytheism for a kind of pagan monotheism or pantheism. These pagan "atheists" practiced the forms of idolatry for practical political reasons but did not believe the myths. The majority of non-Christians, however, did eat such foods as *really* offered to an idol (I Cor. 8:7). And some Christians had *not* settled in their minds that an idol was not a god. Some Christians, especially those from Jewish backgrounds, abhorred all the trappings associated with idolatry and felt as if they had sinned if they even touched such things or looked upon them.

Some idolatrous rituals pronounced holy formulas over the sacrificial animals which allegedly turned the sacrifices into the god who was to receive it. In this ritual the god himself was allegedly sacrificed and when the priests and the worshipers ate the meat of the sacrifices, the strength and glory of the god supposedly passed into the worshipers. Many pagans also believed one way to protect themselves from having demons come inside them through their mouths was to eat meat sacrificed to a *good* god (whose presence would be in the sacrificial meat) and this would put up a barrier against the evil god who might come into them through some food.

This presented a very serious problem for the infant church. It involves the most crucial elements of Christian community—love, liberty, conscience, temptation, knowledge and spiritual maturation. The apostolic resolution of the question was, and is, of immense importance. If it were a prohibition of Christianity under any circumstances to eat meat sacrificed to idols, then the Gentile convert becomes bound to a legal system as condemning as the Mosaic law

and a legalism as impossible as the Jewish rabbinical traditions. If, on the other hand, the Greek Christian was free to do as he pleased in every circumstance, he was given license to carelessly trample upon the tender scruples of a weaker brother and probably cause him to sin.

Paul suffered slanderous misrepresentation and hateful persecution as a consequence of his teaching concerning Christian liberty (see Acts 21:21-24). Although Paul was in full accord with this teaching, it was not merely his but the Holy Spirit's. And anyone who opposed it was "severed from Christ, fallen from grace" (see Gal. 5:1-12).

8:1b-2: Problem of Intellectualism: Paul is not against knowledge or use of the intellect. He "reasoned" from the Scriptures (Acts 18:4, 19). He appealed to logic and deductive processes as befitting Christians (Rom. 12:1-2). He told the Philippians to "think logically" on Christian virtues (Phil. 4:8). His warning here is against *intellectualism*. Intellectualism is the arrogant doctrine that the ultimate principle of reality is human reason. Intellectualism holds that it is possible for the human mind to discover everything man needs to know. It thus dispenses with the need for a revelation from God—eventually dispensing with the need for God at all.

Paul uses two Greek words *oida* and *ginosko* interchangeably or synonymously for *knowing* and *knowledge*. Paul does not seem to be using these two words with as much difference as most commentators allege. It is apparent from the context that he is using irony when he says we know that "all of us possess knowledge." In fact, he is probably quoting a statement from some of the Corinthians themselves. Some of them were enamored of "knowledge" (see I Cor. 1:18-31; 2:1-16; 3:18). These may have been intellectuals agreeing with the gnostic Christians who supposed that the acquisition of mystical, divine knowledge freed one from any moral qualms about participating in the expressions of pagan culture.

The trouble with intellectualism is that it *inflates* (Gr. *phusioi*) the human ego. Those who "know better" than others are always in danger of feeling superior. Knowledge which does that is not true knowledge. There is a wide distance between human knowledge and heavenly wisdom (cf. James 3:13-18). Intellectualism seeks to tear down those of inferior knowledge in order to inflate self. *Love* (Gr. *agape*) seeks to *edify* (Gr. *oikodomei*, build up) the intellectually inferior by denying self. Knowledge is necessary. It certainly is not all that is necessary in man's relationship to God and his fellow man. Just because a person has something analyzed logically, scientifically

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and judiciously does not mean he is prepared on that basis alone to make an ethical decision about another man's salvation or standing before God. Paul clearly admonishes Christians *not* to judge others on the basis of knowledge alone (cf. Rom. 14:14-15). Knowledge must be tempered with love. Love is the motive that will make the right use of knowledge.

The apostle challenges the intellectualistic approach to Christian brotherhood by saying, "If any one *imagines* (Gr. *dokei*, supposes, believes) that he knows something, he does not yet know as he *ought* (Gr. *dei*, is obligated, necessarily, is required) to know." Egocentric knowledge falls short of God's mark for man. There is more to ultimate truth than accumulation of knowledge for knowledge's sake. Man has a higher obligation than knowledge (I Cor. 13:1-13)—that is to *love*!

8:3 Presentation of Ideal: The object of true knowledge is not human intellectual superiority, but a participation in the divine nature (cf. II Peter 1:3-4; II Cor. 3:18; John 6:63) of God Himself. Paul puts it this way, "But if one loves God, one is known by him." The object of true knowledge is not "something" but *Some One*—an experiential knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, His Son (cf. John 17:3). God cannot be reduced to fact or doctrines, although he cannot be known apart from his deeds. Paul is not referring to knowing *about* God. He is talking about the knowledge of God that only comes at the point where personal commitment in faith and love is made by the whole person of man to the whole Person of God. The ultimate method of knowing is *agape* (love)—personal commitment which surrenders all of self to God. Paul's view of ultimate knowledge rests on divine revelation wherein God's knowledge of man has priority. No man can *know* God unless he first lets God know him. Man cannot even love God until he allows God to love him first (I John 4:19). As long as a man elevates himself through pride in human reason, he will not *humble* himself to be *ruled over* by God. Unless Christ takes complete possession of us we cannot know him (see John 13:6-9) because we are not letting him know us. Paul uses this same idea in Galatians 4:9—to be known by God is to know him. The point is this: when God knows us as his own, in a relationship akin to marriage (but deeper and surer), it is only then that we *know* the blessedness of being related to him. Certain aspects of the divine nature may be known factually from nature (cf. Rom. 1:19-20), but experiential, intimate and personal knowledge of God comes only

to those who do his will (John 7:17). Being known by and possessed by God, enables man to see things from God's viewpoint (II Cor. 5:14-17). Only then does man begin to have proper knowledge of anything—most of all, proper knowledge about whether he may eat food sacrificed to idols or not.

Man must love God with all his mind, soul, heart and strength, and his neighbor as himself. When that decision is made we will take everything we know about God's revealed will, about the experiences of life, and about our neighbor and use it to build up the kingdom of God in people's lives. To love God is to be known by Him (I John 4:20). Love requires proper concern for a brother's lack of understanding. It is love that controls the Christian from acting according to knowledge (even when such knowledge may be correct enough in itself) when it would tempt, alienate, or otherwise cause a brother to sin who does not see the issue as clearly or as innocently as I suppose I do.

SECTION 2

The Persons (8:4-7)

4 Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "an idol has no real existence," and that "there is no God but one." ⁵For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"—⁶yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

7 However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through being hitherto accustomed to idols, eat food as really offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.

8:4-6 The Sure: After digressing toward the subject of true knowledge, Paul comes back to the question of eating meat sacrificed to an idol. He appeals to the validity of using empirical knowledge to establish that an idol is not a god. He uses an interesting idiom in Greek to say this. Literally it reads, *oidamen hoti ouden eidolon en kosmo*, or, "we know that no an idol in the world (is) . . ." The RSV translated it, ". . . we know that an idol has no real existence." Idols are "out of this world." They do not exist.

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Throughout chapters 8, 9, and 10 of this epistle, and in Romans chapters 14 and 15, Paul deals with the problems arising in the area of opinions because some Christians are "strong" and some are "weak." The terms "strong" and "weak" are not referring to spiritual strength or weakness—nor to morality. Both categories of brethren, if they have not love, consider themselves spiritually superior to the other. Without love, the one who "abstains" (or "the weak") will consider the other *worldly*. Without love, the one who "partakes" (or "the strong") will categorize the scrupulous as *pharisaical*. The terms "weak" and "strong" have to do with matters of opinion or individual preferences. They have to do with an individual's cultural, psychological, traditional background and experience. The translation "weak" and "strong" is unfortunate. It would be better to translate, "him who abstains" and "him who eats" as in Romans 14:3; or, better yet, "the sure" and "the suspicious" as we have done in our outline.

Since Paul classifies "the weak" (8:7) as those whose scruples cause them to *abstain* from eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols; by inference, we classify the "strong" as those who could, with good conscience, *eat* meat sacrificed to idols because they *knew* that an idol was not a god.

It should be a matter of certain knowledge to every Christian that there is only one God. He is God of the whole universe, God of all men, Creator of everything that exists, and there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, co-equal with God. It was clear to every Jew (Deut. 6:4). If there is only one God, it is clear that "an idol has no real existence." Therefore, the worship of idols is sheer folly; it is the worship of nothing.

8:7 The Suspicious: But such knowledge was not so certain in the minds of some of the Christians at Corinth. To some of the Greek-Christians the images (idols) did represent *something*. In the pagan world there were many so-called gods and lords in the heavens and on earth. So, in the mentality, opinions, or "suspicions" of the Greek-Christians these images were real beings called "gods." Paul repeats his admonition in chapter 10:19-20 that an idol has no real existence, but he warns there that eating meat sacrificed to an idol may endanger even a "sure" Christian of fellowship with demons!

The Greek phrase, 'All' *ouk en pasin he gnosis*, is literally, "But not in all the knowledge." The RSV translation, *possess*, is not a good translation. No doubt, every Christian in Corinth had been

taught that there was only one God, Jehovah, and one Lord, Jesus Christ. They undoubtedly acknowledged the teaching. But what they acknowledged was not "in" them—that is, not integrated into their willingness. The knowledge that there was only one God was something about which they still had emotional reservations. Paul wrote in Romans 14:23, "But he who has doubts is condemned, if he eats, because he does not act from faith; for whatever does not proceed from faith is sin." These Greek-Christians had been taught there was only one God—they had mentally acknowledged it—but they still didn't *trust it!* In Romans 14:5, Paul writes, "Let every one be *fully convinced* in his own mind." The Greek verb there is *plerophoreistho*, meaning literally, "completely carried." It is the same verb as in Hebrews 10:22, translated, "full assurance" of faith. In other words, unless the knowledge is "carried fully" by the mind, the "weak" or "suspicious" Christian should not engage in the action.

The question of urgency, however, is, *why* do not all Christians have full assurance that idols are nothing? Paul's answer is, "some, through being hitherto accustomed to idols, eat food as really offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled." The reason for their weakness is a life-time consciousness of idols as gods. RSV translates the Greek word *sunetheia* by the word *accustomed*, but it means literally, "to know with." It would be better translated, *consciousness*. The word does *not* emphasize *compulsion* to *do* right, as we think of *conscience*. It emphasizes a conscious *knowledge* of what *is* right or wrong. Paul's point is that these Greek-Christians had lived so long with idolatry in their every-day consciousness, they were simply conditioned or trained to accept the idea that an idol was really a god. People may live in an environment where what is false is so widely accepted and practiced as true, and never challenged, they grow up assuming it is true. Such attitudes become so deeply ingrained on the mind through constant exposure and the pressures of circumstance they are not easily wiped out of the mind. Jewish Christians had difficulties changing their minds about many things in the Mosaic system abrogated by the New Testament.

The Greek phrase, *hos eidolothuton esthiousin*, is literally, "as an idol offering they eat. . . ." They felt they were still partaking in the *worship* of the idol by eating food which had been offered in the pagan sacrifices. Missionaries today have similar experiences. A belief in witchcraft or voodoo long continues to lurk in otherwise well taught Christians and they allow themselves to be bothered by it.

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Plummer offers this comment: "It is the force of habits which lasts. . . . They have been so accustomed to regard an idol as a reality, as representing a god that exists, that . . . in spite of their conversion, they cannot get rid of the feeling that, by eating food which has been offered to an idol, they are taking part in the worship of heathen gods; they cannot eat from faith (Rom. 14:23)."

The meat, in itself, was neither clean or unclean. It was indifferent. But since they could not help feeling it was defiled by having been offered to idols, they went against their own judgment of what was right and thereby judged themselves. While Paul plainly classifies this as a sign of intellectual weakness, he also makes it clear in the remainder of the chapter that such weakness was entitled to forbearance and respect from Christians who were not bothered by the weakness. Foods have nothing in themselves which will bring guilt upon a person (see Mark 7:18-19; Luke 11:41). When people do something they are convinced is wrong they bring condemnation upon themselves. God is greater than our mind, and if our own mind condemns us, we will stand condemned (cf. I John 3:19-21). An un-instructed mind may condemn what is *not* wrong, or allow what *is*; but in any case, it ought to be obeyed until it is instructed.

SECTION 3

The Practice (8:8-13)

⁸Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. ⁹Only take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. ¹⁰For if any one sees you, a man of knowledge, at table in an idol's temple, might he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? ¹¹And so by your knowledge this weak man is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. ¹²Thus, sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. ¹³Therefore, if food is a cause of my brother's falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall.

8:8-9 The Sanction: Those who because of their superior knowledge eat meat sacrificed to idols without guilt are not esteemed by God any higher than those who abstain because of guilt. While

Paul is concerned here with the "strong" being careless toward the "weak," it is clear (from Romans chapter 14) the "weak" are not relieved of obligation to understand the "strong" person's liberties and, in love, allow him freedom to exercise his knowledge (cf. I Cor. 10:29). The abstainer is as responsible to love as the non-abstainer! But here in I Corinthians 8, Paul is addressing his admonition to the non-abstainers. They were apparently contemptuous of the abstainers and continuing to eat meat sacrificed to idols with the attitude that they *did not care* how their actions affected their brethren. Food, no matter what it is, is a matter of indifference. Peter had to be given a divine revelation about this matter (cf. Acts 10:9-16). Paul says, "We gain nothing by eating; we lose nothing by not eating." The issue is not eating or abstaining from any particular food. Food has nothing to do with the spiritual in man. It sustains the body only. Paul is not, of course, dealing with gluttony, or taking poisonous substances into the body which would do physical harm. He is dealing with all foods as to where purchased and what association they may have had prior to the Christian's contact with them.

The issue is: *how much do you love your brother!* The admonition is that we must be prepared to sacrifice any liberty we have concerning *things* to save a *person*. The sanction is not against food of any kind. It is against an unloving attitude.

In verse 9 Paul uses the Greek word *exousia* and it is translated, *liberty*. It is the word most commonly translated, "authority, right, power." The most common Greek word for *liberty* is *eleutheria*; also often translated, *freedom*. Paul is evidently emphasizing the *rights* the knowledgeable Christian has because of a clearer understanding. Such a one has the *right* to eat anything he pleases without guilt. But just because it is an inalienable right does not mean it cannot be willingly surrendered out of love. The Christian brother whose knowledge (cultural, experiential, or scriptural) permits him to be free of guilt in some matter of opinion, dare not practice it if it will cause another brother (who understands the practice from a different cultural or moral background) to stumble and fall in his spiritual journey. Paul uses the Greek word *proskomma* for *stumbling-block*; it means, "an obstacle against which one may dash his foot, or a hindrance over which one trips and falls." That which one Christian may do with freedom from guilt may, because of the doing, produce a serious failure in another Christian who may be encouraged to do what he considers wrong.

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8:10-11 The Sin: To lead someone by your liberty to do something he believes he is not free to do, causes him to sin, to incur guilt, and destroys his union with Christ. The exercise of rights by the “strong” may destroy the fundamental moral resolve of a “weaker” brother against sinful practices so that he may be led to engage in practices *clearly prohibited* in the scriptures. Paul wrote to Roman Christians, “. . . it is wrong for anyone to make others fall by what he eats” (Rom. 14:20).

It is sinful to do anything that would cause anyone else to violate his own conscience. It is a sin to carelessly flaunt one’s Christian liberty and undermine the moral decisiveness of another. Too many think of their *own* “rights” first. Paul said we ought to endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ (I Cor. 9:12). It is a sinful attitude that does *not* think *first* of pleasing one’s brother for his good to edify him (Rom. 15:1-2) because our Lord did not please himself (Rom. 15:3). These principles apply to things Christians may have every right to do; things the knowledgeable Christian is certain are not at all sinful in themselves; things the Christian may do without any guilt. If, through any right we may have, a brother may be morally injured we *must suspend* that right for his salvation.

8:12-13 The Seriousness: Paul uses the Greek present participle *tuptontes* which is translated *wounding*. In present, participial, form the word means a continuous, violent, *beating*. It is the same word used to describe the beating the soldiers gave Christ (Matt. 27:30; Mark 15:19). Earlier (8:11) Paul said causing a weak brother to sin against his own conscience was to *destroy* the brother for whom Christ died. Now (8:12) he says such sin against a brother is sin against Christ. That is serious. Destroy another human being and you are actually attempting to destroy God. Paul warned the Romans “Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God” (Rom. 14:20). Trample upon another human being’s weaknesses and you are despising the work of God in that person’s life—you are despising God! It is that serious! To have one’s own way (even if that way is correct and guiltless in itself) at the expense of another person’s relationship to Christ is to commit a grievous sin against the Lord.

In verse 13 Paul uses the double negative in Greek *ou me* to state emphatically that if eating meat would cause a brother to *stumble* (Gr. *skandalizei*, be scandalized, trapped, ensnared), he would *never* eat meat again. The Greek text also includes the phrase, *eis ton aiona*,

which would be translated, "unto the end of the age, or world." In other words Paul is saying, "I am ready to give up any practice of my life, even if it is harmless and enjoyable and may be done with a clear conscience, *if it causes any brother to destroy his relationship with Christ.*" Only those who are willing to do the same are fit for the kingdom of God (Rom. 14:15-21).

SECTION 4

THE PROVISIO

The self-denial of the "strong" brother should be allowed a proviso (i.e., a qualification). This will be amplified at more length in chapters nine and ten. Suffice it to say here, the non-abstaining brother is not obligated to give up his Christian liberty in some cases: (a) there are definite scriptural examples (as well as commands) by both Jesus and Paul (Matt. 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-13; Gal. 2:3-5; Gal. 2:11-14; 5:1-12; Col. 2:16-23) that when certain "brethren" tried to bind on them traditions and opinions as *necessary* for salvation, the Christian is *obligated to resist*; (b) there are people, minutely scrupulous ("nit-pickers"), who may try to use an appeal to their scruples against some area of liberty to serve their own selfish ends. This is also wrong. Christian judgment faces one of its most demanding tasks when the performance of some opinion might injure a tender conscience, while its non-performance would be surrendering to pharisaic traditionalism and harm the cause of Christian liberty. This is sometimes the case in the Christian struggle to promote liberty and Christian unity at the same time.

It would not be fitting to end comments here without suggesting some areas in modern society where the Christian love Paul is calling for may be practiced along with decisions to resist legalism:

- a. Entertainment, pastimes (movies, television, games, hobbies).
- b. Foods (Jewish *kosher* foods; Roman Catholic taboos; use of alcoholic beverages—although the Bible does not *command* total abstinence, this principle of stumbling blocks would make total abstinence the safest practice).
- c. Cultural traditions (dress and grooming; worship traditions; some economic practices; political preferences).
- d. Vocations (if a Christian works at a vocation which might cause someone to stumble, shouldn't the Christian find another vocation?)

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APPLICATIONS:

1. Are there today articles or commodities or things used in or associated with ungodliness which might be neutral in themselves but injurious to a Christian's conscience? Name some.
2. Would Paul's instruction about things sacrificed to *idols* apply today in some foreign countries? Where? Why?
3. What should a Christian do in a foreign country where idols are worshiped?
4. If there are brethren in a congregation who seem to be *too* scrupulous about some things, what should the congregation do?
5. If there are brethren in a congregation who seem to be insensitive to other's scruples, what should the congregation do?
6. Would you classify yourself as "weak" or "strong"?
7. Where would you classify a Christian who thought attending movies was wrong? . . . Who thought playing cards was all right?
8. Do you think one Christian should give up *any* right he has just because another Christian *thinks* it is sinful?
9. Do you think Christian liberty is a threat to Christian unity?
10. Do you think the "weak" Christian brother is a threat to Christian unity?

APPREHENSIONS:

1. Why did some Christians *know* that an idol was not a god, and others did *not know*?
2. How pervasive was idolatry in ancient Corinth?
3. What kind of "knowledge" was Paul talking about?
4. Is it knowledge Paul objects to, or is it the misuse of knowledge?
5. How is knowledge to be used?
6. What is man's highest obligation?
7. What is the ultimate object of knowledge?
8. Who are the "strong"?
9. Who are the "weak"?
10. Why do some Christians think an idol is really a god?
11. Would a Christian who knows an idol is not a god be superior in his spirituality in the eyes of God?
12. How serious is it to do something that causes a weaker brother to feel guilty?
13. When would a strong Christian be obligated to resist the demands of a weaker brother?
14. In what areas of modern life does Paul's principle of liberty versus love apply?

Chapter Nine

THE PROBLEM OF FREEDOM

(9:1-27)

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Why did Paul have to write to the Corinthians about his rights?
2. How did he defend his rights?—on what basis?
3. If Paul was so defensive about his rights, why did he not use them?
4. Did Paul compromise Christian convictions to become all things to all men?
5. What does self-control have to do with freedom?

SECTION 1

Recitation of Rights (9:1-14)

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus **9**our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? ²If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

³This is my defense to those who would examine me. ⁴Do we not have the right to our food and drink? ⁵Do we not have the right to be accompanied by a wife, as the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? ⁶Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living? ⁷Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Who tends a flock without getting some of the milk?

⁸Do I say this on human authority? Does not the law say the same? ⁹For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned? ¹⁰Does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of a share in the crop. ¹¹If we have sown spiritual good among you, is it too much if we reap your material benefits? ¹²If others share this rightful claim upon you, do not we still more?

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Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ. ¹³Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? ¹⁴In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

9:1-7 The Logic: What is freedom? Is a Christian really free? The answer to those questions depends on the meaning of the word *freedom*! Freedom is a state of *character*, not circumstances. Freedom belongs to persons and has a personal objective. Freedom is not an objective in itself. Man is not *just* free—he is free *for* some purpose. Freedom should have as its objective the production of the highest form of personality possible. Freedom should have as its purpose the production of character—good character. The “freedom” (or license) that allows self-indulgence and anarchy produces bad character because man’s potential has a higher goal than self-indulgence. Freedom (the opposite of bondage and enslavement) by its very nature should exist for the purpose of removing all hindrances and restraints that would keep a person from reaching the highest potential for good of which he is capable.

This is precisely what Christian freedom is all about. God, through Christ, has set the Christian free from all hindrances and restraints that would keep him from reaching the highest possibility for which he was redeemed. God, through Christ, makes everything and everyone available for the Christian’s development (I Cor. 3:21-23). It is not our surroundings or our circumstances that keep us from our highest God-ordained possibilities. Attitudes are what enslave us and hinder us. The attitudes which hinder are: (a) guilt; (b) insecurity; (c) rebellion against our Creator and his creation; (d) rejecting the truth about what is real and enduring; (e) fear of death; (f) selfishness. If these may be conquered we will be free and reaching God’s potential for us no matter what our circumstances (even persecution and prison). The real issue is not physical liberation but spiritual liberation. Any man, anywhere, whether politically, socially or literally imprisoned or not, may be *spiritually free* if he trusts God’s Word concerning man’s true purpose and possibility.

In other words, our true freedom depends on whether we believe God’s word about what he made us for and how he says we may

attain it. God made us to produce in us and for us character of the highest goodness. He made us to be "conformed to the image of his Son" (Rom. 8:29). Truth makes man free (John 8:31-32). All truth, God's truth, wherever it is, in the Bible, in creation, in other men, we are to find it, believe it and act according to it. ". . . Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom . . . And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another . . ." (II Cor. 3:17-18). The apostle Paul was a man free in Christ, reaching for the highest good Christ intended him to have. He explains how he *used* his freedom to reach that goal. He has said, in chapter eight, that he was not asking the Christians at Corinth to do anything that he was not doing.

Paul claimed every right allowed him by God's word. He refused to let any man, by making human rules where God never made any, take away any right by which he might reach the goal Christ intended in him. One part of Christ's goal for Paul was his world-wide apostleship. In a series of rhetorical questions, Paul sets forth the logic of his freedom and its use. His first assertion of the logic of his rights is in his question, "Am I not an apostle?" He not only had the rights of a Christian but also the special rights of one particularly commissioned by the Lord to take the gospel to the whole world (an apostle). He is not thinking here of his *authority* as an apostle, but of his right to financial *support* as one "sent" (an apostle). His second appeal to logic is in his question, "Are you not my workmanship in the Lord?" He claimed the right to support on the basis of their obligation to him as the one who brought them to Christ (see Rom. 15:26-27; Gal. 6:6). The Greek word *sphragis* is translated *seal* and means, "to authenticate, to validate." Their conversion to Christ certainly confirmed Paul's apostleship and his right to expect them to support him.

The Greek participle *anakrinousin* is present indicative, *not* subjunctive, and indicates some of the Christians were *examining* or *making judgments* about his right, not only to expect financial support for himself as he preached the gospel, but also the right to expect support for a family. Paul apparently received financial support from the church at Antioch when he was first "sent out" by that church (Acts 13:1-3); he received some support from the church at Philippi (Phil. 4:14-18). But from the beginning of his second missionary journey he chose to support himself by working at his trade as a

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tentmaker (Acts 15:40; 18:1-4; II Cor. 11:7; I Thess. 2:9; 4:11; II Thess. 3:8).

While the apostle used the Greek word *eleutheros*, translated *free*, in verse 1, he used the word *exousian*, translated *right*, in verses 4, 5, and 6, (see comments, 8:9 on word *liberty*). Paul lists Barnabas as one also set aside by the Lord and the church for a full-time ministry and as such, one who has the right to expect Christians to support him, and a family. Since Barnabas (see Acts 4:36; 9:26-27; 11:22-30; 13:2; 15:39) was not an apostle in the same sense as Paul, this is evidently a statement of the rights of all full-time Christian evangelists to be supported financially by other Christians. Paul's statement of the rights of an apostle, and an evangelist, to have a wife deals a death-blow to the Roman Catholic "canon-law" that popes and priests must *not* have wives. Paul substantiates the Gospel records that the apostle Peter was married and his wife journeyed with him in his evangelistic work. Our text clearly states that the "brothers of the Lord" (James, Joseph, Simon and Judas, Matt. 13:55) also had wives who accompanied them in their work. Mary, mother of Jesus was not a "perpetual virgin."

Paul's third appeal to logic is in verse 7. He uses three analogies from the common life of that time to prove his point. In II Timothy 2:1-7 Paul has similar analogies to encourage Timothy to train a company of faithful, full-time evangelists, like himself, who will be devoting all their time to teaching others. They must not get "entangled in civilian pursuits." Now, in this letter to the Corinthians, he declares that a "soldier" of Christ who has not entangled himself in civilian pursuits but has given full-time to the ministry of the Word has the right to expect to be supported financially by the "army" of the Lord, the church. Not only so, but the "soldier's" wife and family also.

9:8-12a The Law: Paul anticipates that some of the Corinthians might object that his first defense of his rights is based on human thinking. So, he asks a rhetorical question, "It is true, is it not, that as a human I am speaking these things?" He expects them to answer, "Yes!" In so doing, he is able to give impact to his introduction of the Law of Moses—the word of God—into the defense of his rights. He follows with a second rhetorical question, "The Law of Moses, does it not say the same thing?" The expected answer is, "Yes!" But Paul immediately supplies the answer, "For it is written in the law of Moses, you shall not muzzle an ox when it is

treading out the grain." Paul's quotation comes from Deuteronomy 25:4. The Israelites threshed grain by having oxen pull a stone or a "threshing sledge" with iron wheels over the grain to separate the grain from the husks. The ox was permitted to eat of the grain as he threshed. This was demanded by God in his Law to keep men from being cruel to animals. God cares about the animals in his creation. It is God's will that animals be cared for by those whom they serve. This regulation in Deuteronomy is contained in a series of laws about economic and social justice. But it is not for oxen *only* that God is concerned. Paul does not mean to say that God is not concerned for oxen—he has already established that. Surely, if God legislates that oxen serving men are to be fed by men, then men serving others in spiritual things are to be fed by those they serve. Paul applies the same Old Testament law to the support of elders who labor in preaching and teaching the Word (I Tim. 5:17-18).

The word *entirely*, in verse 10, is too strong for the context. Paul does not mean the law of Deuteronomy 25:4 was totally for man and not for oxen at all. The Greek word *pantos* might be translated here, "by all means, doubtless, at least." The teaching of Jesus (Matt. 6:25-34) explains that while God cares for birds and lilies, he will "much more" care for men who love him. Paul answers his own rhetorical question of verse 10 by stating, "It *was* written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope . . . of a share in the crop." The Greek word *opheilei* is translated *should*, but carries the idea of obligation or *duty*; it is sometimes translated *ought*, *owe*, or *bound*. The "plowman" is duty bound to "plow" in hope of sharing in the product of his labor.

The plowman's right becomes an analogy by which Paul asserts the right of a spiritual "sower" to be supported in *material* (Gr. *sarkika*, fleshly, physical) sustenance from the hands of those who have benefited from the spiritual sowing.

Almost indignantly (9:12a) Paul asks, "If you authorize others the right of sharing your material goods, shouldn't you acknowledge that we (Christian evangelists) have even greater right?" Who are the "others"? Some think they are the other apostles and other evangelists who had already been given the privilege of support by the churches (9:3-6). Some think "others" refers to the Judaizers (II Cor. chapters 3 and 4) who had taught them. In addition "others" may refer to teachers of Greek philosophy and letters. It was common practice for the peripatetic (walking-around) teachers of Greek

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culture and philosophy to be supported financially by the parents of their students. Whatever the case in Corinth, it is a fact of the modern world that while men and women willingly band together in cities or rural districts and pay taxes for gymnasiums, football stadiums, huge public school buildings, buses, teachers' and administrators' salaries for the secular education of their societies, some Christians often begrudge a minister of the gospel and his family a salary commensurate with the average of the membership of the church. Preachers and evangelists who are in the ministry primarily for the money are hirelings (John 10:7-18)! But that is not what Paul is discussing here. His phrase, ". . . do not we still more?" signifies the right of a faithful evangelist or preacher of the gospel to expect "even more" (or, "rather first") consideration in material support than Christians give in other areas of life.

9:12b-14 The Lord: If Paul found it necessary to be financially supported, or to marry, to reach the goal God had for his life, then he declared himself free to do so. Not only was he free to do so, he insisted the brethren acknowledge his rights. If Paul had *not* insisted that others at least acknowledge his freedom or his rights, he would have allowed the truth to be perverted and, to that extent, have forfeited his freedom by compromising with falsehood.

Now Paul might surrender his *use* of these freedoms or rights of his own to take an even better action in order to produce the highest good. But he must not surrender his *right* to such freedom for that would be surrender to spiritual slavery. Our freedom in Christ must always be defended (Gal. 5:1ff.) whether we exercise every aspect of it or not.

The very essence of freedom is choice. Freedom in its ultimate and highest sense can never be legislated or enforced. Christian freedom *is* the ultimate freedom. Christ fulfilled the law written in ordinances. Those who choose Christ are no longer limited by the law. Their goal of spiritual growth is not fettered by or limited by law. They may choose the highest spiritual goal of all—being conformed to the image of God's Son—perfection. Paul always tried to choose what he thought, guided by God's revelation, was the highest spirituality in his own life and in the life of others.

So, here, he exercises his right to surrender what he considers a lesser right (to be financially supported by the Corinthian church) in favor of a more spiritually productive right (not to put any obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ). This was Paul's free choice for

Corinth. But apparently it was not always his choice. In a different circumstance, and with a different body of believers, he chose to accept their financial support (see Phil. 4:15-18), for their spiritual growth.

It appears the Corinthian church later accused Paul of being a false apostle because he did not take financial support (see II Cor. 12:13, 16, 17) from them. While Paul could not know ahead of time how the Corinthians would react to forfeiting his right to financial support, it must have grieved him to later be despised for an act of love he intended for their spiritual advancement. But that goes with the territory of exercising Christian freedom!

In the first covenant (the Old Testament) the Lord commanded that the priests who devoted all their life to serving in the Temple were to be sustained by sharing (Gr. *summerizontai*, a dividing-up, an apportioning) of all the offerings given by their Hebrew brethren to the Lord. Reviving this ordinance of the Lord was one of the first and most significant acts of Hezekiah in his attempt to bring repentance to the nation (see II Chron. 31:4-19).

The Lord Jesus Christ ordained the same practice for the New Testament church. The Greek word *dietaxe*, *ordained* or *commanded*, was used in other Greek literature to describe official *appointments* to position of authority. The Lord did not approach the matter of support for full-time Christian servants as a suggestion but as an official edict. He commanded it. The church has no choice in the matter. The individual servant of the Lord may choose to forego this right, but the church is ordered by the Lord himself to support the faithful evangelists it sets aside to full-time service in the Gospel. The laborer is worthy of his hire (Matt. 10:10; Luke 10:7; I Tim. 5:17-18).

A few commentators have used the KJV translation, “. . . they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel” to say the Lord meant “those who preach the gospel should live according to what they preach.” The *context* makes it clear this is not the meaning. The RSV translation gives the correct meaning, “. . . those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.” The Greek words are even clearer; “. . . *ek tou euangeliou zen*.” The Greek preposition *ek* means “out of,” or “from”; the Greek infinitive *zen* means “to live.” Those who proclaim the gospel are to live out of the gospel.

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SECTION 2

Relinquishment of Rights (9:15-18)

15 But I have made no use of any of these rights, nor am I writing this to secure any such provision. For I would rather die than have any one deprive me of my ground for boasting. 16For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! 17For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission. 18What then is my reward? Just this: that in my preaching I may make the gospel free of charge, not making full use of my right in the gospel.

9:15-16 Sacrifice: In this section the apostle begins to make a transition from the specific right of financial support he claimed, to the principle of the need for relinquishment of any right in certain circumstances. He has called upon the Corinthians to consider the *principle* (8:1-13) earlier. He illustrates the *application* of the principle in his own actions (9:1-14). He will state the purpose of the principle (9:19-27) later, but here he is proving that he has not asked the Corinthians to make a more severe sacrifice of rights than he himself had been willing to make. He uses the Greek word *kechremai*, a perfect tense verb, which indicates an action begun in the past and continuing at the present. Paul had never exercised his right to be financially supported upon the Corinthian church.

Furthermore, he denies that he has used the illustration of his own practice as some sort of subtle attempt to elicit financial support from them now. He says, “. . . nor am I writing these things in order that so it should become with me” (literal translation of the Greek). His motive in using himself as an example is pure. He says, in fact, he would rather die than have any one deprive him of the opportunity to exemplify in his own life the principle of sacrificing rights for the edification of others. And Paul never used the phrase, “I would rather die . . .” in a flippant way. He was “deadly” serious about this principle! He did *not* mean to say he *boasted* about his own sacrifices in an arrogant, self-righteous way. Paul uses the word *boasting* (Gr. *kauchema*, glorying) in the good sense, meaning, “to hold up or exalt as an example of Christian virtue” (see II Cor. 7:14-15). This translation clarifies the true meaning of the next three verses.

In light of the above remarks we should paraphrase verse 16, "When I preach the gospel I have nothing to hold up or exalt as an example of Christian sacrifice—necessity lies upon me, I feel compelled to do so. I am utterly miserable and unsatisfied if I do not preach the gospel." Paul discusses his compulsion for preaching in II Corinthians 5:11-21.

The highwater mark of Christian discipleship is when a person freely chooses to give up his rights in order to remove any obstacle to the gospel of Christ being heard or seen. Giving up "rights" did not hinder Paul in his race toward the highest good God could make of his life. In fact, this discipline sharpened his self-control (cf. 9:24-27) and became beneficial in the development of godliness in him. His choice to give up the right to financial support from the Corinthians gave him opportunity to perfect his character in the area of servanthood and helpfulness. This actually helped Paul form within himself the very nature of Christ. Jesus is the perfect example of self-control and servanthood rather than rights. Having every right to expect the disciples to wash *his* feet (John 13), he washed theirs instead. One cannot be a disciple of Jesus unless he is willing to *forfeit* rights rather than let them become obstacles to the gospel. There is only one way to serve God and that is to serve mankind. If we are going to serve sinful and imperfect men, inevitably, somewhere, we will have to choose to forfeit some of our rights. Jesus did! (Phil. 2:5-11).

9:17-18 Satisfaction: What does Paul mean, "For if I do this of my own will . . ."? Did he not preach by choice? Certainly! Remember, he is speaking about the relinquishment of certain rights which were his because he *was* a full-time preacher of the gospel. Paul is trying to convince these Corinthians that there are *greater rewards* to be found in the relinquishment of rights.

We might paraphrase verses 17 and 18 thus, "If preaching is simply my way of choosing to make a living, I should be, and will be, rewarded with my living; if I could make a living another way, and I could, but I have chosen to preach anyway, then it is apparent that I consider preaching more than a way to make a living—I consider it a divine stewardship with which I have been entrusted. What reward, then, or satisfaction do I receive, if I receive no financial support? Just this: my pay is to do without pay! My joy is in making the gospel free of charge in order that no one might use the idea of my right to financial support as an obstacle to the truth of God." Paul would not allow the slightest hint of profiteering or exploitation to be found in his ministry (cf. II Cor. 2:17; 4:2).

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Great satisfaction comes from giving up rights when others may be served for the sake of Christ. Paul refused to lose the satisfaction he received in such service by *insisting* on a few rights or liberties. He would rather die than be robbed of the great enjoyment he received in sacrificing for others. "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:38). Satisfaction and contentment is part of a godly character. God has given us the freedom to choose to renounce certain freedoms or rights he has given us in order to have this contentment. This satisfaction which Paul enjoyed is somewhat like the satisfaction a mother or father gets when giving up one of their "rights" to help a precious child. It is the satisfaction a teacher gets when he surrenders one of his "rights" to help a student reach his highest potential. It is the satisfaction a craftsman gets when he gives up his "right" to sleep and to food in order to produce the finest work of which his hands are capable. Paul was no masochist. He did not give up financial support because he loved to suffer. He sought no self-righteous merit (cf. Phil. 3:1-16). His aim was to glorify Christ and present no obstacle whatsoever to the salvation of any man. If Paul had been persuaded that *refusing* the financial support might become an obstacle, he would not have refused it. Could refusal ever become a problem? Apparently the Corinthians made it a hindrance to accepting Paul's apostleship (cf. II Cor. 11:7-11; 12:11-18; II Thess. 1:9; 3:8). And even in modern times, some self-supporting preachers and missionaries have found it an obstacle to their ministries.

The comments of Fred Fisher, *Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians*, pg. 146, pub. Word, are pertinent here:

Paul would have rebelled against the modern practice of paying preachers a salary as if they were mercenaries selling their services. He would have insisted, I think, that churches should support their ministers. There may not seem to be much difference between giving a minister so much support and paying him the same amount in salary. The money is the same. But the principle is not. "Salary" implies payment for services received. "Support" implies that the church enables the minister to be free from worldly concerns so that he may carry on his ministry. His "reward" should not be earthly, but heavenly. The problem is that the misuse of the word "salary" may lead both the church and the minister to take a worldly view of the ministry.

Though the modern preacher has a right to expect the church to support his ministry with financial remuneration, he should be willing to relinquish that right should it become an obstacle to the proclamation of the gospel. Furthermore, no Christian preacher should consider financial support his source of satisfaction in the ministry. His satisfaction ("boasting") should be found in servanthood.

SECTION 3

Reasons For Relinquishment (9:19-27)

19 For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. ²⁰To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews; to those under the law I became as one under the law—though not being myself under the law—that I might win those under the law. ²¹To those outside the law I became as one outside the law—not being without law toward God but under the law of Christ—that I might win those outside the law. ²²To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. ²³I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

²⁴Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. ²⁵Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. ²⁶Well, I do not run aimlessly, I do not box as one beating the air; ²⁷but I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

9:19-22 To Save Some: It is important that Paul lists the salvation of others as his first reason for willingness to relinquish rights. This is the priority he is trying to establish in the consciences of the Corinthians.

When Paul says he is free from all men, he means he is free from being bound by any man's scruples (see I Cor. 10:23, 29, 30; Rom. 14:1-4). He does *not* mean that he has no moral obligation to be his "brother's keeper." All men have that liability. And this is exactly the point to be made in this passage. Though free from the scruples of all men, Paul will gladly relinquish this freedom and submit to

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their scruples in order to win them to Christ. He does more than merely acknowledge other men's right to have and to practice scruples different than his, he declares his practice is to enslave (Gr. *edoulosa*, aorist tense, "enslaved at some point in the past") himself to other men's scruples in order to save them. The Greek word translated *win* is *kerdeso* and often translated *gain* (as in money or business profit); it is used metaphorically in the scriptures to describe winning someone to the gospel. When we win someone to Christ, we not only gain them for Jesus, we gain a brother (see Matt. 18:15) and are ourselves profited. This is Paul's motivation for sacrificing any right to "gain a brother."

Paul was a Jew. He was reared in the strictest sect of the Jewish culture—the Pharisees (see Phil. 3:4-6). We would suppose he preferred to practice, whenever possible, Jewish cultural habits. He undoubtedly preferred *kosher* food as much as Peter (cf. Acts 10:14); he carried with him the Jewish abhorrence of images and idols (see Acts 17); he went customarily to Jewish synagogues to worship and preach; he practiced Jewish purifications (Acts 21:26) in order to conciliate his Jewish brethren; he defended himself against the charges that he had profaned the Jewish temple (Acts 24:5-21); and reminded Agrippa that he had always lived among the Jews according to the strictest sect of the Pharisees (Acts 26:2-8). When he was among the Jews, Paul honored their Jewish scruples and lived as they did, ate what they ate, abstained from that which they considered unclean, observed their days and seasons. However, when any Jewish brother demanded that Paul keep the law of Moses as a necessity for salvation or membership in the kingdom of God (the church), he vehemently and immediately denounced it as apostasy (cf. Galatians, Romans and Hebrews). He would have Timothy to become circumcised in order not to offend his Jewish brethren (Acts 16:1-4), and on the other hand, he would refuse to yield to the Judaizers who insisted he compel Titus to be circumcised (Gal. 2:3) in order to keep the law of Moses. All this he did in order to bring as many Jews as he could into the saving grace of Christ.

And it was the amazing grace of Christ that could make this Pharisee of the Pharisees, Paul, equally at ease involving himself in Gentile culture ("those outside the law"). He was truthful and firm, but never rude and insulting toward Gentiles for their belief in idols (cf. Acts 19:37). He was so thoroughly familiar with their philosophies, arts, and politics he could communicate the gospel to them in their

frame-of-reference (Acts 17:22-33; 16:35-39). He fellowshiped with Gentile Christians as his brethren and defended their gospel liberties even against the "pillars of the church" (Gal. 2:1-21). He could eat with unbelievers and even partake of meat sacrificed to idols without wounding his own conscience (I Cor. 10:27-30). Paul could be knowledgeable, courteous and friendly toward unbelievers, and could freely fellowship with Gentile Christian brethren in an atmosphere of perfect equality. But he would never use his liberty as license for immorality (see I Peter 2:16; Gal. 5:13; I Cor. 8:9). Paul considered himself under law to Christ (Rom. 6:12-23). The "law" of Christ is the law of love (Rom. 12:10; II Cor. 5:14; I Tim. 1:5; John 13:34-35; 15:12-17; Gal. 5:14; Col. 3:14-15; James 2:8; Matt. 22:39-40). Love is more compelling and constraining than any law (I Cor. 13:1-13; I John 3:14-24; 4:7-12; 4:13-21). Only under the compulsion of Christ's love is there power to relinquish one's rights for the salvation of another. Only in the constraint of Christ's love is there power to keep the commandments of God's *new* covenant in daily living. Every condescension Paul-the-Jew made to Gentile culture he did so in order to win every Gentile he could to Christ. But he would never participate in any cultural usage, Gentile or Jewish, which compromised the new covenant of faith in Christ.

To the overscrupulous (Jew or Gentile) Paul became scrupulous. He would observe any man's scruples so long as that man did not attempt to bind them on others as *necessary* to covenant relationship with Christ. Every Christian has the same obligation toward all men (cf. I Cor. 8:7; Rom. 15:1; I Thess. 5:14; I Cor. 13:4-7; Acts 20:35, I Cor. 10:33).

In the latter half of verse 22, the verb *gegona* is perfect tense and means, "I *became*, and am *becoming*, all things to all men." It is something he had practiced ever since becoming a Christian and would continue to practice. His statement here does *not* mean he became a two-faced hypocrite. It does *not* mean he compromised any doctrinal or ethical truth. It simply means he tried to project himself into each individual's circumstances as much as possible in order to win them to Christ. It means he made every attempt possible to *understand* the thinking, feelings and actions of others. It means he had an honest interest in people as persons and not just as numerical-conversions. Someone once described teaching, medicine, and the ministry as "the three patronizing professions." But when we "patronize" people we make no effort to understand them—no effort to find some

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point of personal contact. Paul did *not* patronize people. He made every effort to understand them and live with them within their own cultural, educational and social milieu. The Living Bible paraphrases I Corinthians 9:22: "Whatever a person is like, I try to find common ground with him so that he will let me tell him about Christ and let Christ save him." One of the greatest hindrances to the spread of the Gospel throughout the world is that people of all races and cultures simply do not try to understand one another in matters not clearly commanded in the New Testament. Even Christian people are unwilling to forfeit their rights in order to make such understanding possible. Until Restoration Movement people are willing to sacrifice some of their overly-cherished Anglo-Saxon traditions and customs in order to "understand where others are coming from" we will never accomplish the great ideal for which the Movement began—Christian unity!

9:23-27 To Save Self: The Greek phrase (verse 23), *panta de poio dia to euaggelion hina sugkoinonos autou genomai*, should be translated "All these things I do because of the gospel in order that I may become a joint partaker of it." One commentator insists, "The suggestion that this (verse) means, 'lest I lose my share in salvation' (ICC), misses Paul's meaning. The context indicates that he was concerned with the salvation of others, but that he had no doubt about his own." In the first place, the Greek preposition *dia* denotes "cause or reason." In the second place the Greek verb *genomai* is in the subjunctive mood and indicates Paul was *hoping* to become a joint partaker. In the third place the *context* (9:23-27) *does* suggest Paul feared he would lose his share in the gospel if he did not run so as to obtain it.

Even the word *prize* (verse 24) reinforces the idea that Paul was concerned with the possibility of forfeiting his share in the gospel. The Greek word *brabeion* is translated *prize* and is related to the Greek word *brabeuo* which means "to decide, arbitrate, rule, umpire, award, referee." The *brabeion* was the *prize* awarded by the referees or "rulers" of the Greek games to an athlete who won his race or other contest (see Phil. 3:14; Col. 3:15). The Corinthian brethren would understand immediately the figure of the Greek games as an analogy of the Christian life. Since the time of Alexander the Great, athletic games had been popular throughout the Greek world. The most famous, of course, were the Olympic Games held at Olympia (located in the Peloponnesus). The first games in recorded history were held in 776 B.C. The Roman emperor Nero drove a *quadriga*

(a chariot pulled by four horses) in the races in 66 A.D. (about 10 years after Paul wrote this letter). Nero was thrown from his chariot and nearly crushed to death; restored to his chariot he continued the contest for a while, but gave up before the end of the course. The *brabeus* (judge or referee), however, knew an emperor from an athlete and awarded Nero the crown of victory. Overcome with happiness when the crowd applauded him, he announced that thereafter not only Athens and Sparta but all Greece should be exempt from any tribute to Rome. The Greek cities accommodated him by running the Olympian, Pythian, Nemean, and Isthmian games in one year; he responded by taking part in all of them. The Isthmian games were second in popularity only to the Olympics, and were held every third year. Paul must have been an avid sports fan, for he used athletic contests often to illustrate his messages (cf. Phil. 3:14; Gal. 5:7; II Tim. 2:5; 4:7-8; Heb. 12:1).

The Greek word *agonizomenos* is translated *athlete* in verse 25. Its literal meaning is "one who struggles, one who contends, one who agonizes." Our English word *agony* comes from this word. Jesus' struggle in the Garden of Gethsemane is called *agonia* (Luke 22:44). Jude writes that Christians are to "contend earnestly" (Gr. *epagonizesthai*) for the faith once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). Right relationship with God is a *struggle*—make no mistake about that! It involves agony and pressure. Christians are contenders, combatants, strugglers.

Every "agonizer" (athlete) must exercise self-control in all things in order to compete as a winner. Paul uses the Greek word *egkrateuetai* translated *temperate* in the KJV, but *self-control* in the RSV. It literally means, "within-strength," or "inner-strength." Self-control is the fruit of the Spirit of God in the Christian (Gal. 5:23). Self-control is what the Christian must "make every effort to" add to his life as a supplement to faith, knowledge, virtue, etc. (II Peter 1:6). Athletes in the Greek games had to endure, according to Horace, the regimen of obedience, sparse diet, and severe training for ten months before he was qualified to enter the actual game. Modern athletes spend weeks and months disciplining their minds and bodies in rigorous training and competition. Some modern professional golfers have been known to practice swinging their clubs until their hands are blistered and bleeding. These all submit to self-discipline in order to win a perishable trophy. Should not Christians, then, be willing and able to exercise self-control for the imperishable crown of eternal

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life? Should not Christians be willing and able to relinquish a few "rights" or "freedoms" in order to win the game of life?

For Paul there was no *uncertainty* in his regimen of self-discipline. He did not run his race of life *aimlessly* (Gr. *adelos*, unevident, unclear, uncertain). He did not consider the Christian struggle a session in "shadow-boxing" or quixotic jousting with windmills. For him the Christian life was a contest to win, a war in which there was no substitute for victory (Eph. 6:10-23). It was a trial that demanded *severe* self-discipline.

In verse 27 the Greek word *hupopiazō* is translated *pommel* and means literally, "to give a black eye by striking the face." Figuratively Paul is saying, "I beat my body black and blue . . ." to keep it under control. It is inconceivable that Paul is saying he practiced literal flagellation (whipping) of his own flesh. He clearly taught that *literal* severity to the body was of no real spiritual value (Col. 2:18, 23; I Tim. 4:1-3; 4:8; Rom. 13:14). Withdrawal into a monastery and daily scourging of the flesh does not solve the problem of worldly-mindedness. It may, in fact, intensify it by pride in self-righteousness. The other Greek word in verse 27, *doulagōgō*, translated *subdue*, is literally, *lead as a slave*. This clarifies Paul's practice of self-control. He, Paul, that is, his *mind*, controlled by the Spirit of Christ, led his *body* as a slave. He articulated this with precision in Romans 6:12-23; 8:5-11; 12:1-8.

Athletes set goals. Their goal is always to win! They must be willing to give up any "freedom" which might be a hindrance to reaching that goal. The Christian's goal is to be transformed in character into the image of Christ. Christians need to see the goal *clearly*. One of the most distressing things about modern man is the obvious aimlessness and distortion in setting this as a goal. If any Christian is not willing to give up whatever is necessary for him and others to attain the highest potential God has for them, that Christian will, at the end of the race, find himself rejected. *Adokimos* is the Greek word translated *disqualified*. It is a word from the ancient alchemist (who was both a pharmacologist and a metallurgist) and his practice of testing metals and *casting aside* those which were spurious.

This is not the final word of the New Testament on Christian freedom. But it is perhaps the clearest and most persuasive presentation to be found. Only the teachings and examples of the Living Word, Jesus Christ, are more compelling.

The man who has surrendered to evil and rebellion against God has imprisoned his "self" behind walls of fear, alienation, hate,

falsehood and impotence. Man was not made for that kind of character. He cannot be free with that nature controlling him. Those characteristics severely limit any potentiality he may have for growth into the image of Christ. The man who is good only because there is a law standing in his way to being bad is not free either. The only man who is truly free, is the man who is good because he wants to be good for Jesus' sake. It is Jesus Christ who makes us free men by making us new creatures through regeneration. His Spirit is born in us and we are changed into His image from one degree of glory to another as we surrender to his new commandment (compulsion) of love.

APPLICATIONS:

1. Are you *free* in Christ? Free to do what? Do you really *feel* free or do you feel bound? Is freedom ever free of all responsibility?
2. Do you believe all Christians are obligated to give financial support to the ministers of the gospel?
3. How much financial support do you think they should have?
4. What do you think would be the result if all present-day preachers and missionaries decided to find employment away from their ministries in order to support themselves? Would the church survive? grow?
5. Have you ever relinquished any conscientious right belonging to you as a Christian for the sake of a "weaker" brother?
6. Would you rather die than cause a weaker brother to stumble?
7. How far would you go in accommodating yourself to a foreign culture in order to save lost sinners? How far should you go?
8. Could you give up celebrating Thanksgiving if it offended someone? Could you drink a glass of wine with your meal if the culture where you ministered expected it? Could you give up the use of a musical instrument in worship if it offended someone?
9. How much self-control do you exercise in order to be faithful to Christ? In what things or areas? Are you satisfied with your self-control?

APPREHENSIONS:

1. What is freedom?
2. What has the word of God to do with the Christian's freedom?

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3. Should the Christian guard his freedom in Christ? How?
4. What does the Bible say about financial support for ministers of the gospel?
5. Did Paul's decision not to ask the Corinthian church for financial support have any bad effects? What?
6. Is preaching the gospel more than a way to make a living? What is it?
7. What rights would Paul have to relinquish to make his ministry effective among the Jews? among the Gentiles? did he?
8. When Paul said he became "all things to all men" did he mean he could participate in anything anyone else did? What did he mean? Would you?
9. Was Paul afraid there was a possibility that he might lose his share in salvation? Is the Christian life a serious matter? How serious?
10. What is self-control? How does a Christian control self?

Chapter Ten

THE PROBLEM OF PRESUMPTUOUSNESS (10:1-33)

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Why would Paul bring up the failure of the Israelites right here?
2. Why are idolatry and immorality usually coincidental?
3. When is "the end of the ages"?
4. Are all temptations common to all men?
5. In what way is the "cup" which we bless a "participation" in the blood of Christ?
6. Was it possible for the Corinthians to be "partners" with demons?
7. Are *all* things really lawful for a Christian?

SECTION 1

Illustration (10:1-5)

10 I want you to know, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea. ²and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³and all ate the same supernatural food ⁴and all drank the same supernatural drink. For they drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ. ⁵Nevertheless with most of them God was not pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

10:1-4 Privileges: The Corinthians are given a short review in Israelite presumptuousness. The descendants of Jacob ("Israel") were delivered from Egyptian bondage under the privilege of great, supernatural works. They were *immersed* (Gr. *ebaptisanto*) or surrounded by *water* in the cloud and the sea to protect them from the Egyptians. God gave them miraculous guidance in the unknown wilderness by a cloud and a pillar of fire. He sustained them by supernatural food and drink (cf. Exod. 13:1—17:16). God chose them for a messianic destiny. Since the Messiah was in their loins, God gave them the privileges of the Messiah's supernatural sustenance. It was the Anointed One of the Father who actually gave them the miraculous water in

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the wilderness. Jesus later made it plain that it was not Moses who gave them the bread from heaven, but God himself (John 6:32-33), and man's life is perpetuated not by physical bread but by the supernatural bread—the Word of God, even Jesus.

The ancient Israelites presumed these initial privileges meant God would surely continue to give them security without any need for an exercise of faith and holiness of life on their part. Hebrews 3:7-19 tells us why they became overconfident and presumptuous—pride and the deceitfulness of sin. Later Jews were so smug as to believe that as long as they had the Temple in their midst, God would not punish them for blatant sin (Jer. 7:4-11).

The Greek word *pneumatikon* is usually translated *spiritual*, but is correctly translated here *supernatural* (see comments on I Cor. 2:14-16). The emphasis of the context is the supernatural sustenance the Israelites were privileged to enjoy. The food and water they consumed was real and physical enough, but its origin was supernatural. The supernatural Spirit of God and Christ was with the Israelites through their journey to the promised land (see Isa. 59:21; 63:11-13). But God's Spirit was with them there in an even more important way. He provided the Israelites with *spiritual* bread and drink through Moses' teachings about the Messiah (see Deut. 8:3; 18:15). That "supernatural" Rock (the Christ) "followed" them in deed and word wherever they went in the wilderness. They were being sustained physically and spiritually by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God (through Moses).

10:5 Perfidy: This is the point Paul wishes to illustrate. Divine privileges obligated the recipients to respond in holiness and love. The Israelites were privileged, by God's grace, to receive supernatural and spiritual fellowship with the Creator above and beyond all other people. But they were unwilling to exercise self-control, holiness and love for their Benefactor. They "sat down to eat and drink and rose up to dance."

Those who are Christians (including apostles) have privileges and liberties beyond anything the Israelites ever enjoyed. Most of the Israelites (all of responsible age except Joshua and Caleb) God destroyed in the wilderness. They never went into the promised land! They failed because they used the freedom from bondage God gave them for occasion to indulge their own fleshly desires. They would not control themselves and sacrifice the flesh for the greater messianic goal set before them in the teaching of Moses.

The Christians at Corinth had been baptized into Christ, set free, protected and sustained. They had heard Paul and other Christian teachers emphasize their freedom in Christ. They had been taught, and now believed, that an idol was nothing. They had been taught that all of God's creation was good and "everything belonged to them" (I Cor. 3:21-22). Paul evidently felt the Corinthians (especially the "strong" brethren) were dangerously close to becoming as presumptuous as the fleshly-minded Israelites were after their release from bondage.

There is a *risk* in freedom. When people are made free they are, by the nature of freedom itself, made vulnerable to options. Free people are autonomous (self-ruled) and may no longer be controlled by outside force. The only thing forced by freedom is *responsibility*. There is always the risk with freedom that people will "use their freedom as a pretext for evil" (I Peter 2:16). While there is risk in freedom, the alternative, trying to produce righteousness and morality by force of law, is unacceptable. Righteousness cannot be wrought by force; it can only be produced in a matrix of freedom to choose motivated through the compulsion of faith and love.

Of course, *God* must *reveal* to man precisely what kind of thinking and acting constitutes righteousness, goodness and morality. God has, by the redemptive work of Christ, made right thinking and acting possible. But God cannot, and will not, make man's choice for him. That is the *risk* God takes when he sets us free in Christ. The risk itself is *not* bad. Man could never *grow* into the potential for which he was created if the freedom to choose was not there. When man becomes proud and presumptuous, disaster is certain. That is when man rejects God's *revelation* (which is all wise and all powerful) directing him to true righteousness and goodness.

Often God reveals to man what righteousness is by revealing and warning against unrighteousness. That is what the apostle Paul does in this dissertation. He warned that overconfidence (which is really a lack of faith in God) makes man vulnerable to the temptations of *immorality*, *idolatry* and *insensitiveness*.

SECTION 2

Immorality (10:6-13)

6 Now these things are warnings for us, not to desire evil as they did. 7 Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is

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written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to dance." ⁸We must not indulge in immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. ⁹We must not put the Lord to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents; ¹⁰nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. ¹¹Now these things happened to them as a warning, but they were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come. ¹²Therefore let any one who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. ¹³No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

10:6 Imperative Instruction: The actual, historical experiences and divine judgments upon Israel in the wilderness *became* (Gr. *egenethesan*, aorist verb) warnings for us, not to *ardently desire* (Gr. *epithemetas*) evil as they did. The word *warning* is *tupos* in Greek. It is the word from which we get the English word *type*. A "type" is "the imprint left when a die or other instrument is struck." John's gospel uses the word *tupos* when reporting Thomas' statement that he would not believe in the resurrection of Jesus unless he saw the "print" of the nail in Jesus' hand. Paul is saying that God recorded the history of Israel's forfeiture of its privileges and its fall in the wilderness to *strike* an indelible *tupos* (imprint or image) of the consequences of presumptuousness and overconfidence. The lesson is *historical*—not mythological, or allegorical, or theoretical.

Israel's divine judgment in the wilderness is separated from us by more than three thousand years. Israel's circumstances, technologically and culturally, differed from ours today like light and darkness. Our privileges, both spiritual and physical, surpass theirs. However, human nature and the human predicament are exactly the same. Man still cannot come to virtue and goodness without the grace of his Creator. Man still is tempted to be presumptuous, overconfident and independent of his Creator. So, man still refusing to learn from history, dooms himself to repeat it.

10:7 Idolatry: Idolatry is *immoral*. "Moral" means, "that which is right" and "immoral" means, "that which is wrong." It is wrong and immoral to worship other gods. The *first* commandment of the Decalogue is, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exod.

20:3; 20:23; Deut. 5:7). No object, thing, creature, human being, angel or spirit (except the Holy Spirit of God) is to be revered, worshiped, adored, exalted, prayed to, trusted in, or looked to for eternal life. To do so is idolatry. That which a man trusts and serves or puts first or gives the essence of his life to is his god. Jesus stated an unequivocal truth: "No man can serve two masters." No man can obey contradictory orders from two masters. No man can continue that way; sooner or later a man's motives and goals force him to choose which master he wishes to please. Then he will despise the other for interfering. The issue is: Man is so created that he takes on the nature of that which he worships (see Hosea 9:10; Ps. 115:3-8; Rom. 1:18-32).

10:8 Illicit Intercourse: The Greek word *porneumen* is translated *immorality* (RSV) and *fornication* (KJV) and is the word from which we get the English word *pornography*. It probably refers to illicit sexual intercourse. The Israelites apparently indulged in fornication and adultery as they worshiped the golden calf (see Exod. 32 and Deut. 9); Paul may be referring to their fornication at the time of Balaam and Balak (see Num. 24-25).

We have already learned from this letter (ch. 5-7) that all forms of illicit sex were commonplace in Corinth, and that the Christians had a difficult time overcoming what was so socially acceptable by their heathen contemporaries. The seven churches of Asia Minor were also beset with this temptation to sexual perversion (cf. Rev. 2:14-15; 2:20-23). The Roman empire is characterized or symbolized in the early centuries (100-500 A.D.) as "the great harlot" (Rev. ch. 17-18). The Gnostic cult within the first and second century church taught that since all matter or all that is physical is evil, and all that is mental or spiritual is holy, so long as you did not think evil you should never be concerned about misusing your body. One could only sin with the mind, according to the Gnostics, not with the body. Gnostics said as long as you know or think what is right you are righteous no matter what you do with your body. Ancient Gnosticism has crept into the twentieth century Christian church under the guise called "situation ethics." Situation ethics says whenever a person does the most loving thing in any situation he has acted morally. Classic illustrations of this principle have pictured sailors, having been deprived of sexual release for months at sea, being "loved" by prostitutes because they have "done a good thing" in satisfying the sailor's sublimated sexual urges when he has come ashore on liberty. Some Christians have rationalized illicit sexual relations with persons other

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than their spouses by declaring they are "helping" their illicit partners find "love and tenderness" and relief from "frustration" for the first time in their lives.

Sexual intercourse with a person outside the bonds of matrimony, or with a person other than one's singular spouse, is immoral in any circumstance. It is immoral because God has declared it to be so in his Word. No amount of human reasoning or feeling can change or temper that divine edict!

10:9 Incredulity: Unbelief is immoral. Paul warns, "Do not put the Lord to the *test*." The Greek word translated test is *ekpeiradzomen*, which is literally, *overtest*, or, *test beyond what is acceptable*. God does want us to put the promises he has revealed to us in his Word to the test. At least as far as reason and propriety will allow. He does want us to test his Word to confirm its historicity and accuracy.

But to keep asking God to prove himself and his promises *beyond* the Word is to put him to the test! The Israelites did this when they asked for more proof than the Lord had already given of his presence among them (cf. Exod. 17:7; Deut. 6:16; Num. 21:4-6; Heb. 3:7-19).

This same unbelief appears to have been a problem with the Corinthians. It is demonstrated by their clamoring for the continuance of miraculous gifts which were given exclusively to create belief and were to "pass away" (see I Cor. ch. 12-14). At the same time the Corinthians shunned the gifts designed to edify and which were to abide. When the evidence is sufficient, demanding more from the Lord is to "put him to the test" and is immoral. Jesus warned the Jewish rulers who kept asking him for more "signs" that they were committing the *unpardonable sin*.

The Israelites in the wilderness had every opportunity and privilege God could offer to create faith and commitment in their hearts. But they asked for more. The Corinthians had every opportunity and privilege Christ could offer to give them liberty and freedom. They seemed to be demanding more. Paul warns them they are putting the Lord to the test. The New Testament is Christ's final and complete "Bill of Rights" for the church. Any Christian who presumes to demand more is putting the Lord to the test.

10:10 Ingratitude: Christians are not to *grumble*. The Greek word is *egongusan* (Eng. *gong*) and is an onomatopoeic word, i.e., a word which represents the significance by the sound of the word, like the English word *murmur*. In the papyri the word is used of the impudent complaining of a gang of workmen. The word is almost always used

with the connotation of private or nearly inarticulate *complaining*. The Israelites were inveterate complainers (Num. 14:1-3; 14:27; 16:41; 17:5, 10; 20:2-13; see also Matt. 20:11; Luke 5:30; John 6:41, 43; 6:61; 7:32; Acts 6:1; Phil. 2:14; I Peter 4:9). It often appears that those most blessed and privileged are the most presumptuous and complaining. *Ingratitude* is the mother of all manner of wickedness (see Rom. 1:21ff.). Moses warned the Israelites against ungrateful presumption (Deut. 8:11-20). Paul is here warning all Christians about presuming upon the Lord's grace by complaining. Grumbling is immoral!

10:11-13 Indolence: Paul repeats his use of the Greek word *tupos*, type or imprint, in reference to God's historical dealings with the presumptuous Israelites. The RSV translates *tupos* with the word *warning* because the Christian age was the ultimate purpose for God's dealing with Israel as he did. The judgments and redemptions God worked upon Israel were recorded ultimately for the Bride of Christ—the New Testament church. Paul says they were *written* (Gr. *egraphe*, Eng. graph, engraved, graphically) for our *instruction* (Gr. *nouthesian*, combined word from *nous*, mind, and *tithemi*, to put; literally, a putting in mind). Our *instruction* is to be more than teaching, it is indoctrination—we are to have it put into our minds so that it becomes a part of our mentality or way of thinking.

The next phrase is, in Greek, *eis hous ta tele ton aionon katenteken*, or in English, *upon whom the end of the ages has come*. It is an extremely significant phrase because it is so decisive in stating apostolic eschatology in one declaration! It *clearly* declares the Christian age as the goal of all past ages. The Greek word *katenteken* is a perfect tense verb and may be translated, "has come down in the past with a continuing result." The decisive word in the whole phrase, however, is the Greek word *tele*, translated, *end*. It is the word from which we get the English prefix, *tele*, or *telo*, meaning, end, perfect, final, complete. The Greek word *teleios* means "having reached its end, finished, completed, perfected or final. The Christian age, begun on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:17ff.), is the *final* age. There will be *no more* ages or eras or dispensations. The only great event in the framework of time yet to come is the *end of time*, at which point Jesus will come again visibly to deliver the faithful living and dead to glory and to judge and deliver the unfaithful living and dead to Hell. The church age is the kingdom age. There is *no* kingdom dispensation yet to come. Paul's use of the perfect tense verb *katenteken* and his use of the

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noun *tele* settles the issue of Christian eschatology once for all. All the previous dispensations or ages of history were pointing toward the Christian age as their goal. The coming of the Christian age means that the goal has been reached, that the last phase of redemption has begun. So Paul is urging the Corinthians that self-discipline is now imperative. God has no other plan of redemption than the one in the New Testament. God has no other revelation than that written down in the New Testament. God has no other time or age in which he will work with mankind than this age. "Behold, now (in the Christian age) is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day (or age) of salvation" (II Cor. 6:1-2). To wait for or hold out to others any hope of another time-frame (or dispensation) after this age in which God will offer salvation to any group of people is presumptuous. This phrase has behind it inspired, apostolic authority. It is in complete harmony with all the rest of the Bible in teaching that the Christian age (the church age) is the last age of time. There is no millennium (in the sense of a latter dispensation) yet to come. If there is any millennium at all in the framework of time, we are now in it.

Paul's purpose in making his unequivocal statement about the Christian dispensation being the last of God's dispensations in time is to *prove* his argument about the necessity for Christian resistance to temptation in this earthly phase of life. There is no other probationary or proving phase of life. We are becoming what we shall be. *Therefore*, let any one who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. Let anyone who thinks *privilege* secures his standing before God, take heed lest he be indolent toward the *responsibilities* involved. To be indolent is to be lazy; to deliberately avoid responsibility or exertion; indolence is slothfulness. The Corinthians were prone to be slothful in exercising Christian charity and brotherhood toward "weaker brethren." They were arrogant in their liberty supposing such privileges secured their spiritual superiority. They presumed they "stood" while the weaker had "fallen."

Some Corinthians had clearly rationalized their arrogant disregard for "weaker" brethren by claiming they were participating in things they just could not quit. They probably argued that their old habit of eating at the feasts honoring idols was just too ingrained to be given up. They plead, our temptation is *unique*—no one knows how strong this temptation is. Besides, they knew an idol was no god so they were free to participate. Let the "weaker" brother look out for himself. He should get rid of his scruples and grow up to our level

of spirituality, they probably argued. Paul's answer was that *any* temptation may be resisted; *any* test endured.

The Greek word *eilephen*, translated *overtaken you*, is third person, singular, perfect tense, indicative mood, active voice. It means Paul is indicating these Corinthians had *already* been taken in the temptation of presumptuous arrogance and it was *continuing* in their lives. The apostolic revelation is that *every* temptation is *common* to mankind. The Greek phrase *ei me anthropinos* is translated "that is not common to man." *Anthropinos* literally means "is human." Now the devil may use different tools or agents in different cultural milieu or in different historical times, but his temptations to rebel against God generally fall into three or four general categories ("the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," I John 2:16). Jesus was tempted in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13) essentially in these three categories; Eve and Adam were tempted in the Garden of Eden in these three categories (Gen. 3:1-7). The Corinthians could not excuse their weaknesses by claiming their temptations were unique. No man can!

On the positive side, every human being who wishes may have the help of God for every temptation he faces. God will not permit any man to be tempted beyond the availability of help. Notice that the Bible does *not* promise any man (especially Christians) that they will have *no* temptation. As a matter of fact, temptation is one of God's ways of disciplining his children. God does not want his children to do evil, nor does he push them in that direction (James 1:13-15). But he does want them to develop spiritual maturity and strength and this can only be done as his children wrestle with and conquer temptation (see Heb. 10:32-39; 12:1-17; James 1:2-11; II Cor. 1:3-11; 12:1-10). Jesus, fully human as he was fully divine, proved in the flesh that all temptation is common to mankind and that every temptation may be overcome if human beings will avail themselves, by total faith, of the help of God. Jesus never used his divinity nor his miraculous power to extricate himself from a temptation. He always relied on the word of God in total commitment to God's faithfulness (see Matt. 4:1-11, et al.).

With every temptation God allows he makes available an attendant way of escape. The Greek text has the definite article *ten* before the noun *ekbasin*. In other words, Paul says, ". . . with *the* temptation will also provide *the* way of escape." It is not *a* way of escape, but *the* way of escape. Every temptation has its own way of escape. The

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temptation and the way of escape come in pairs. God sees to it that one does not occur without the other. No man can plead "not guilty" by saying the way of escape was not made available because Paul says God sends with every temptation the escape *that you may be able to endure*. If a Christian sins it is not because he did not have the way to escape it; it is because he did not *avail* himself of the way of escape. Sin cannot overpower a person unless the person allows it. God expects all men to *resist* temptation (Prov. 1:10; 4:14; Rom. 6:13; Eph. 6:13; II Peter 3:17). God encourages all men to seek his help (Heb. 2:18; II Peter 2:9; Heb. 4:14-16, etc.). Great men of faith have resisted (Abraham, Gen. 14:23; Joseph, Gen. 39:1-9; Job, Job 2:9-10; the Rechabites, Jer. 35:5-6; Daniel, Dan. 1:8; Christ, Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13; Peter, Acts 8:20). Spiritual indolence is inexcusable!

SECTION 3

Indulgence (10:14-22)

14 Therefore, my beloved, shun the worship of idols. ¹⁵I speak as to sensible men; judge for yourselves what I say. ¹⁶The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? ¹⁷Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. ¹⁸Consider the people of Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices partners in the altar? ¹⁹What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? ²⁰No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons. ²¹You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. ²²Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

10:14-18 Gregariousness: Paul is not teaching a lesson on Christian communion or the Lord's Supper here. He is using Christian communion as an *analogy* or an illustration of the principle of *fellowship*. It should be logically apparent to any thinking individual that the congeniality of dining and drinking with someone indicates the diners are like-minded, agreed in aims and purposes. This was certainly

true in ancient cultures more than in modern American culture. People do not participate, continually, at meal-tables with their enemies; at least they are not that congenial with enemies by their own free choice. For example, when Christians eat and drink with Christ at his Supper they are testifying to all they are in "fellowship" with Christ. They demonstrate they have freely chosen to *participate* in what he is, in what he is for and against, and in what his aims and purposes are. As Paul will show, the Corinthians, by attending the pagan feasts dedicated to idols were testifying to all they were in "fellowship" with that for which the idol stood.

This passage in no way teaches the idea that the emblems of the Lord's Supper become the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ. Neither does it teach that should we miss participation in the emblems due to circumstances beyond our control we lose contact with the blood of Christ. The death of Christ becomes efficacious to us through obedient faith, to be sure, but a person might have perfect attendance at the Lord's Supper and still lose contact with the blood of Christ *if* he is trusting in the ritual to make him meritoriously fit for salvation. The Pharisees never missed a tithe, never missed a fast, never missed a regulated time of prayer, but they were trusting in their own self-righteousness for approval before God rather than in God's mercy. The real issue here is not the *observance* of the Lord's Supper, *per se*, but that of *divided loyalty*. A man cannot *participate* with Christ and *participate* (or indulge) with the devil at the same time. A man cannot serve two masters. A man cannot serve God and mammon.

Another illustration is presented. The priests of the old covenant gave testimony to the fellowship they had with God when they participated in the ritual of offerings upon the altar of God. They did not partake, literally, of the altar—the altar itself was emblematic of the spiritual fellowship they had by faith. This meaning must be applied to all physical acts of New Testament Christianity. There is nothing supernatural or miraculous in the water in which a believer is immersed. The participation the believer has with the efficacious death of Christ is by faith. Immersion in water, in obedience to the command of Christ, symbolizes that faith. Refusal to be immersed, since that is the express act commanded in the New Testament for demonstrating initial faith, would symbolize unbelief. Partaking of immersion in water and the Lord's Supper testifies to, demonstrates and symbolizes the spiritual (unseen) reality of the believer's oneness with Christ. But the things themselves have no efficacy because

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things are amoral. Persons are moral. The efficaciousness of Christ's death is appropriated through the exercise of a person's faith. Proof that the altar *itself* contained no efficacy in which priests participated is clearly established by the prophets of the Old Testament who denounce the unbelieving priesthood of their day as enemies of God all the while they are performing the rituals at the altar.

10:19-22 Guilt: The preceding principle is exactly what Paul says he is trying to communicate to the Corinthians. Is the food, *per se*, offered to idols anything? No! Are the wooden or stone or metal images, in themselves, anything? No! A person is not defiled by touching an image or a piece of food sacrificed to an image. The issue is that what those pagans deliberately, willingly, and with personal, moral choice sacrifice to images is really (by their own understanding and choice) sacrifice to demons. These pagans know that the stone image is not a god in itself, but they are worshiping the personal being (an evil being) which it represents.

These "strong" Christians at Corinth had lost sight (from their misunderstanding of Christian liberty) of the fact that deliberately joining in the festivities and meals around the altar to an idol indicated they were willing to participate in the worship of the evil being represented by the image. They may have been "strong" enough not to have thought of their actions this way, but everyone else (including Christians more sensitively scrupulous) saw in it Christians willing to join in the worship of demons.

An idol or image may be only a piece of wood or stone, but it is a ready tool for the devil and his demons by which to deceive and seduce men into unbelief. We repeat—things are amoral. But evil persons may use things to corrupt and condemn men. Although Christians may understand that a thing is neither right nor wrong in itself, when they participate in the wrong use of an object, they become partners with the evil person who is using that object to destroy goodness. This is not guilt by association, but guilt by participation. Can we buy, sell, attend, defend things and places devoted to sin and destruction of mind and body without sharing in the devil's work?

All a person has to do to become a partner of the devil and his work is to refuse to become a partner with Christ and his work! Some people think they may be neutral, not an enemy of Christ, yet not a friend of the devil—so they think. Wrong! Jesus said (Matt. 12:30-31) "He that is not with me is against me; he that gathereth not with me, scattereth." Paul says it, "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons." To refuse to surrender to the Lordship of

Jesus is not neutrality—it is the enthronement of self. The person who rejects Jesus as king, makes himself king. To worship man is idolatry and, actually, “demonolatry” (see Rom. 1:22-25). Rejection of Christ is immoral because it is a rejection of absolute truth. To refuse to participate in the work of Christ is to join in the work of the demons of hell. There is no middle ground!

SECTION 4

Insensitiveness (10:23-30)

23 “All things are lawful,” but not all things are helpful. “All things are lawful,” but not all things build up. ²⁴Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor. ²⁵Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience. ²⁶For “the earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it.” ²⁷If one of the unbelievers invites you to dinner and you are disposed to go eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience. ²⁸(But if some one says to you, “This has been offered in sacrifice,” then out of consideration for the man who informed you, and for conscience’ sake—²⁹I mean his conscience, not yours—do not eat it.) For why should my liberty be determined by another man’s scruples? ³⁰If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of that for which I give thanks?

10:23-24 Carelessness: As mentioned earlier, with Christian liberty there is risk. There is always an ever present danger that the Christian will become selfishly concerned foremost about his liberty and unconcerned about the scruples of his brother. Thus Paul repeats the fundamental principle of Christian liberty, “All things are lawful . . .” qualifying it with, “but not all things are helpful.” The Greek word *sumpherei* is translated, *helpful*, but means literally, *brought together*. It is often translated by the English word *expedient*, and is more accurately understood by the word *advantageous*, or, *profitable*. Paul goes on to say, “All things are lawful, but not all things build up.” The Greek word *oikodomei* is a word from the construction trades, *oikos*, house, and, *demo*, to build. One might even translate the phrase, “. . . not all things are *constructive*.”

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The liberty of the Christian is not for the sake of self-indulgence. Christ set men free to reach their highest potential. Their highest potential is in the service of others—to be helpful, to build people up to do constructive things for others, so they may be reborn in the image of Christ. “He who would be greatest among you must be the slave of all” (Mark 10:44).

Actually, Paul is not saying a Christian is free to do anything he wishes, participate in every human behavior, partake of any object on earth, or even think anything he wishes to think. Christian freedom is limited by the revealed (Biblical) word of God. When Paul says, “All things are lawful” the immediate context must be remembered. The context is the specific discussion of *eating meat sacrificed to idols*. Paul declared Christ had set all Christians free from the legal restrictions of the Mosaic law concerning foods. If the law of Moses had not been superceded, no Christian could eat meat which had been butchered by a pagan lest he be ceremonially unclean. But the Mosaic restrictions no longer applied. Such *food* was not contaminated. Paul is saying “All foods formerly prohibited by the Mosaic law are lawful” (see I Tim. 4:1-5). He was not saying, “All actions are lawful.” But while all foods were lawful, the Christian might sin partaking even of lawful food if he should wound the conscience of a weaker brother by doing so.

Life can never be at a standstill. If it is not growing or developing toward the higher—if it is not being constructive—it is declining toward the lower. What is not used for growth will become atrophied and eventually destroy and be destroyed. Christian freedom that is careless and unconcerned about helpfulness and growth, inevitably contributes to destruction. Paul expressed this principle graphically in Romans 14:19 “Let us then pursue what makes for peace and mutual up-building” or in Romans 15:2, “let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to edify him.” And now to the Corinthians, the shocking words, so diametrically opposed to modern, worldly “me-ism,” “Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.” The Christian is not simply to help his neighbor if the opportunity to do so happens to present itself. The Christian is to *seek* good for his neighbor. The Greek verb *zeteito* is present, imperfect, active, meaning the Christian is to go on and on and on *seeking* good for his neighbor. That is the Christian’s job! It may be of significance that Paul does not limit his exhortation to the Christian here to seek the good

of a "brother." He literally wrote, "No one the thing of himself let him go on and on seeking, but the thing of the other." The word *other* is the Greek word *heterou* which denotes generic distinction or difference in character. It is translated *neighbor*. Christians are to put to practice the limits of love on Christian liberty toward all men.

10:25-27 Complication: With the issue of Christian liberty and scrupulousness, comes the temptation upon the stronger to implicate the weaker in behavior contrary to the weaker one's conscience. Paul states the principle by which the Christian conducts himself properly and then he illustrates it with an hypothetical situation. First, "Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience—for the earth is the Lord's, and everything in it." The Greek word *makello* translated *meat market* is found nowhere else in the New Testament. It is probably a word coined by the Greeks from the Latin word *macellum* which meant "a bench or stall for marketing merchandise, especially, meats; it came to designate a slaughterhouse" and since warfare usually turned a town into a "slaughterhouse" or a "shambles" that is how the word came to be translated *shambles* in archaic English. A drawing of archaeological discoveries in the ancient city of Pompeii shows both the slaughterhouse and the meat-shop next to the chapel of Caesar. This confirms the suggestions of our text that there was a very close connection between the meat-market and pagan idolatry. It would have been very difficult for any one, even a Christian, to buy meat in such a market without being immediately associated with worshiping at the temple of the idol.

So, writes Paul, the helpful or constructive (edifying) thing for a Christian to do, should any plate of meat be set before him, would be to refrain from questioning whether the meat came from the pagan "meat-market" or not. The Greek clause, *meden anakrinontes* (translated, *discerned* in I Cor. 2:14-15), translated here *do not question*, means literally, *do not carry on an investigation*. It is a legal term. Paul is not, of course, forbidding all questioning of right and wrong. He is not discussing the conscience of the eater at all—but the conscience of the server. The instruction is that the guest is not to implicate the conscience of the host by asking questions about the meat set before them.

Out of pure worldly arrogance, a strong, more sophisticated person may be tempted to implicate a weaker (more scrupulous) person

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just to elevate his own image of "wisdom" or "sophistication" by exposing the scruples of the more conscientious person. Paul says this is not fitting Christian conduct. It is not right for a strong Christian to exploit the scruples of a weaker brother or a pagan intending to display his own "knowledge" or "freedom" by agitating for such a comparison.

It is significant that Paul is setting forth proper ethical behavior of the Christian toward the unbeliever. There may be some Christians who think unbelievers do not deserve to be treated ethically. It is also interesting there is an assumption that the Christian would wait to be invited by the unbeliever to his home and would not push himself into the pagan's fellowship uninvited. He says, *kai thelete poreuesthai*, "and if you wish to go. . . ." He does not command them to go, or even encourage them to go—but to go if they wished. And if they accept the invitation, Christian helpfulness, Christian purpose to edify, yes, Christian love, requires that no complicating implications be raised. To do so would be immoral!

Christians will not try to destroy weaker, even unbelieving, persons by irritating or ventilating consciences, without positive instruction in what is right and wrong so that edification will result. Conscience is a functioning characteristic—not a diagnosing or circumscribing characteristic. The conscience functions on the basis of what the mind diagnoses as right and wrong. The conscience does not tell a person *what* is right and wrong, its function is to *judge* the heart for having *done* either the right or the wrong. *Information* as to *what* is right and wrong comes from revelation—from the word of God, the Bible. For the Christian to go into a home and begin to fuss and cross-examine an unbeliever as to how abominable it is to serve meat purchased in an idol-market, is to proceed to destroy the unbeliever. No Christian is to use his "knowledge" or his "liberty" to destroy another.

10:28-30 Callousness: The questions arise, "What if a Christian conscientiously believes it is not wrong for him to eat meat from the pagan meat-markets and there is an unbeliever present who believes it is wrong for the Christian to do so?" "And, what if the unbeliever says to the Christian, 'This has been offered in sacrifice'?" Is the Christian to reply, callously, "If my eating offends you or bothers you, that is your problem, not mine. I know it is not wrong so I am going to eat it!"? Paul says an emphatic, No! The Christian must sacrifice his liberty of conscience to the scruples of even an unbeliever.

Out of consideration for the possible salvation of the unbeliever, and even for the sake of the unbeliever's over-scrupulousness, the Christian is not to eat.

With all the freedom in Christ and with the liberated conscience of the believer comes the danger of callousness on the part of the person who knows an idol is not a god. It is often true that the non-Christian has a much stricter opinion of the proper behavior of a Christian than a fellow-Christian has. So the Christian must be willing to sacrifice his "rights" even when the unbeliever is excessively scrupulous. If a Christian is insensitive and disregards the scruples of an unbelieving friend, he almost inevitably damages his influence for Christ with that friend.

The final sentence of verse 29, "For why should my liberty be determined by another man's scruples?" is *not* a cry of rebellion on the part of the "stronger" brother. Verses 29b and 30 are rhetorical questions from the apostle Paul, in anticipation of the answer in verses 31, 32, and 33. The Greek expression, *hinati gar he eleutheria mou krinetai . . .*, is stronger than the most English translations present it. It might be translated, "To what end or purpose is my liberty to be determined by another man's scruples?" J. B. Phillips has it correctly translated in *The New Testament In Modern English*, "Now why should my freedom to eat be at the mercy of someone else's conscience? Or why should any evil be said of me when I have eaten meat with thankfulness, and have thanked God for it? *Because*, whatever you do, eating or drinking or anything else, everything should be done to bring glory to God." Why should the strong Christian brother be willing to make such sacrifices as to surrender his freedom to someone else's conscience? Or, conversely, if what the strong Christian eats is something for which he is able to thank God, and he is slandered for it, why is it proper that evil has been spoken of him? *Because*, any action that violates another man's conscience does not bring glory to God; and that includes even an action for which a strong Christian may give thanks to God.

10:31-33 Conclusion: Paul is ready to move on to another "problem that is plaguing the saints" but before he does he wants to sum up what he has said about Christian liberty. The Greek verb *poieite* (English, *do*) is used twice in verse 31. In that Greek form it may be either present indicative or present imperative. It appears Paul uses it both ways in this verse. It might be paraphrased, "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you are continuing to do, I command

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you to do all to the glory of God.” The application of the actions of a Christian is as wide as the total sphere of the Christian’s movement in society. The actions of a Christian will have influence on everyone who sees him, hears him, or makes contact with him in any other way (see Rom. 14:7-9). And this is particularly true of the influence a Christian may have on unbelievers. In the Christian, the unbelieving world is seeing an attempt to live out in the flesh the personality or character of God and Christ. God is glorified when Christians live according to the principles of self-sacrifice and love enunciated by Paul in these chapters (8, 9, 10).

Strange as it may seem, there are Christians who, while being careful not to offend an unbeliever, are careless about offending a brother in Christ. That is somewhat like the behavior of certain persons toward their immediate family members—showing deference and politeness to strangers while being rude and insensitive toward father, mother, brothers and sisters. So, Paul makes a point of saying, “Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church (Gr. *ekklesia*, congregation) of God.”

Paul never compromised on matters that were essential to one’s belief in Jesus. He never compromised on matters of moral behavior clearly delineated in the scriptures. He would not even compromise on a matter of indifference (circumcision) when the Jews insisted that it was a matter of covenant relationship to Christ. So, those areas are *not* in the scope of his statement, “. . . just as I try to please all men in everything I do. . . .” He did accommodate himself to the scruples of others in matters that were opinions and not essential to covenant terms with Christ. Paul did not curry the favor of men. His primary goal in life was to please God (Gal. 1:10; I Thess. 2:5-6). A better translation of the Greek word *aresko* would be “seems proper.” Paul is saying, “. . . just as I try to behave as seems proper toward all men in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved.” Paul would do anything, short of apostasy and immorality, to save a man. He would sacrifice any of his privileges or “rights” to win men to Christ. He imitated Christ. He commands (Gr. *ginesithe*, imperative mood, *Be!*) all Christians to be imitators of him as he is of Christ. Verse 1 of chapter 11 should be considered the closing statement of the discussion of chapter 10. May God grant us the power and the motivation to do everything possible to win men to Christ!

APPLICATIONS:

1. God gave great privileges to the Israelites he did not give to others—they defaulted. *What about Christian's privileges?*
2. Since the Old Testament events are warnings to us, should we not study them more frequently?
3. What responsibilities are incurred by the privileges of freedom?
4. What "idols" are you tempted to worship?
5. Unbelief is immorality.
6. We must make constant, deliberate and overt expressions of thankfulness, because ingratitude is the most heinous of all sins.
7. Do not be lead astray—the church age is the last age there will be.
8. God makes a way to avoid every temptation to sin known to man. The question is, Do we believe God?
9. Taking the Lord's Supper is more than participating in a ritual. It is a weekly oath or testimony by the Christian that he is like-minded and of the same purpose as Christ.
10. To be insensitive to another person's moral reservations or scruples is a sin for the Christian.
11. To implicate another person with guilt by questioning or belittling another person's scruples is wrong.
12. Every Christian who desires to glorify God must agree that his liberty is to be determined by the scruples of others!
13. The Christian must be willing to give up anything, or to do anything short of apostasy and immorality to win men to Christ.

APPREHENSIONS:

1. Why does Paul give a short review of Israelite history?
2. What kind of privileges did God give Israel in the wilderness?
3. What kind of responsibilities are demanded as a response to such privileges?
4. What is the risk of freedom?
5. How were the experiences of the Israelites *types* of all human experiences toward God?
6. Why is idolatry almost always associated with illicit sexual behavior?
7. What is "putting the Lord to the test"? Do Christians today do that? How?
8. Why are Christians warned against "grumbling"?

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9. When did the "end of the ages" come? Why is it significant that we understand this? Why do so many people today insist the "end of the ages" is yet to come?
10. Are there any temptations unique to just you?
11. Are there any temptations for which there are no escapes? Why, then, do men fall into temptations?
12. Can a Christian eat food sacrificed to an idol without participating in the worship of demons?
13. Are *all* things lawful to a Christian? What does Paul mean by his statement?
14. How careful must the Christian be about criticizing and ridiculing another person's scruples?
15. Should a Christian condescend to behaving according to a weaker brother's more rigid scruples?
16. What is the purpose in allowing another person's scruples determine one's liberty?
17. Should we do anything, short of apostasy and immorality, to win others to Christ? Give up anything which is merely a matter of opinion?

Chapter Eleven

THE PROBLEM OF DISORDERLY WORSHIP (11:1-34)

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Why would order in worship be a problem to Christians?
2. What do head-coverings have to do with proper worship?
3. Is it really degrading for a man to have long hair?
4. Must there be factions in the church in order to find out who the genuine believers are?
5. Does eating meals in the church building profane the Lord's house?
6. What is eating the Lord's Supper in an "unworthy" manner?
7. What is eating and drinking "without discerning the body"?

SECTION 1

Opening Words (11:1-2)

11 Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. ²I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I have delivered them to you.

11:1-2 Commendation: Clearly, the first verse of the eleventh chapter should be the closing verse of the tenth chapter. It belongs to that context. Paul changes the subject to disorder in worship in 11:2. He commends the Corinthians for "remembering" to consult him about their problems, and for "maintaining" the apostolic teachings ("traditions") he had taught them. Paul is using the word *traditions* to mean Holy-Spirit-inspired-doctrines—not human traditions. He distinguished clearly between the two. In Galatians 1:14 and Colossians 2:8 he speaks of *human* traditions. In I Corinthians 11:2 and II Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6, he refers to apostolic "traditions" which were *delivered* and *taught* by the apostles and *received* by the Christians as the word of God (see I Thess. 2:13). This is precisely why Paul could address this church, with all its faults and difficulties, as "brethren," and "saints." They may seem grossly immature, but they knew where to turn for the truth! The *only source*

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for solution for the problems that plague the saints is the apostolic word (“traditions”).

SECTION 2

Order, a Requirement for Godly Worship (11:3-16)

³But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. ⁴Any man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, ⁵but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled dishonors her head—it is the same as if her head were shaven. ⁶For if a woman will not veil herself, then she should cut off her hair; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her wear a veil. ⁷For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. ⁸(For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. ⁹Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.) ¹⁰That is why a woman ought to have a veil on her head, because of the angels. ¹¹(Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; ¹²for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God.) ¹³Judge for yourselves is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? ¹⁴Does not nature itself teach you that for a man to wear long hair is degrading to him, ¹⁵but if a woman has long hair, it is her pride? For her hair is given to her for a covering. ¹⁶If any one is disposed to be contentious, we recognize no other practice, nor do the churches of God.

11:3 The Issue: The eleventh chapter of this letter very evidently deals with problems reported to the apostle Paul about public worship in the Corinthian congregational assemblies. Actually, chapters 12, 13 and 14 also deal with the problem of disorderly worship. But, since these chapters treat problems distinctly different than those of chapter 11, we will treat them separately.

The Hebrew word *shakhah* is the most usual word translated *worship* in the Old Testament. It means, literally, “to bow down, to prostrate oneself.” The Greek word in the New Testament most often translated *worship* is the word *proskuneo* and also means, “to bow down, to

prostrate oneself, and to do obeisance." The English word *worship* is a contraction of the early English word *worthship*. The old English *worthship* gives us an exact idea of what our modern word *worship* means. The one to whom we give *worship* must be *worthy* of absolute homage, honor, reverence and obedience.

Worship is essentially an attitude instead of an act! First, the performance of certain rituals of worship without the proper attitude is condemned by the Scriptures as "an abomination before God." On the other hand, a false emotion that discounts as irrelevant clear commands about definite acts of worship betrays a disobedient attitude and makes a mockery of worship.

Attitude in worship is the fundamental issue Paul deals with in chapter eleven. It is the issue of obedience to the revealed will of God as spoken and written by the apostles. The problem has manifested itself by two symptomatic actions in the public worship of the Corinthians; they are (1) the man-woman relationship; (2) the Christian-brother relationship.

In worship the outward man is bound up in the inward man. Worship is an outward act or acts springing from, and under the control of, inward attitudes and impulses of love and obedience. It is said, "To worship God is to make Him the supreme object of our esteem and delight, both in public, private and secret." It is apparent from chapters eleven through fourteen, the primary problem of the worship of the Corinthian church was that it was directed toward themselves. They were so interested in calling attention to themselves and to their supposed superiorities over others, they were not making God the supreme object of their esteem. The key verse to this huge context of four chapters (11-14) is probably, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit" (12:13).

While it is true regarding salvation and grace that men and women are of equal worth to God, it is also true that God has ordered certain hierarchies of authority within this world and his kingdom so long as it is in the world. In the church there are elders, evangelists and deacons to lead and shepherd the congregation. In the home the husband is the authoritative head. Evidently some of the Corinthian women misunderstood the teaching, "In Christ there is neither male nor female . . ." (Gal. 3:28). Some of them had cast off the cultural modes of ancient dress which particularly stressed and emphasized their *femininity*, hence their subordination to their husbands. While

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the primary focus of the apostle's discussion is on woman's subordination to man, the issue is not simply a wife's obedience to her husband's loving authority. It is much broader than that and covers attitudes of all women and men—married or unmarried. The broader issue is that women (and men too) must *not rebel* against the *divine order* of femininity and masculinity!

Paul discusses the divine order by declaring that the head of every male person (Greek *andros* instead of *anthropos*) is Christ. No man should wear a sign of subordination to other men when he prays (or worships). There is only one mediator between man and God, himself man, Jesus Christ (I Tim. 2:5). In the same *divine order*, the head of a female person is a male person. This does not deny that Christ is the head of the woman also, nor does it mean that a female person is inferior or of less importance than the male. Paul is reinforcing God's order as it was ordained from the beginning (Gen. 2:18) when the woman was created as a *helper* for man. The divine order of masculinity and femininity involves differing functions which require hierarchies of authority. Man functions as leader, protector, provider; woman functions as mother, helper, supporter. This in no way means one is superior and the other inferior. It does not mean that the male person makes all the decisions arbitrarily and without consulting the wisdom of the female person. But Paul's teaching (in harmony with the rest of scripture) does mean that the husband is the final authority and the leader in the home.

11:4-12 The Illustration: Lenski says the general custom among Greeks was that slaves should cover their heads while free men went bareheaded. If a man wore a covering over his head in Paul's day it signified he was acknowledging final loyalty to a human being. It is wrong for a man to dishonor his masculinity in any way. God made man masculine. God made man to lead and be the final authority in the human order. On the other hand, the general custom among Greeks was that women, who desired the honor and protection femininity afforded them, wore veils in the public presence of men. Some of the Corinthian Christian women were apparently praying and attending public worship without being veiled. They were declaring their rejection of the divine order of human hierarchy by casting aside the first century symbols of this divine order.

In Paul's day the veil worn by women probably covered the whole head with openings for the eyes and reached clear down to the feet. No respectable woman would go without a veil in public for if she

did she would be in danger of being misjudged. The woman's veil in those days was an important part of feminine dignity and gave her security and protection. Sir William Ramsay explains: "In Oriental lands the veil is the power and honor and dignity of the woman. With the veil on her head she can go anywhere in security and profound respect. She is not seen and therefore not subject to male familiarities and crudities. It is a mark of thoroughly bad manners to become familiar with a veiled woman in the street. She is alone. The rest of the people around are non-existent to her, as she is to them. She is supreme in the crowd. . . . But without the veil the woman is a thing of nought, whom anyone may insult. . . . A woman's authority and dignity vanish along with the all-covering veil that she discards."

The veil was the woman's badge of honor and respect. It showed that she had a definite place as a person in God's order. Woman was not created to be simply a "thing" or an "object" to be exploited by any and all men. She is to be honored, protected, cherished, loved, served, and led by her husband because she is a female.

Any man who prayed or prophesied with his head covered dishonored Christ ("his head"). A man worshiping in those days with his head covered symbolized he acknowledged some other human authority before Christ. The male Christian who worshiped with uncovered head signified he was accountable only to Christ. But the woman who prayed or prophesied with her head unveiled dishonored her husband ("her head"). She would dishonor her husband unveiled just as if she had her head shaved. Shaving of the head in ancient times (as even now in most cultures) was a sign of disgraceful and shameful conduct. At the end of World War II, those French women who had fraternized with Nazi soldiers were caught and their heads were shaved in public. Any woman in the civilized world of the apostle Paul, Greek, Roman, Jew or Syrian, would have felt terribly ashamed to have had her head shaved. Since that was the case, says Paul, the women of Corinth should have covered their heads in public—especially in the worship services of the church. For the Christian woman of Corinth to go with her head uncovered was to act the part of a shamed woman whether she was one or not. And that, in turn, brought shame upon her husband, and upon the church.

In verses 7 through 9 Paul gives us clear scriptural proof of the divinely ordained human hierarchy. Woman was made from man, not man from woman. Man was made *first* and then the woman was made from his body (see Gen. 2:21-22). *Man is first* in the divine order.

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Furthermore, woman was made *for* man, not man for woman (see Gen. 2:18). *Man* is *first* in divine *purpose*. Both the origin of woman and the reason for her being is found in man. There is no room for human speculations or rationalizations when we have both the creation account and the apostolic reiteration. No matter how much political and philosophical rhetoric and no matter how practical and appropriate it may sound when some activists demand that females have, not only the right, but the obligation to reject the customary, biblically-taught, function of femininity, and step into the world of maleness and function as any man, it is clearly not the revealed will of God!

The Greek text of verse 10 reads, *dia touto opheilei he gune exousian exein epi tes kephales dia tous angelous*. Translated, literally, "*On account of this, she ought, the woman, authority, to be having, upon the head, on account of the angels.*" The New American Standard Version translates this sentence, "Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels." The NASV has supplied the words, "*a symbol of*" since they are not in the Greek text. The New International Version *supplies* the same words. The Revised Standard Version supplies, "*a veil*" where there are no words in the Greek text. These versions are supplying words to give the sentence the *usual* interpretation.

This interpretation is the usual one, but some commentators have differed. They have taken "authority" as referring to the woman's authority over her own natural head. There is justification for this interpretation in the Greek words (i.e., authority upon). This combination of words is found three times in the book of Revelation with the meaning "have control of" (11:6, "over the waters"; 14:18, "over fire"; 20:6; "over such," meaning the saints). In each case the combination of authority plus the preposition (Greek, *epi*) is the same. If this translation is taken, it is possible that the expression means that the woman should maintain control over her head so that it would not expose her to indignity. The woman's veil then became her willing subjection to her husband, her refusal to expose herself to others. However, the ultimate significance of the two interpretations is the same. Willing subjection to her husband's authority was a recognition of that authority, and this is the meaning of the clause. Even so, it would seem that the usual interpretation has the best claim to validity (Fred Fisher, *op. cit.*, p. 177).

We are not so sure the words "a symbol of" or "a veil" should be supplied here. We *are* sure the woman (and the man) should acknowledge that she "is to be having authority upon the head." There are women today who have all the symbols (hats, dresses, cosmetics) of womanhood but verbally and vehemently declare their rejection of the subordination of femaleness to maleness in the divine order of creation. It is more than a mere *sign* of authority the woman is to put on. She is to be mentally, emotionally and physically subordinate to the man. This does *not* degrade the woman! In subordinating herself to man she is actually taking her God-ordained place. She is filling the place of *honor* God created for her. Strange as it may seem to modern female activists, the woman's place of dignity is in her femininity. By God's word it is the woman's *right* to have the protection, dignity and honor that she alone can have in femininity. If she forfeits her femininity, she forfeits her rights! That is diametrically opposite to much modern feminist philosophy.

The reference, "on account of the angels . . ." simply reinforces the idea that all God's creatures have their place. The angels who left their assigned place in the created order of God forfeited their rights, dishonored God and themselves, and were cast into the abyss (cf. II Peter 2:4; Jude 6).

Just because woman's divinely ordered place is in subordination to man does not mean that man can exist independently of woman. For as the woman was made *out of the man* (Gr. *ek tou andros*), now the man is born *through woman* (Gr. *dia tes gunaikos*). Men and women are equally dependent upon one another—but each in their own God-ordered place!

11:13-16 The Indictment: The woman must not arrogate to herself the man's place (pray with her head uncovered in cultures where it is a shameless usurpation of maleness to do so). The man is not to arrogantly defy God and take the woman's place (wear long hair in cultures where it is not masculine to do so). Rebels and fanatics defy God's created order; Christians obey it. It is unnatural and rebellious for men to wear their hair long like women. Nature itself shows that man, being short-haired, is intended by the God of nature to be unveiled; woman, being long-haired, is intended by the same God to be veiled. Generally speaking, in the more refined and advanced civilizations, men have always worn their hair short and women have worn theirs long. Plummer writes in the International Critical Commentary on I Corinthians, "At this period, civilized men, whether Jews, Greeks, or Romans, wore their hair short" (p. 235).

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“The long hair of the Greek fop or of the English cavalier was accepted by the people as an indication of effeminate and luxurious living. Suitable for women; it is unsuitable for men.” (*The Expositor's Greek New Testament*, I Cor. 11:14). “Homer's warriors, it is true, wore long hair, a fashion retained at Sparta, but the Athenian youth cropped his head at eighteen, and it was a mark of foppery or effeminacy except for the aristocratic knights to let the hair afterwards grow long. This feeling prevailed in ancient times as it does in modern times.” (*Expositor's Greek New Testament*, I Cor. 11:14).

According to Philip Vollmer's *Modern Student's Life of Christ*, archaeologists object to the conventional pictures of Christ with long hair because they are not true to history. A German painter, L. Fahrenkrog, says Christ certainly never wore a beard and his hair was beyond doubt closely cut. For this we have historical, archaeological proofs. The oldest representations, going back to the first Christian centuries, and found chiefly in the catacombs of Rome, all picture Christ without a beard. All the pictures of Christ down to the beginning of the fourth century at least, and even later, are like this. The further fact that Christ must have, in his day, worn short hair can be proved by the scripture. Among the Jews none but the Nazarites wore long hair. Christ was indeed a Nazarene, but not a Nazarite. Then, like the rest of the Jews, he wore his hair short. Further evidence is furnished by Paul here in I Corinthians 11:14, where he expressly declares that it is a *dishonor* for a man to wear his hair without having it cut, something that no apostle would have said had his Master worn it thus. One thing Jesus did not do was dress in such a bizarre way as to attract undue attention to himself. He was so much a conformist in his appearance, apparently, the soldiers had to ask which one he was when they went to arrest him in the Garden of Gethsemane!

Some have tried to equivocate over this passage about the prohibition of long hair on a man. They ask, “How long is long?” or, “How long should a *woman's* hair be?” The point of this discussion is that the man is *not* to have what the woman is to have. Actually, the expression “long hair” in 11:14-15 is from the Greek word *komao* which means “let the hair grow.” The idea of length is not one of relativity here. It is not how long some woman's hair is in proportion to how short some man's hair is. Every man or woman with respect to their hair falls into one of two categories. Their hair is either *natural length* or it is not natural length. We either let our hair grow or we do not let it grow. We either cut it or we do

not cut it. Paul's instruction might be translated, "If a man let his hair grow, it is a shame unto him. But if a woman let her hair grow, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering." The Greek word translated "nature" is *phusis* and could be translated, "instinctively." *Instinctively*, creation expects men to have short hair and women long hair. It is disgraceful in a man to be like a woman, and in a woman to be like a man.

God expects those who trust him to keep the distinctions between maleness and femaleness, both outwardly and inwardly, clear and unequivocal. Deliberate effeminacy in men and masculinity in women has always been an abomination to God. Israelite men were not to wear women's clothing, nor were women to wear men's clothing (Deut. 22:5). Homosexual behavior was a sin punishable by death in the Old Testament (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Deut. 23:17-18). Effeminacy is prohibited in the New Testament (I Cor. 6:9-10) along with homosexuality by either male or female (Rom. 1:24-27).

Many of the heathen poets and philosophers of the Greek and Roman civilizations considered long hair in men a mark of effeminacy. Livy, Roman poet and historian, spoke strongly against the effeminacy of his age. Juvenal, disgusted by the sexual excesses and perversions of his day, spoke loathingly of the dandies whose manners, perfumes, and desire make them indistinguishable from women; and by the women who think that emancipation means that they should be indistinguishable from men.

In Zephaniah 1:8 God said that he would "punish the officials and the king's sons and all who array themselves in foreign attire." It has been thoroughly documented that the world-wide mania for long hair on men and hierarchical equality of women with men is fundamentally a *rebellion* against the divinely created and revealed order of God for the human race. When God's people, by their modes of dress, indicate they are more in harmony with the "foreign" (heathen) culture than they are with God's standards, it is time to apply the teachings of the apostle here in this eleventh chapter.

Notice the words used by the apostle in this context: "dishonors," "disgraceful," "improper," "is it proper?" and "degrading." For women (or men) to rebel against the place God has decreed for femininity or masculinity is serious sin. One cannot give acceptable worship to God in such rebellion. We repeat, the place *God* has ordered for femininity and masculinity is the basis of Paul's instruction here. Man praying with his head covered, dishonors his masculinity which

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is from God; woman praying with her head uncovered, dishonors her femininity which is from God. Man's dignity, or place, is to *lead* in society, to *protect* the weaker sex (female), to *provide* for the basic unit of society (the family) and to *discipline*. Woman's dignity is to be a *mother*, to be a *helper* in many things (see Prov. 31); to give sexual intimacy to her husband (see I Cor. 7), to help *rear* children (Eph. 6:1-4)—in essence, woman's dignity is to be feminine!

The apostle is *not* here advocating a dictatorship of the husband over the wife. In fact, as some see it, the husband as dictator and tyrant, and the wife as some non-thinking, non-speaking, non-human slave is not taught in the Bible at all. Many women—married women, too—in the Bible made decisions, spoke as individuals, and made crucial contributions to history. What the Bible does teach is that man has certain functions and woman has certain functions—neither is to replace the other. There are things women are not supposed to do and things men are not supposed to do (see Luke 8:1-3; Acts 9:36; 18:24-28; 21:19; Rom. 1:1-16; I Tim. 2:12-14; 5:9-16; Titus 2:3-5).

In verse 16 Paul makes the matter of subverting masculinity and femininity as God has revealed it, a matter of *disobedience* to apostolic practice and that is disobedience to God. Paul does *not* mean by verse 16, "If anyone objects or wants to argue against what I have said, just forget about it because I didn't mean it anyway." Paul is saying that "if any man, after this clear statement from me, is disposed to dispute the divine order of masculinity and femininity, and appears to be contentious, we simply say that we (the apostles) disapprove of the disordering of the places of male and female, and so do the churches of God." With any person who would dispute Paul's instruction here, argument is useless. Authority is the only solution to the controversy. Apostolic authority is unquestionable. And no man is justified, except on clearly scriptural grounds to reject the accepted and practiced customs of the local congregation of believers, (see I Cor. ch. 8-10).

SECTION 2

Oneness, a Requirement for Godly Worship (11:17-34)

17 But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. 18For, in the first place, when you assemble as a

church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and I partly believe it, ¹⁹for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. ²⁰When you meet together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. ²¹For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal, and one is hungry and another is drunk. ²²What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

²⁷ Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself. ³⁰That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. ³¹But if we judged ourselves truly, we should not be judged. ³²But when we are judged by the Lord, we are chastened so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

³³ So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another—³⁴if any one is hungry, let him eat at home—lest you come together to be condemned. About the other things I will give directions when I come.

11:17-19 Cliques Stated: The church at Corinth was especially troubled by problems of worship. This was in part due to the variety of religious backgrounds among its members. The Jews in the Corinthian church would be accustomed to the simple, subdued, but dignified services of the synagogue. The synagogue would have been male-oriented. The women would have kept silent. Scriptures would be read, a scholarly dissertation of the scriptures would be given,

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prayers said, and, as the worshipers departed, offerings would be placed in the alms boxes. Most of the Gentiles in the Corinthian church, however, would be accustomed to the idolatrous services associated with Dionysus, god of intoxication and revelry—wild orgiastic feasts where food and wine were consumed in great quantities. The cult of Mithras, which was so popular with the Roman troops, initiated its converts in the *taurobolium*—a pit in the ground over which a bull was slaughtered. As the blood poured over him, the new devotee eagerly let it immerse his eyes, nose, and tongue. This makes it clear there would be difficulty in the Corinthian church about how the worship services should be conducted.

A serious problem had arisen about the observance of the Lord's Supper. Paul was very distressed over the reports of their conduct. Apparently there were *cliques* (small, exclusive groups) forming according to social and economic levels and separating from one another. It is clear that the worship service of first century Gentile churches was preceded by a communal meal (a fellowship supper). Paul says in this very chapter that the worship service in Corinth observed such a meal before worship (11:20-22). By having this "fellowship supper" they may have thought they were making progress in their Christian commitment. But Paul says they were coming together not for the better but for the worse! They would have been better off not even to have come together to behave as they were.

Division is abhorred by the Lord whether it is over church leaders, over opinions, or over social and economic status. Paul does not say here (v. 18-19) that *divisions* (Gr. *schismata*) and *factions* (Gr. *haireseis*, or heresies) are necessary in the church in order to prove who belongs to God. He certainly would not advocate that Christians should form denominations and sects and cliques so the world would be able to find the true God. Jesus prayed just the opposite (see John 17:1ff.). He is pointing out, however, that when people form cliques within the church, those who refuse to join them and refuse to approve of them, are themselves recognized as genuine in their faith. A Christian who is a genuine brother to all Christians will not only refuse to join cliques and factions, but he will resist them with loving admonition.

11:20-22 Communal Supper: William Barclay in his commentary writes about the communal meal in the first century church:

The ancient world was in many ways a much more social world than ours. It was the regular custom for groups of people to meet together for common meals. There was, in particular, a

certain kind of feast called an *eranos* in Greek language, to which each participant brought his own share of the food, and in which all the contributions were pooled to make a common feast. The early church had such a custom; they had a feast called the Agape or Love Feast. To it all the Christians came, bringing what they could, and when the resources of all were pooled, they sat down to a common meal. It was a lovely custom; and it is to our loss that the custom vanished.

This meal probably grew out of the fact that when Jesus first instituted the Lord's Supper it was in connection with the Passover meal he and his disciples had just eaten. It was a way of producing and nourishing real Christian *fellowship* (Gr. *koinonia*, sharing, participating). It offered the well-to-do a regular opportunity to share their material blessings with the poor. After this meal, all the Christians would partake of the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper, to memorialize his atoning death for the sins of all men.

But in the church at Corinth things had gone sadly wrong with the "Love" feast (and as a consequence, it had defiled their act of partaking of the Lord's Supper). Paul treats this problem with one of the angriest outbursts in the whole epistle. He begins with sarcasm, "When you meet together, it is not the Lord's Supper that you eat." William Barclay again:

In this church there were rich and poor; there were those who could bring much of the finest of foods to the Love Feast and there were slaves and poor who could bring little or nothing. For many a poor slave the Love Feast must have been the only decent meal in the whole week. . . . The rich did not share their food but ate in little exclusive groups by themselves, hurrying through it in case they had to share. The meal or gathering at which the social differences between members of the church should have been obliterated only succeeded in aggravating these same differences.

Some in the Corinthian church began to eat before the others arrived, gorging themselves, consuming most of the provisions, and letting the others go hungry. The "drunken" are the wealthy who had the leisure to come early. They fed themselves full, and drank until they became inebriated. How shameful! The "hungry" were the slaves, common laborers, foundry workers, tired dock hands, and sick and disabled who were poverty stricken. Most of these would

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of necessity arrive late for the communal meal in the evening because they had to work until the sun set; these needed the most and received the least. It is scandalous to become drunken at the worship service; it is even worse to be “drunk” with a false sense of superiority and an indifference to the needs of the brethren.

What started as a “love” feast turned out to be an orgy of squabbling, hurt feelings and even drunkenness. This, of course, destroyed all possibility of properly commemorating the Lord’s sacrifice in the Lord’s Supper. Paul insists that this prostitution of Christian fellowship destroys the true meaning and purpose of the Lord’s Supper.. They go through the ritual of the Lord’s Supper all right, but it does not glorify Christ. They have hardly turned away from showing their contempt for Christ in their factious gluttony before they are pretending to join their snubbed brethren in “communing with the Lord.”

Paul is not prohibiting Christians from having “fellowship suppers” in the “church-building” in verse 22. In the first place, so far as we know historically and archaeologically, there were no buildings built specifically as church-buildings before 200 A.D. The Christians at Corinth were meeting in people’s private homes (see I Cor. 16:19). Furthermore, it is clear that what Paul condemned was the manner in which they were conducting themselves, not the place of the supper. Paul’s suggestion is that if they are going to continue with their insensitive arrogance and gluttony to humiliate their brethren, they should stop the “love feast” and eat in their own homes. The place had nothing to do with their despising the church of God—it was their carnality.

Once again we behold actions so carnal and shameful in Christians we wonder how Paul could call them “brethren.” But with only a little soul-searching we all should acknowledge we are “ignorant” and “obstinate” brethren—in differing areas of behavior.

11:23-26 Covenant Shared: This parenthetical section—a review from Paul concerning the establishment of the Lord’s Supper—serves as a reminder of the spiritual purpose of the Lord’s Supper. Paul had not been an eyewitness to the initial institution of the Supper. But that did not matter since the Lord Himself revealed to Paul the historical and spiritual details of it—and Paul had taught that to these Christians at Corinth.

In this text the apostle is emphasizing covenant, not ritual. Some would make the ritual the Christian’s covenant. The Lord’s Supper

is *not* our covenant—it commemorates our covenant. Isaiah predicted at least twice that God would make the Servant (the Messiah) *himself* our covenant (42:6 and 49:8). Isaiah's statement 42:6, "I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations," is *unquestionably* messianic (see Isa. 42:1-4 and Matt. 12:18-21) in its context. Jesus Christ, himself, is our covenant. When we observe the Lord's Supper we are *remembering* that through faith we have appropriated *him* (Jesus) as our covenant. Of course, observance of the Supper is an *act* of faith on our part, but neither our faith nor the ritual is our covenant. It is through faith that we have been made *partakers of the divine nature* (see II Peter 1:3-4). Jesus, himself, dying and atoning for our sins and rising from the dead to supply the new creation of his Spirit within us, *is* our covenant. How does one *partake of a person* as a covenant? Through assimilating his *word* (his Spirit, his will). We "eat his flesh and drink his blood" by believing and obeying his word (see John 6:63). It would be of *no* profit to us even if we could engage in some ritual where we ate the actual, literal, physical flesh and blood of Jesus. It is his will, his personality, his mind, and his actions he wants us to assimilate (to partake of, to have *koinonia* with).

Our communion (participation) is in his person, his nature, and must not be confined merely to rituals. Participation in the life of Christ may involve observance of clearly revealed ceremonies or actions specified by Christ or the apostles, but the ceremonies are not the covenant. A covenant is an oath. God's oath in the new dispensation was the Messiah himself (see Heb. 6:17, where it should be translated, ". . . he interposed *himself* with an oath"; see II Cor. 1:20, where *Jesus* is said to be God's oath of confirmation to all his promises). A covenant is a reconciliation. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" (II Cor. 5:19). The ceremony of the Lord's Supper is the weekly reminder that we share in a Divine Person—not a system of rituals.

"Do this in remembrance of me," involves *more* than remembering the crucifixion scene. It involves remembering that ". . . one died, therefore all died." It involves remembering that "from now on . . . we regard no one from a human point of view . . ." (see II Cor. 5:14-21). It involves remembering that we *participate* in the very life of Jesus Christ, or that he controls, directs, orders our lives. When Jesus died, *we* died—if we accept his death for us. I no longer direct me—Jesus does.

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Had this been the case in Corinth, the brethren would not have arrogantly and greedily disregarded their brethren. They would have waited at the "love feast" for the poor, lower-class, late-comers and would have "counted them better than themselves" for this is the *mind of Christ* in which Christians are to participate (see Phil. 2:3-8). This is the life we are to have in us, being lived out through us. This is being in covenant with Jesus. The Corinthians were faithfully gathering to observe the ritual, but they were not partaking of the covenant!

Twice in this context the Greek adverb, *hosakis*, "as often as" is used to qualify the imperative verb, *poieite*, "Do." There really is *no* distinct, categorical commandment from the Lord or the apostles as to when the Lord's Supper *must* be commemorated. No particular day is commanded and no commandment is made as to frequency. Since no explicit directive is given in the New Testament, our next best guide about time and frequency of observance would be some precedent set by the apostolic (first century) church. We would certainly be on safer ground by seeking apostolic precedent than by trying to guess about the matter some twenty centuries removed from the beginning of the church.

From Acts 20:7 and I Corinthians 16:2 we observe that the first century church met every first day of every week to do two things: "break bread" (Acts 20:7) and "put something aside" (take up an offering) (I Cor. 16:2). Even if we assume the phrase "break bread" in Acts 20:7 refers to the "love feast," we are still compelled to acknowledge (from our text here in I Cor. 11:23-26) that the "love feast" was followed by the observance of the Lord's Supper. However, we may just as well assume the phrase "break bread" refers specifically to the Lord's Supper rather than the "love feast." Whatever the case may be, we must admit the church at Troas, in the first century, observed the Lord's Supper at least *every* first day of the week.

Since the church at Troas was undoubtedly established and taught by the apostle Paul, we must assume they met *every first day of the week* to break bread in accordance with apostolic instruction. Alexander Campbell wrote in *The Christian System*, pp. 274-275:

The Apostles taught the churches to do all the Lord commanded. Whatever, then, the churches did by the appointment or concurrence of the apostles, they did by the commandment of Jesus Christ. Whatever acts of religious worship the apostles

taught and sanctioned in one Christian congregation, they taught and sanctioned in all Christian congregations because all are under the same government of the same king. But the church in Troas met upon the first day of the week for religious purposes.

Among the acts of worship, or the institutions of the Lord, to which the disciples attended in these meetings, the breaking of the loaf was so conspicuous and important, that the churches are said to meet on the first day of the week for this purpose. We are expressly told that the disciples at Troas met for this purpose; and what one church did by the authority of the Lord, as a part of his instituted worship, they all did.

Many of the early church "fathers" (Christian leaders of the church in the second century) testify in their writings that the Lord's Supper was observed on *every* first day of the week. Justin Martyr, who wrote about 140 A.D., says:

And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place . . . when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgiving, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons.

In the compilation of writings called "The Teaching of The Twelve," written about 120 A.D. Christians were exhorted to gather *every* Lord's Day to break bread and give thanks. The Ante-Nicene fathers confirm this practice of observing the Lord's Supper every Sunday.

So, while we have no categorical command from the Lord about the frequency of its observance, we surely have clear apostolic precedent for observing it every first day of the week.

There may be a number of reasons we have no distinct and dogmatic order about the frequency of observing the Lord's Supper. First, if the Lord has to spell out in minute detail every spiritual action we are to take, he leaves no room for spiritual growth and character-building. It is in accepting the responsibility for discovering some truths, rather than in having them spelled out in detail, that we come to spiritual maturity. Perhaps that is why the Lord left the matter of

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frequency merely implied in the New Testament. Further, knowing the tendency of man to be legalistic, the Lord undoubtedly decided not to legislate the Supper's frequency. He would not want men to use a command about frequency of observance to attack, condemn and destroy ignorant and immature babes in Christ. Jesus would want this very significant and intimate act of worship to be done from love not from legalism. And if the Lord places in his word a veiled hint (or precedent) about its frequency, love will find it!

Observance of the Lord's Supper is not merely a remembrance of the past redemptive deeds of Christ—it is also a *telling-forth* (Gr. *katangellete*, a proclamation, a declaration) of the future redemptive deed of Christ in his Second Coming. The Christian, by observing the Lord's Supper every week, is declaring to the world around him that he believes the death of Jesus Christ to be efficacious for the forgiveness of sin and participation in the Spirit of God by grace. In observing the Lord's Supper the Christian is telling the world there is salvation in no other name under heaven than that of Jesus Christ. This testimony will go on, and on, and on, and on, in the world, as often as it is done, until Christ returns. The Lord's Supper is also a declaration to the world that Christians believe Christ is alive, risen from the dead, ascended to the right hand of God the Father, there making intercession on behalf of those who love him. It is a proclamation that Christians believe Jesus Christ to be living and communing in the Spirit with the church every time the Supper is observed (see Matt. 18:20). If this be the case, let us not argue about frequency of observance. Let us rather rejoice that we have apostolic precedent for observance at least every first day of the week when the church gathers for corporate worship. Consider the possibilities of intensifying the Christian proclamation with more frequent observance. Why not observe the Lord's Supper on other corporate gatherings of a congregation? Why not on Wednesday night at "midweek" service? Why not at ladies' meetings, men's meetings, youth meetings? The spiritual oneness, and moral constancy that would permeate a congregation meeting early every morning of every week, before scattering to different places of employment, would soon result in an evangelistic harvest.

11:27-29 Criticism of Self: A primary purpose of the Lord's Supper is, on the basis of Christ's loving atonement, to stimulate the participant into an examination of himself and his relationship to the *whole body* of Christ. This was what Jesus used it for on the very night he

instituted it. There, he challenged the apostles to examine their own hearts about betraying him. And each one did, asking, "Lord, is it I?" All the disciples, at that first Communion, were prodded into thinking of themselves in relation to Jesus and to one another. The Greek word *dokimazeto* is translated *examine himself*. It is the same Greek word used in II Corinthians 13:5 where the KJV translates the word, "prove." To examine is to test or prove. It means, literally, we are to put ourselves on trial.

But what is eating the Lord's Supper "in an unworthy manner"? The Greek word from which we get the English word *unworthy* is *anaxios*. *Axios* is the Greek word from which we get axiom, axiology, and axiomatic. The word in both Greek and English means, "value, proper, good, right, and worth." It is, therefore, possible to observe the Eucharist in an improper way. To do so makes a person guilty (Gr. *enochos*, liable to judgment of law) of the body and blood of the Lord (guilty as if the participant had crucified the Lord). Paul clearly says, "For any one who eats and drinks *without discerning* the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself."

To "discern the body" during observance of the Lord's Supper is not to be confined simply to a mental image of the crucifixion. To "discern the body" in this *context* refers specifically to *brotherhood*. It means to refresh one's memory about Jesus dying for *all* believers, rich or poor, famous or unknown, strong or weak. It means Christians, prompted by the Lord's Supper, are to discern the "body" in its membership, in its *koinonia* (fellowship). Too often, we focus too much on ourselves, even at the Lord's Supper. It is in keeping with the intent of Paul's discussion of the Supper here to have the burdens and needs of other members of the church upon our minds and hearts as we observe it. The less we think of ourselves during the Supper, the more likely we are to observe it as Paul wanted the Corinthians to observe it. The one way to drink it in an unworthy manner is to isolate oneself from the rest of the body in attitude and action. No man is unworthy in and of himself to partake. The Supper should be observed by sinners who are repenting. Sin should not keep us away from the Communion—it should drive us to it so we may get the right attitude. But the person who, like some of these Corinthians were doing, observes the Lord's Supper and is insensitive toward any other member of the body, drinks judgment upon himself.

The Lord's Supper was ordained by Christ to prompt people to love him and his body, the church. It is a "love" feast. It must be

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observed in unity. No one should dare observe it if he is not in harmony with his brethren. To observe the Lord's Supper and at the same time be slandering a brother, or disregarding a brother's needs, or agitating division within the body, is to profane and make a mockery of it. Such would be to blaspheme the very life he hypocritically professes to be sharing—the Life of Jesus!

11:30-34 Consequences of Such a Sham: Having the wrong attitude and still trying to play the role of a worshiper of God can have dire consequences. A separatist, schismatic attitude about the body of Christ while trying to pretend oneness and unity causes spiritual *sickness*, and, eventually, spiritual *death*. This is precisely the reason for so much spiritual sickness among Christians today. Too many Christians are “going through the motions” as they gather about the Lord's Table, but they haven't really surrendered to the mind and will of Jesus Christ as he revealed it “once for all” in the Scriptures. Too many, even Christians, want to judge the scriptures by their feelings and selfish desires rather than judging their feelings by the scriptures. This is the very point Paul is making here in Corinthians. He reminds these Christians at Corinth they must not judge their fellow church members by their feelings, but by the objective work of Christ documented in the New Testament. That is, all sinners are equally lost; all believers are equally redeemed. All Christians are equally members of Christ's body, the church. There may be different places of service within the kingdom of God, but every citizen is a servant. There is only one Master, and he is Jesus. Of course, there are specific hierarchical orders God has ordained within human society (even in the church), but still, there are no kings, only servants.

Paul told the Corinthians their spiritual sickness (Gr. *arrostoi*, feebleness) was directly due (Gr. *dia touto*, on account of this, therefore) to their profanation of the Lord's Supper by misdiscerning the body. The Bible speaks of spiritual sickness often (see Isa. 1:5; 33:24; Hosea 5:13; Ps. 30:2; Isa. 53:5; Jer. 6:14; 8:11; etc.). Spiritual sickness, and eventually, death, results from at least two causes: (a) improper ingestion of spiritual food—either not enough or the wrong food (see John 6:35-65 and Luke 12:1; Heb. 5:11-14; I Cor. 3:1-4, etc.); (b) exposure to the infectiousness of sin (Eph. 5:3-14; II Peter 3:17). Sin, if not treated by the spiritual healing of faith in Christ, invades our minds and infects them much like viral micro-organisms that cause physical illness and death. Sin, allowed to incubate, grows and develops and when it is “fullgrown” brings death (James 1:14-15).

Unworthy observance of the Lord's Supper brings condemnation to the whole body of Christians (11:34) when worship is profaned by play-acting. It is contagious. Hypocrisy and division will soon infect an entire congregation so that swift, radical, spiritual-surgery is sometimes called for (cf. I Cor. 5:1-13; Rom. 16:17-18; II Thess. 3:6-15; Titus 3:10).

The only worthy way to observe the Lord's Supper is to discern the body. Thus, from now on regard no one from a human point of view, but be consistently controlled by the love of Christ. At the Lord's Table concentrate on the fact that because one has died for all—all must die to self and live no longer for self but for him who for your sake died and was raised (see II Cor. 5:14-17; Gal. 2:20). Concentrate on viewing every Christian, every member of Christ's church, as an equal member of the body, a new creature in Christ. If all who meet at his Table will do this, every week, the church will be healthy and alive. Churches may *appear* to be alive and be dead (Rev. 3:1). Churches may *appear* to be healthy and be sick (Rev. 3:15-17). The Lord wants the church to be healthy at the very core of its being. This will be true only when the church partakes of the Lord's Supper in a worthy manner.

APPLICATIONS:

1. Have you ever *thought* about what worship is? Is it all feeling? Do you worship when you attend church services?
2. Should women wear head coverings today when they go to church? Do you? Why do Jewish men wear head coverings in the synagogue?
3. What about women cutting their hair in modern society? Shouldn't they let it grow to its full, natural length?
4. As a woman, do you believe you should be subordinate to a husband? As a man, do you believe you should rule over your wife?
5. If you were asked to make a decision about whether young men should wear long hair or not, what would you decide? Why? How long is long?
6. Would you compromise Paul's teaching here on hierarchy or order within the earthly kingdom of God should it become a matter of contention?

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7. What would you answer a member of a denominational church who said I Corinthians 11:18-19 teaches there *should be* denominations in Christianity?
8. Is it forbidden to have meals and eat in the church building?
9. Do you think of yourself as being locked into a covenant with God? What is the basis of your covenant? What are its terms?
10. How often do you think we should observe the Lord's Supper? Would you object to or appreciate observing it more than once a week?
11. Have you ever thought of your partaking of the Lord's Supper as a proclamation by you? To whom do you make your proclamation?
12. Do you ever feel like you are unworthy to take the Lord's Supper? When? If you had committed a terrible sin on Saturday, should you partake on Sunday?
13. Have you ever partaken of the Supper without having "discerned the body"?
14. What do you think is necessary for a congregation to be partaking of the Lord's Supper in a worthy manner?

APPREHENSIONS:

1. What is the apostolic "tradition"? Why should we obey apostolic tradition if Jesus condemned the traditions of the Pharisees? (See Matt. 15:1-20.)
2. What is worship?
3. Why is Paul discussing such insignificant things as veils on women and long hair on men in connection with worship? What is the fundamental issue he is discussing?
4. What is the proper order of hierarchy in the home? Where is the man's position? What is the woman's role?
5. Why does a man dishonor God by covering his head as he worships?
6. Why is the Bible so explicit about the feminine and masculine roles?
7. What does Paul mean when he says, "we recognize no other practice, nor do the churches of God"?
8. Why did Paul say, ". . . there must be factions among you *in order that* those who are genuine among you may be *recognized*'?"
9. What specific faction is Paul talking about in this context?

10. Were Christians actually getting drunk just before the worship service?
11. How often are we to observe the Lord's Supper?
12. Is the ritual of the Supper our covenant?
13. What were these Corinthians doing that Paul accused them of partaking of the Supper in an "unworthy manner"?
14. What is "discerning the body"?

Chapter Twelve

THE PROBLEM OF MAINTAINING UNITY IN THE MIDST OF DIVERSITY (Miraculous Gifts) (12:1-31)

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Why couldn't a person without Christ's Spirit in him utter the words, "Jesus is Lord"?
2. Why does Paul say God "inspired" the various workings of the Spirit?
3. How are we all "baptized" by one Spirit into the body of Christ?
4. Why did God adjust the human body to give greater honor to the inferior part?
5. If Christians are to "earnestly desire the higher gifts," what are they?

SECTION 1

Sovereign of Diversity (12:1-3)

12 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be uninformed. ²You know that when you were heathen, you were led astray to dumb idols, however you may have been moved. ³Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus be cursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit.

12:1 Purpose of Chapter: Although the chapter begins, "Now concerning spiritual gifts . . ." its main purpose is not to discuss the nature of miraculous gifts. Nor is its primary purpose the discussion of the place or purpose of miraculous gifts. If their purpose is mentioned in this chapter at all it is only because their purpose may have some bearing on the main problem. The main topic is the *correction of faulty attitudes* these Christians had toward miraculous gifts. This chapter (and the two chapters following) is as relevant as today's church affairs. Christians are still, today, expressing attitudes toward *alleged* miraculous gifts that disrupt the unity of Christ's church.

Actually, the word "gifts" is not even in the first verse. The Greek text has only the word *pneumatikon* which should be translated, "spiritual things, or matters." Translators have supplied the word "gifts" in this first verse. It might very well have been translated, "Now concerning the spiritual attitude you have toward spiritual gifts," since that is clearly the main point of this whole chapter.

A brief consideration of the purpose of miraculous gifts will help us understand this chapter. The *primary* purpose of miraculous gifts was *evidential*. Miraculous gifts were to confirm the deity of Jesus and to validate the message of the apostles as that of the Holy Spirit. Miracles were not granted to transform, convert or indicate the worker of such miracles had reached a higher phase of sanctification. In the infancy of the Church, when congregations everywhere were compelled to depend upon the oral instruction of the apostles and other evangelists, God saw fit to confirm the heavenly origin of their message with miracles (see Heb. 2:3-4; II Cor. 12:12; John 3:2; 10:37-38; 14:11; Acts 1:8; I Cor. 14:22, etc.). When the Church was still a child, it spake as a child (dependent upon confirmation of its message by the Father); but when the Church became a grown, integrated man, it put away childish things. When the body of Christ was fully formed and permanently established (incorporating both Jew and Gentile) with elders, deacons and evangelists, and when the Truth was fully revealed and propositionalized in the New Covenant scriptures, then the miraculous support by which it was sustained in its infancy was no longer needed and, therefore, passed away. This was according to the pre-ordained plan of God (see I Cor. 13:8-13). Most certainly, the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were not given to the primitive church to be used as toys for amusement and entertainment. The possession of a miraculous gift was *not* a signal from God that the possessor was to be elevated in importance above any other Christian brother, gifted or non-gifted. For expanded treatment of the purpose of miraculous gifts and their cessation see Special Studies at the end of this chapter.

There must have been wholesale discrimination and division going on in the Corinthian church over possession and non-possession of miraculous gifts from the Holy Spirit. Those few who had been given these gifts felt they were spiritually superior to those who had not received miraculous gifts. The "gifted" were even discriminating among themselves as to which "gifts" were more important and which ones were of very little value. Some of the "gifted" were even declaring that those without miraculous gifts to exercise could not prove

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they had the Holy Spirit dwelling in them! Paul's response to these egotistical Corinthians is certainly relevant for the twentieth century.

In verse 2 Paul reminds the Corinthians how they were led astray to dumb idols by pagan priests who pretended to have miraculous gifts and divine revelations from "the gods." Archaeologists have found in the ancient city of Pompeii in the ruins of a pagan temple, a secret stair by which the priest mounted to the back of the statue of Isis; the head of the statue shows the *tube* which went from the back of the head to the parted lips. Through this tube the priest concealed behind the statue spoke the "answers" of Isis. These pagan priests usually tried to prove that only they had the "spirits of the gods" in them by ecstatic trances, pseudo communication with the "gods" by uttering unintelligible mutterings; by pretended "prophecies"; and by attempting to communicate with the dead. These pagan priests often contradicted themselves and represented the "gods" as cursing what they had once blessed. Heathen priests also promoted hatred, revenge, envy and immorality as part of the religion of the "gods."

The Corinthian Christians were having difficulty determining whether pagan priests possessed the Spirit of God and spoke divine revelations or not. And, further, they were being confused by the self-appointed "spiritual elite" within the church as to whether the non-gifted Christian had the Holy Spirit or not. Paul sets out to clear up the confusion. He takes three chapters (12-13-14) to do so. He begins by stating that "no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says, Jesus be cursed." All heathen religions would say that of Jesus. But the Holy Spirit would *never* contradict himself, and curse the Son of God. The Corinthians may know assuredly that no pagan priest speaks by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit!

Contrariwise, any person who says Jesus is Lord, and exhibits a life surrendered to the lordship of Jesus, does so in partnership with the Holy Spirit. Any person agreeing to be ruled by Christ *has* the Holy Spirit. One does not have to receive the miraculous gifts of the Spirit to have him within them. It is only through the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit that any person is able to confess Jesus as Lord. The lordship of Jesus is revealed by the Father through the Holy Spirit (see Matt. 11:25-30; 16:17; John 14:1—16:33; Romans 8:1-17; I John 4:1-6), and the Holy Spirit *documents* the lordship of Jesus through the written word. The lordship of Jesus is not something which men may discover for themselves—it is something which God, in his grace, revealed to the world.

The primary purpose for miraculous gifts of the Spirit was to give the infant church an infallible guide by which to determine whether a preacher or teacher was speaking under the auspices of God and his Spirit or not. Before the New Testament scriptures were completed, and God's revelation to man was finalized, these miraculous powers were necessary. The spiritual gifts enabled the Corinthians to recognize pretenders in their day; the truth of the Bible enables the church to do the same today.

Part of the difficulty we have in understanding the problem in Corinth over miraculous gifts of the Spirit is due to the fact that such phenomena no longer exist. The pseudo "miraculous gifts" of modern Christendom are, at best, psycho-somatic, but for the most part, hoaxes. The gifts Paul discusses were unquestionably miraculous and unique. They were also transitory (see I Cor. 13:8-13). John Chrysostom (345-407 A.D.) wrote that Paul's discussion of miraculous gifts was obscure, even to the church of his day, because of the fact that such phenomena no longer took place.

So, the proper attitude toward miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit is to acknowledge that the real test of the Spirit's presence is the total commitment of life to the lordship of Jesus. A person might have been given the power to do miracles and not have had the sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit within. Judas Iscariot was empowered to work miracles right along with the rest of the apostles (see Matt. 10:1-8) and it is clear that he did not have the Holy Spirit in his heart for he was a thief from the beginning (John 12:6). It is apparent that some of these Corinthian Christians, while having power to do miracles, were dangerously close (if not at the point) to rejecting the lordship of Christ and doing despite unto the Holy Spirit by their proud and arrogant misuse of the "gifts."

Paul wants these "saints" to know that now that they are Christians they must allow Christ to exercise total lordship in their lives. They must speak and act according to the Spirit of Christ whose revelation for life comes through the apostolic word. If they have enthroned Christ as the Lord of their hearts, they are not going to envy another's "gift." They will be glad for every service that glorifies Christ. They are not going to call another Christian inferior because he has no *miraculous* gift.

There are no more miraculous gifts exercised in the church. They are no longer needed. They served their purpose. But there are *functional* "gifts" within the church today. *Every* Christian has some functional

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gift (see Special Study: *Gifts and Miracles*). So the principles of Paul's correction about attitudes toward "gifts" applies to the church for all time. Wrong attitudes, or worldly-mindedness, toward the gifts or abilities or circumstances with which God has blessed every Christian will lead to the same consequence in the church today as it did two thousand years ago—division and eventual destruction. There is great diversity and individuality in the gifts of God's grace—but there must be *unity* in Christian's minds and hearts!

SECTION 2

Source of Diversity (12:4-11)

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in every one. ⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

12:4-7 Provenance: The word *inspires* in verse 6 is a translation of the Greek word *energon* which actually means, "energizing, working, or operating." Paul emphasizes over and over that it was the "same God" or "same Spirit" who *energized* or *operated* the miraculous gifts through those who were given them. These special gifts all came from God and were, therefore, to be used to *edify* (build up) the church, not to divide and destroy its oneness. These gifts all had their source in the power of One Divine Person, so, there was *one purpose* (God's) for their use. If it was the same God who was the Source of all the gifts, then they were all given for the *common good* (Gr. *sumpheron*, literally, "together-profiting"). They were not given to promote the superiority of those possessing them—they were to serve every member, one way or another, in the body of Christ. No gift of God to man, whether miraculous or non-miraculous, is ever given to

be used selfishly for the promotion of human pride or superiority. Gifts are given for service. It may not have been Paul's intention to teach the doctrine of the Trinity, but the oneness of the threefold personage of the Godhead is certainly delineated when he states, "... the same Spirit . . . the same Lord . . . the same God."

12:8-10 Particularity: In verse 4 the apostle indicated there were *varieties* of gifts given to the Corinthians. The Greek word translated *varieties* is *diapseis* and means literally, "to take apart," or, "in many parts," hence, "differences" or "distinctions." The Corinthian church probably had a full complement of all the gifts God intended the first century church to have. Verse 4 also contains three significant Greek words explaining the purpose of the variety. The Greek word translated *gifts* is *charismaton*; literally, "things of grace." The Greek word translated *service* is *diakonion*; literally, "deaconries." The Greek word translated *working* is *energmaton*; literally, "operatings." God purposely gave great variety of miraculous gifts in order that the whole church might have a miraculously sustained ministry, so necessary for the extremely crucial infant years (approximately 30-100 A.D.) of its existence. The emphasis is definitely on variety for the purpose of service and ministry.

Nine supernatural gifts are listed. Each had a particular function to perform in sustaining and maturing the church. When we read that these gifts were supernatural we must not forget the trials, temptations, doubts and fears those first century Christians endured. The New Testament (Acts, Hebrews, I Peter, Galatians, Thessalonians, Revelation) documents for us a fearsome record of their sufferings. They needed divine demonstrations to nourish courage, faith and endurance. Christians of that century did not have Bibles of their very own. Precious and few were the manuscripts or copies and those were circulated from one church to another. The infant church also needed direct, divine guidance in discerning the truth from all the deceptive falsehoods of paganism and the Judaizers.

The "gifts" as Paul lists them are:

- a. "the utterance of wisdom" (Gr. *logos sophias*); probably supernatural power to reveal Christian *principles* of thought and behavior; revealed applications of gospel facts.
- b. "the utterance of knowledge" (Gr. *logos gnoseos*); probably supernatural guidance in knowing the *facts* of the gospel so they might confirm "prophecies"; the importance of this is evident from I Corinthians chapter 15.

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- c. "faith" (Gr. *pistis*); probably the faith to "move mountains" (I Cor. 13:2; Matt. 17:20) or do miraculous works; J. W. McGarvey said that no amount of personal faith ever enabled one to perform a miracle to whom such power had not been given. We must be careful to distinguish between the use of "faith" in connection with spiritual gifts and the personal faith that saves. Jesus gave Judas "faith" to perform miracles (Matt. 10:1-8) but Judas did not, evidently, possess faith of his own in Christ sufficient to acknowledge him as his savior.
- d. "healings" (Gr. *iamaton*); undoubtedly supernatural power was given to certain individuals to cure illnesses and diseases; perhaps some could heal certain diseases and others different diseases; it is not stated that anyone had power to heal all diseases.
- e. "the working of miracles" (G. *energemata dunameon*, operations of powers); probably has to do with miracles other than healings; perhaps supernatural power to bring the judgment of God upon persons opposing God (Ananias and Sapphira, Elymas) or powers over nature and things.
- f. "prophecy" (Gr. *propheteia*); probably supernatural endowment to proclaim (and predict when necessary) and preach the gospel inerrantly, and directly without having been eyewitnesses as the apostles were; the word "prophecy" may be used for non-miraculous preaching (see Rom. 12:6).
- g. "ability to distinguish between spirits" (Gr. *diakriseis pneumataton*); literally, "critiquing of spirits"; probably supernatural endowment of the ability to judge between true and false teachers and doctrines with immediacy. In the infant church (without a proliferation of written scriptures) there was no objective test available to determine correct teaching versus false so supernaturally endowed gifts to make such distinctions were necessary. Now, with the Bible complete, in thousands of human languages, the supernatural gifts are no longer necessary. Doctrine and teachers are to be measured according to the written apostolic word (see I John 4:1-6; II Thess. 3:6-15; II Tim. 3:16-17).
- h. "various kinds of tongues" (Gr. *gene glosson*); probably supernatural endowment to speak in a human (foreign) language unknown, except by miraculous endowment, to the speaker

and often unknown to the listeners requiring an interpreter. These "tongues" (languages) were human languages. They were not totally "unknown" (as the KJV implies) (see Acts 2:8ff.) (see comments on I Cor. 14:1ff.).

- i. "interpretation of tongues" (Gr. *hermenia glosson*). The word *hermenia* is the word from which we get the English word *hermeneutics*, "the science of interpretation and explanation." When a Christian, under supernatural power of God's Spirit, spoke in a language foreign to himself and his hearers, it required someone supernaturally endowed with the gift of understanding the unknown language to *translate* the message in the language known to the hearers. The main purpose of the phenomena of speaking in a language unknown to the speaker was the manifestation of a miracle (see I Cor. 14:22). At the same time, however, getting the message of the "unknown" tongue to the audience was so important, Paul's instruction to the Corinthian church was, "if there is no one to interpret, let each of them (tongues speakers) keep silent in the church." Those with the gift of foreign-language-speaking could control their utterings. (See John 1:41-42 for two examples of the Greek word *hermenia* being used to mean "translate.")

12:11-Partitioning: Miraculous gifts were apportioned according to the sovereign *will* and *choice* of the Holy Spirit. It was *not the desire of the recipient* that determines the gift. Modern, pseudo, charismatic gifts are allegedly given on the basis of the recipient's faith and desire. The Bible clearly documents the fact that supernatural endowments of the Holy Spirit of God were given exclusively according to God's purpose. Paul makes it plain in three of his other epistles (Rom. 12:6; Eph. 4:7; Heb. 2:4) that all "gifts," supernatural and natural, are distributed entirely according to the purpose of God.

In his parable Jesus taught that all "talents" and "pounds" were distributed according to the "owner's" will. Servants all received different measures and were responsible only for the measure they had received—not for what another had received. There is no room for pride or jealousy when we acknowledge the truth that everything we have is from the "same God" and "according to his omniscient will."

The RSV is not as accurate as it could be in verse 11 had it been a more literal translation. The Greek text reads: *panta de tauta energei*

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to en kai to auto pneuma, diairoun idia hekasto kathos bouletai. A more literal translation would read: *And all these things the same Spirit operates, distributing separately to each one as he purposes.*

Christians, of all people, must recognize and admit that human beings have *absolutely nothing at all* (miraculous gifts, functional gifts, material gifts) unless received from God, to be used as he purposes in his revealed will, the Bible. He is the source of all we have so that no man might boast in the presence of God (cf. I Cor. 1:30).

SECTION 3

Sagaciousness of Diversity (12:12-26)

12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

14 For the body does not consist of one member but of many. 15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? 18 But as it is, God arranged the organs in the body, each one of them, as he chose. 19 If all were a single organ, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. 21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need for you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 22 On the contrary, the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and those parts of the body which we think less honorable we invest with the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, 24 which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part, 25 that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. 26 If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

12:12-13 The Organism: The "body" of Christ (the church) is an *organism*, not an organization (see Special Study, "Is the Church An Organization or an Organism?"). On the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1ff.) when the apostles began to carry out the command of their Lord, the resurrected Christ in heaven was united, as the Head, to the spiritual body (the church) being formed on earth in order that the work of redemption, attained by Christ in his physical body, might be practiced and proclaimed and increased in Christians (the body) until he comes. Of course, the church (Christians) can never add a word, a thought, or a deed to the finished work of Christ's vicarious death and the Holy Spirit's revelation of the New Testament scriptures. Jesus completed all that forever. But the Lord in that human body was not ending something, he was beginning a great program which he himself, in the limitations of a human body could never complete (the task of world-wide proclamation of redemption, see Col. 1:24-27). When Jesus was here in his physical body there was no part of human life that his *holy* nature did not penetrate with the redemptive purpose of God; his incarnation was an invasion of holiness on all fronts and in every aspect of human need. He penetrated every level of life with righteousness: social, political, ecclesiastical, moral, educational and familial. That is the work his body (the church) is commissioned now to do.

The definition of *organism* is: "Any highly complex thing or structure with parts so integrated that their relation to one another is governed by their relation to the whole." An *organism* is something living where the whole exists for the parts, and each part for the whole and for all other parts. That is precisely what Paul is saying to the Corinthians in these verses about the church. Plummer says: "The Church is neither a dead mass of similar particles, like a heap of sand, nor a living swarm of antagonistic individuals, like a cage of wild beasts; it has the unity of a living organism, in which no two parts are exactly alike, but all discharge different functions for the good of the whole. All men are not equal, and no individual can be independent of the rest; everywhere there is subordination and dependence."

Paul is saying that every individual has some function to discharge, and all must work (see Eph. 4:15-16) together for the common good. The all-important operation of an organism is unity in loving service. The Church is an organic body of which all the parts are moved by a spirit of common interest and mutual affection.

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Christ's "body" (the church) is one. Any member contributing to the destruction of this oneness, either by refusing to function (as it has been gifted) or by hindering another member from using its gifts (through jealousy or pride), is in danger of being cut off (see Matt. 5:29-30; John 15:1-11). The *oneness* of mind, love and purpose in his disciples was what Jesus prayed for on the night before his death (John 17:1ff.). He knew the world would never believe God sent him if his disciples could not function as many different members in one whole, living, organism. Just as a human body must have all its "members" (parts) functioning properly in order for one body to be whole and serving its purpose, so it is with "Christ," says the apostle. Paul is using "Christ" in verse 12 as a metonymy for the church. All members in a physical body cannot have the same function, but the fulfillment of the body's purpose demands that each member function according to its part. The body cannot be whole and cannot reach its fullest potential when one of its members does not function properly.

Paul wrote verse 13 in Greek thus: *dai gar en heni pneumati hemeis pantes eis hen soma ebaptisthemen . . .*, literally, "for indeed by one Spirit we all into one body were immersed. . . ." The emphasis is, of course, on the *oneness* of the instrumentality of the Corinthian's immersion (see Acts 18:8). The Greek preposition *en* used with the dative case *pneumati* should be translated causally (see examples of *en* translated causally at Luke 24:49; II Thess. 2:13; I Peter 1:2) when the context demands it. The Corinthians were not initially immersed *in* the Spirit but *by* the revealed will and command of the Spirit. Their initial immersion was in water in obedience to apostolic preaching. Some of the Corinthians later received the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. But the possession of miraculous gifts did not *necessitate* the "immersion of the Holy Spirit." The immersion (baptism) of the Holy Spirit was administered only by direct endowment of Christ (see Matt. 3:11-12; Luke 24:48-49; John 1:33; 20:22-23; Acts 2:1-21; 10:44—11:18). Miraculous gifts of the Spirit were incidentally imparted to those (the apostles and Cornelius' family) who received the "immersion (baptism) of the Spirit." All other Christians, except the foregoing, who received supernatural endowments, received them by the laying on of the hands of an apostle. Therefore, when Paul says *en heni pneumati*, "by one Spirit," he is indicating that all the Corinthians, Jews or Greeks, slaves or free, were immersed in water in obedience to the revealed will of the *same* Spirit of God. His argument is that since they were all obedient to the will of the same Spirit,

they are all members of the same body. Any person immersed in water in obedience to the revealed will of the Holy Spirit as preached and written by the apostles is a member of Christ's body and equally important. Such a person is then personally responsible to the Head (Christ) of the body to use with humility and gratitude any and all endowments (gifts) he may have for the edification and increase of the whole "body of Christ." All who have been immersed into Christ's body by the *instrumentality* of the Holy Spirit were made to drink of one and the same Spirit of God (see John 7:37-39; Isa. 44:3; 55:1; 58:11; John 4:10, 13; 6:35; Rev. 21:6; 22:17). All Christians of all ages *drink* of the Holy Spirit without receiving the "baptism of the Holy Spirit." The New Testament plainly teaches that drinking of the Holy Spirit is the same as "partaking of the Holy Spirit" (Heb. 6:4) or the same as "partaking of the divine nature" (II Peter 1:4) or the same as having the abiding, indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit (John 14:23; I John 2:24; 3:24, etc.).

12:14-20 The Organs: Paul uses the human body, the physical body, to illustrate the wisdom of diversity. Every organism or body consists of more than one member or organ. And no *one* member or organ can supply every need the whole body must have to function as a whole; proper functioning in order to bring about the common good of the whole body requires the contribution of what each member has. Picture what a human body would look like, and how it might function, if it were all ear or all eye! Not only would it be a monstrous looking thing, it would be a malfunctioning thing, perhaps even a dying thing. God made unity, but not uniformity; he did not reduce all human beings down to sameness. Every member cannot have the same function, and, while it may *appear* that some members have more important functions than others, it is not so.

Because one member of the church in Corinth did not have the popular miraculous gift of speaking in a foreign tongue (or had no miraculous gift at all) he was not to be considered unimportant or unnecessary. If the Corinthian church had received only the miraculous gift of "tongues" what a useless body it would have been!

Furthermore, since God arranged the organs in that body (the Corinthian church) as *he* chose, for Christians to rearrange the priorities and functions of the members was rebellion against God. Whatever gifts God gives (miraculous or non-miraculous) he gives not to please men but to fulfill his redemptive purposes for the world. God certainly did not create diversity of functions in the members

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of the human body to *destroy* the body. Neither did Christ's Spirit give diversity of miraculous and non-miraculous gifts to *destroy* his church. A body has to have many members to function properly. All members cannot have the same function. But the fulfillment of the body's purpose must have each member functioning according to its part. The body cannot do without one of its members. The Corinthian church was dividing and destroying itself over the use and abuse of the different miraculous gifts, thinking some were important and some were not needed.

12:21-26 The Operation: The very fact of diversity should preclude the possibility of discord. Diversity is given by God in order that the members may care for one another. What one lacks another supplies. Where one cannot function, another functions. This text teaches that Christians ought to: (a) realize they need each other; (b) respect each other; (c) sympathize with one another.

In the human body God has *adjusted* (Gr. *sunekerasen*, literally, "blended" or "mingled together") all the organs and parts of the body in such a way that no organ can be considered inferior or useless or not needed. Those parts of the human body which seem to be weaker we find to be indispensable. One need only to lose the use of an arm, an eye, or even a finger to learn how indispensable each member is. Those parts of the human body we think are *less honorable* (Gr. *atimotera*), such as the sexual organs, God invests with greater honor. The sexual organs which some think dishonorable and uncomely have the function of procreation. Thus greater honor is given to those members of the body which men tend to think of as inferior.

These same principles are true in Christ's spiritual body, the church. Some, in the church at Corinth, were categorizing the miraculous gifts in degrees of greater importance, lesser importance and no importance. In chapter 14 we shall learn that the one gift they thought "superior" was tongues and the "inferior" gift was prophecy. God revealed through Paul that the divine categorization of gifts was exactly *opposite* from that of men. It is true in the body of Christ today (universally, or locally). Every member has at least one non-miraculous gift. That gift comes by the grace of the same God to all. The body as a whole cannot get along without that gift. Some gifts are not as flamboyant as others. But the non-flamboyant may be more important. The less sensational gifts are certainly not to be considered "inferior"; they may, in fact, be superior!

There can be no such thing as isolation in the church. In the body there is no question of relative importance. If any limb or organ ceases to function the whole body is thrown out of order. This is even more true in the spiritual body (the church). When church members begin to think about their own superiority over one another, the possibility of the church functioning properly is destroyed. If any one member of the body suffers abuse, misuse or nonuse, all the other members together suffer some malfunction or loss. If any one member of the body seems to have a more honored (Gr. *doxazetai*, glorified) function or gift, the whole body should rejoice together that this member is making his God-given contribution to the common good of the whole body, realizing that from God's perspective his *glorious* function is of no more significance than someone else's *non-glorious* function. It is not easy for human beings to have the divine perspective. It requires faith! It requires setting the human mind on the things of the Spirit (Rom. 8:5-17)! It requires the control of the love of Christ over our thoughts until we no longer regard anyone from a human point of view (II Cor. 5:14-21). Men tend to want to categorize, make themselves superior and others inferior, and lord it over one another—but it shall *not* be so among Christians! (Matt. 20:20-28). The devil will always make the divine perspective concerning gifts, talents, abilities and functions to be impractical and unfair. So the Christian must surrender his evaluations and priorities totally to the direction of the Spirit of God in his word, the Bible. The Christian's only option is to perceive and classify gifts as the Bible does.

SECTION 3

Singleness in Diversity (12:27-31)

27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. 28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, then healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But earnestly desire the higher gifts.

And I will show you a still more excellent way.

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12:27-30 The Reality: Paul says, "Now you *are* the body of Christ and individually members of it." Whether men like it or not, understand it or not, God has *appointed* (Gr. *etheto*, placed, set, deposited, constituted, ordained) in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, etc.

The way in which God created the human body and how it is to function is a fact that has to be accepted. The same holds true in the spiritual body of Christ, the church. The appointments and gifts God gives to the various members of the church are to be accepted. God ordained the varieties of functions in the church to produce singleness (unity) of purpose and practice. There *is* one body. But there is still individuality. And the oneness of the body is sustained only when there is surrender of the members to Christ's revealed will concerning variety and individuality. We dare not try to fit all members of the body into one mold of functioning. Sameness is not necessary—in fact, it is unhealthy. Sameness in miraculous gifts would never have produced a strong, growing body of Christ in the first century. Sameness in non-miraculous functioning will not produce spiritual increase and development. It is not sameness of function which produces unity in the body. Unity comes by obedience to the Head!

12:31 The Route: Singleness in diversity is attainable! There is a way for a multi-talented church in any cultural, social, economic, educational and political circumstance to be one body of Christ. That way is agape-love!

Paul has not yet discussed the idea that some supernatural gifts were "greater" than others. He went to great lengths (12:1-31) to demonstrate that each *member* (gifted or not) is as important to the body as any other. But, in chapter 14, he categorizes the usefulness of miraculous gifts, declaring that the gifts which edified and gave a steadying influence on the whole congregation (such as prophecy) were the "greater" gifts. The Corinthians apparently had a mania for the more spectacular, exhibitionist gifts such as "speaking in tongues." In chapter 14, Paul reprimands that attitude. He may be rebuking it here in 12:31.

. . . in I Cor. 12:31 perhaps we should read a mild rebuke. It could just as accurately be translated, "But you are zealously seeking the greater gifts." In the second person plural of the present tense, indicative and imperative forms (in Greek) look alike. The context and line of thought must indicate which it

is. In view of the overall teaching of I Cor. 12-14, rebuking pride in some gifts, and expressing the same divine source for all different gifts, and teaching "to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit *for the common good*" (I Cor. 12:7 RSV), is it not more likely that Paul is disapproving of their desire for the greater gifts?

It seems clear that in these chapters he is teaching against both selfish pride in some gifts as greater and failure to use the gifts for others.

Learning From Jesus, by Seth Wilson, pub. College Press Publishing Company, pp. 471-472.

Paul's main concern was that the whole church be edified (see I Cor. 14:18, 19, 26). All supernatural gifts were to be practiced solely to that end. And some gifts were more apt to produce edification of the body than others.

Prompted by the Spirit of Christ the apostle declares "there is yet a more excellent way I will show you" to produce unity in the body. That, of course, is the way of *agape-love*. Paul elucidates on the superiority of love over supernatural gifts in chapter 13. *Agape-love* is a virtue every Christian must have. To have a supernatural gift and not have agape-love makes the supernatural gift less than useless. Supernatural gifts were temporary. They were endowed by God for a specific time and place in the infancy of the Church. They were destined to become obsolete and vanish. Not so with agape-love. The completed New Testament scriptures and Christians practicing agape-love is all the church now, in its manhood, needs. Love is far superior to miraculous gifts. Love is able to overcome, to produce, and to sustain where miraculous gifts alone never could. Love alone will produce oneness in the body of Christ whether there is ever a miraculous gift or not. Supernatural gifts alone will not produce oneness. Indeed, gifts alone will produce pride, jealousy and division.

The doctrine Paul introduces here (and amplifies in chapter 13) applies at all times, in every circumstance, for the body of Christ. It matters not in a congregation how erudite the preacher, how rich and influential the members, oneness is the consequence of agape-love. *The body of Christ must have oneness!* It is not his body if it doesn't!

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APPLICATIONS:

1. Have you ever thought about the fact that you would never have been able to call Jesus "Lord" without the work of the Holy Spirit?
2. Does that help you know that *you have* the Holy Spirit?
3. What is your attitude toward the "gifts" of God? (both miraculous and non-miraculous)?
4. Do you think the church has a responsibility to inform Christians as to the attitude Christ wants concerning "gifts"? What about your church?
5. Although you cannot expect a miraculous gift today, you still have many non-miraculous gifts from God—are you functioning as an integral part of the body of Christ with your gifts?
6. Would you serve the church more if you were more talented or "gifted"?
7. Have you been immersed into the body of Christ by the revealed will of the one Spirit of God?
8. What does it do for your understanding of the functioning of the church in the world today to think of it in comparison to the human body?
9. Try to think of as many non-miraculous "gifts" as you can to which God may give "the greater honor" today! Make a list. (Compare Rom. 12:1ff.)
10. Does the whole church where you attend suffer when one member is not functioning according to his "gift"? Does the whole church rejoice when one is honored? Which is easier for the church to do?

APPREHENSIONS:

1. Why is one's attitude toward a gift (miraculous or non-miraculous) more important than the gift itself?
2. Are those claiming today to have miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit (and claiming Jesus as "Lord") while rejecting other apostolic doctrines, really letting Jesus be Lord?
3. Why, when the New Testament is so plain to say that miraculous gifts are distributed according to the will of God, do so many clamor for miraculous gifts today as if such gifts are available because they desire them?
4. Would it help the unity of the church if Christians were reminded more often that they have absolutely nothing except it has been

given them by God? Are we guilty sometimes of thinking, "I worked hard for that and I deserve it"?

5. Is the church actually the "body of Christ" in the world today? Why is it a body? What is the difference between an organism and an organization?
6. How does man mix himself up about the significance of certain parts of the "body" (both physical and spiritual bodies)?
7. What would happen to the body if there were no diversity in its members?
8. Why is it unhealthy to try to fit all Christians into one emotional, cultural, functional mold and do away with individuality?
9. Why must we see the functioning of the members of the church through the perspective of God?
10. Is there a way to have unity through diversity? What is that way?

Special Study

GIFTS, MIRACLES

(Heb. 2:3-4)

Introduction

DEFINITION OF MIRACLE

A. "An event occurring in the natural world, observed by the senses, produced by divine power, without any adequate human or natural cause, the purpose of which is to reveal the will of God and do good to man" (McCartney, in *Twelve Great Questions About Christ*).

1. Hume once argued: there is more evidence for regularity in nature than for irregularity; therefore, regularity and not irregularity must be the truth of the matter.
2. Certainly there is more evidence for the regular occurrence of nature than for any supernatural occurrence. If there weren't we could not talk of miracles.
3. The argument of miracle rests on the regularity of nature generally.
4. Only if all the historical evidence available to man could show there is no being outside nature who can in any way alter it can there be an argument against the possibility of miracles. This the evidence does not do—indeed cannot do!

B. In our text four different words are used:

1. *semeiois* = signs
2. *teras* = wonders
3. *dunamesin* = powerful deeds
4. *merismois* = distributions (of the Holy Spirit)
5. Milligan (Hebrews) says these words classify miracles as:
 - a. to their design (signs)
 - b. to their nature (wonders)
 - c. to their origin (supernatural power)
 - d. to their Christian aspect (distributions of the Holy Spirit)

II. THE FACT OF MIRACLES RESTS ON THE HISTORICITY OF OUR NEW TESTAMENT TEXT

- A. Were these writers eyewitnesses?
- B. Are they credible?

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C. Are the documents authentic?

D. This is another subject—but it is the fundamental subject.

III. PURPOSE OF MIRACLES

- A. As our text points out, the primary purpose of miracles was to “bear witness” that the message from Jesus and that Jesus Himself was from God. John 10:25, 37, 38; 15:10-11; Matt. 9:1-8

The miracles do not prove Jesus to be the Son of God—many men worked miracles—but they prove Him to be a truthful messenger, and this truthful messenger says that He is God. Christ may have wrought miracles and not have been God; but He could not have wrought miracles and said that He was God without being God.

- B. To demonstrate the mercifulness of God in the case of individual men. Miracles illustrate and explain the teaching of Jesus on the love and mercy of God.
- C. To demonstrate God’s wrath upon sin and rebellious sinners Matt. 21:18-19 (cursed fig tree), Acts 13:11 (blinding of Elymas) Acts 5:5-10 (Ananias and Sapphira). Bible miracles taught not only God’s love and goodness but also His power and authority, and sometimes His righteous and fearful judgments.
- D. Miracles of the Bible demonstrate clearly that miracles were never intended to be universal:
1. In extent: for they were always limited to few and special cases. Never have they been used to relieve suffering or prolong life here for all of God’s people universally.
 - a. Some received no miraculous deliverance here (Heb. 11:35-40)
 - b. John the Immerser, greatest born of women, worked no miracles, nor was he delivered miraculously (Matt. 11:7-11; John 10:41).
 - c. Jesus could have healed all or raised all from dead but He didn’t.
 - d. Paul healed many, but did not heal Trophimus and Timothy (II Tim. 4:20; I Tim. 5:23).
 2. In result: All who were delivered from sickness had at other times to suffer again and die. All who were raised

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from the dead had to die again. Peter was delivered twice, but not a third time. (God was no less compassionate and Peter no less believing.)

IV. PASSING OF MIRACLES (AS SUCH)

- A. It would take some convincing to persuade me that God does not work providentially in history today. I believe He answers when we pray (sometimes yes, sometimes no, sometimes without acting at all).
 - 1. I teach Life of Christ, Old Testament Prophets and Revelation. You cannot study and teach those books and believe them for 20 years without believing God is active in the affairs of men and nations.
 - 2. I do not deny that God could reinstitute an age of miracles such as we read about in the Old Testament and New Testament if it suited His purpose.
 - 3. It is just that I believe He will not because He has no further need of such miracles and signs. Here is why I believe that:
- B. "When that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away . . ." I Cor. 13:10.
 - 1. The reason for the election of the Jews in Christ (Eph. 1) was for "a plan in the *fulness of time*, to unite all things in him . . ." (not for heaven, but for earth). Thus the plan was to unite both Jew and Gentile, slave and free, man and woman, into one body, the church. This is why the spiritual miraculous gifts were given in Ephesians 4:11f., for this ministry of unifying. These miraculous gifts were to last until the *teleios* "man" was formed (Eph. 4:13).
 - 2. The identical context, outline, illustrations, and terminology in I Corinthians 12—14 leads us to conclude that such is also the meaning of *teleios* there . . . to perfect both Jew and Gentile in the one body.
 - 3. It is unquestionably apparent that the problem in both Ephesians and Corinthians was the immaturity and schismatic tendencies of the early church. In light of the frequent association of love with perfection (maturity)—and in light of the fact that the entire epistle of I Corinthians

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deals with the grand theme of divine love in the context of the childish immaturity of so many Christians at Corinth, it seems best to define "the perfect" in terms of the ultimate goal, aim, and end which Paul seeks to accomplish which is growth and maturity in Christ.

4. Paul's description of the carnal immaturity of Christians at Corinth serves to underscore his emphasis on the ultimate goal which he sets for them in chapter 13. Chapter 13 must be read in the context of the whole book and may not be interpreted apart from his charge in 14:1—"Make love your . . ." and in 14:20 "Do not be children in your thinking; in malice be babes, but in thinking be perfect."
5. When the "perfect" comes, says Paul, the tongues, etc. would cease. These miraculous gifts were not proofs of spiritual maturity. Paul does not say that these will cease when Jesus comes again, nor when the Corinthians get to heaven. Rather that in time, during their life on earth, the miraculous demonstrations will cease.
6. I do not think "perfect" means just the completed canon of New Testament books; it also has to do with a "perfected" church.
 - a. The canon's formation was by uninspired men (so far as we know). I believe every book in the New Testament is inspired and apostolic. But what if another scroll of antiquity is found with the same credentials as the books we now have? We would not have a "perfect—complete" New Testament!
 - b. The "perfect law of liberty" was already at work when James wrote of it in James 1:25. This perfect law was in action before the completion of our 27 books of the New Testament were formed into a New Testament. One could look into this law then and be blessed in obedience to it. It was the perfect law of freedom because it accomplished what the incomplete Law of Moses could not do. It is significant in this context that James also speaks of the children of God as being perfect and complete in the church (James 1:4-5).
- C. The end for which miracles were wrought, to attest to the veracity of Christ and His claims, to bring the church to

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maturity, and to bring about faith through which we may partake of the divine nature (II Peter 1:3-4)—this is the ultimate goal of God's work with us. **MIRACLES CAN NEVER BE AN ACCEPTABLE SUBSTITUTE FOR THIS INDWELLING** (I Tim. 1:5; II Peter 1:3-11; I John 1:5-8; 3:1-6; I Cor. 12:31—14:1; II Cor. 3:18). (See *A Study of the Work of the Holy Spirit in Christians*, by Seth Wilson, mimeo, Ozark Bible College bookstore.)

1. Miracles are signs or works of the Holy Spirit, not the Holy Spirit Himself. They are the effects of which he is the cause. Miracles have been found where the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit did not occur. (Matt. 10; Luke 10; apostles and 70 disciples worked miracles months before Jesus said the Holy Spirit had not come yet (John 7:38). King Saul on his way to murder God's anointed was made to prophesy by the Spirit of God (I Sam. 19:18-24). Balaam's ass (Num. 22:25-30). Cornelius (Acts 10:44-48).
2. It is evident that some men whom Christ called "workers of iniquity" claimed to have worked many miracles in His name. If they speak that boldly to His face, at judgment, does it not appear that they will be sincerely convinced that they have actually wrought such mighty works by His power here?
3. It does not appear that miraculous demonstrations are necessary effects whenever or wherever the Holy Spirit dwells in men. I Corinthians 12:3, the man who honestly says Jesus is Lord manifests he has the Holy Spirit. I Corinthians 12:29-30 shows that not all in the New Testament church had the gifts of miraculous works.
4. The word of God has the power to regenerate and to sanctify through faith which allows the Spirit of God to dwell in us (Eph. 3:16-19; I Tim. 1:5; Gal. 5:22-25; II Peter 1:3-4; II Cor. 3:18).
5. Miraculous deeds did not guarantee a spiritual church. The Corinthian church "came behind in no gift" and was enriched "in all utterance and in all knowledge" (I Cor. 1:5-7); yet that church was notorious for errors in doctrine and evils in practice.

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6. Are such wonders and signs always caused exclusively by the Holy Spirit? May some of the experiences and utterances be caused by the workings of the subconscious mind, by something like hypnotic influences? (See *The Psychology of Speaking in Tongues*, by John P. Kildahl, Harper & Row.) Scriptures warn of the possibility (at least in the first century) of "lying wonders" (Matt. 24:24; 7:22; II Thess. 2:9; I John 4:1-6; Rev. 13:14; 16:14; 19:20). Even the Old Testament warned against false prophets with signs (Deut. 13:1-5; 18:22; Isa. 8:20).
7. Isolated wonders do not necessarily prove a divine revelation from God. Bible miracles were part of a coherent combination of many miracles and messages to which they were significantly related. The extent and quality of Bible miracles and revelations is different from the many alleged miracles and prophecies of today or centuries since apostles. Philip's miracles and those of Simon Magus were different. Even Pharaoh could see (or should have) the difference between Moses' miracles and those of his magicians (Gal. 1:6-9). Even a gospel by angels, if different than Paul's would be condemned.
8. I John 4:6 says it is not the Holy Spirit if men show they do not hear (heed and keep) the words of the apostles. James 3:13-18 shows that the Spirit of God does not cause men to be jealous and factious—divisive. **WHEN THERE ARE SO MANY DENOMINATIONAL FACTIONS, ALLEGING TO HAVE THESE MIRACULOUS SIGNS AND WONDERS, YET STRIVING TO MAINTAIN THEIR DENOMINATIONAL DIFFERENCES EVEN IN THE FACE OF PLAIN SCRIPTURAL TEACHINGS, WHAT ARE WE TO CONCLUDE ABOUT THEIR CLAIMS?**

V. FUNCTIONAL GIFTS (Rom. 12:1-13)

- A. I believe all men and women have gifts from their Creator.
 1. All may not have the same gifts or latent potentialities.
 2. Some may have many more potentialities than others.
 3. **BUT THEY ARE ALL NEEDED AS FUNCTIONS IN THE BODY OF CHRIST.** This is the important point:

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No gifts, capacities, talents, abilities (all given by the grace of God) are more important FUNCTIONALLY, than others.

4. The whole context here indicates Paul is talking *not* about miraculous gifts given by God for the same purposes as those of I Corinthians 12-14; but of functional gifts, one of which at least every member of the body has (“ . . . I bid every one among you . . .”).
- B. I like the way Carl Ketcherside explains it in *Mission Messenger* Vol. 36, No. 10, Oct. 1974, “Functioning Gifts.”
1. Any gift freely bestowed by God is a gift of the Spirit, regardless of how it is communicated to the recipient. That is why I object to designating any period of time a charismatic age. There is no such thing as a charismatic age, for the simple reason that there is no non-charismatic age. There has never been a time when the will of God was not enhanced and promoted by gifts of grace. A gift is not charismatic because of its nature, method of reception, or effect, but because of its origin. It is charismatic because it is a gift of *charis*, grace.
 2. The man who has the enviable gift of understanding and relieving the needy is “charismatic” as surely as one who has the gift of prophecy. The one who can give cheerfully and freely as his contribution to the work of the saints is “charismatic.” In view of this, I am not turned on by such expressions as “The Spirit is working again in our time.” The Spirit has never ceased working.
 3. The gifts of God are varied. Paul wrote to a congregation which came behind in no gift and told them that the ability to restrain sexual passion, making marriage unnecessary was a *charisma* of God. But he also implied that the gift of sexual need which could be gratified in marriage was a *charisma*. “I would that everybody lived as I do; but each of us has his own special gift from God—one in one direction and one in another” (I Cor. 7:7). It is quite evident that Paul’s gift was in a different direction than that of the majority.
- C. Ephesians 4:7 “But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift.”

SPECIAL STUDY: GIFTS, MIRACLES

1. Do not the parables teach that men are *given* (how else, but by the grace of God) "talents" and "pounds" according to different measures, and each one is expected to *use* them (none are non-functional) and be rewarded according, not to what he does not have, but according to how he uses what he does have?
2. Now if we will follow the leading of the Spirit in His revealed will and make sure instead of worrying about "having the Spirit" that the "Spirit has all of us," we will "use" our *praxin* (function, or action) *charismata* gifts for the benefit of the one body.

Actually, if we simply let ourselves be "transformed" by "the renewing of our minds . . ." (Rom. 12:1-2) we will use our gifts of grace for the upbuilding of the body in love.

Even unconverted men and women have *charismatic gifts! functional gifts*—whatever they have in potentialities they have by the grace of God but they are not allowing the Spirit to use them for the upbuilding of Christ's body.

- D. Does all this mean that the special *supernatural* gifts should also be continued by the Holy Spirit in the church today? No.
1. They were for special needs. The functional gifts will always be needed.
 2. I do not need to see a miracle performed by anyone else, nor have one performed upon me, to produce faith in the revealed Word of God.
 3. The original envoys of Jesus who gave the message were thoroughly accredited and their message was confirmed by miracles, wonders and signs. There is no sense in having miracles to confirm miracles, and once truth is confirmed it never needs to be confirmed again.
 4. The spectacular, *super* natural, signs and wonders were to cease (there is no doubt about that), but the functional gifts through which every member of the body may *love* man and God will abide!
 5. AFTER ALL, THE GRACE OF GOD HAS GIVEN EACH OF US GIFTS FOR FUNCTIONING IN THE

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CHURCH AND WE USE THEM ACCORDING TO THE MEASURE OF OUR FAITH.

The miraculous, supernatural gifts could be given and made to function regardless of the measure of the faith of the person.

Special Study

PAUL'S POWER TO GIVE CHARISMATIC POWER (Acts 19)

- A. There is much ambiguous, scripturally-imprecise and confusing exegesis of Acts 19:1-7 being done today.
1. "Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed? The apostle Paul asked this very important question of twelve saved disciples of Christ, at Ephesus. Acts 19:2 . . . Later . . . when they prayed together, 'The Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues and prophesied.' This should have been expected since in all four gospels we are told that Jesus will baptize with the Holy Ghost." From—*The Baptism in The Holy Spirit According to God's Word*, a tract by the Full Gospel Assembly, 3688 Lee Rd., Shaker Heights, Ohio, 44120.
 - a. Note: The writer *omitted* the statement of the Scripture that "Paul laid their hands on them. . . ." and *inserted* something that is not even in the text, "Later . . . when they prayed"!
 - b. The same tract says, "Must I speak in Tongues? Yes, this is important! . . . To refuse tongues is to refuse to yield yourself completely to God . . ." and further on, "It is very important to pray in tongues! Practice this new language of the Spirit until it becomes as natural as breathing." Why does it need *practice* to become natural if it is supernatural?
 - c. The tract also states, "To manifest God's love for our fellow man we must have supernatural power."
 2. From another interesting but ambiguous and self-contradictory book *A Handbook on Holy Spirit Baptism*, by Don Bashan, pub. Gateway Outreach, p. 16, "At times baptism in the Holy Spirit may come immediately following conversion, like in Acts 10. . . . Most Christians today receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit only after instructions and specific prayer. . . ." Cornelius was not "converted" until baptism in water.
 - a. From the same book, p. 100, "How can I receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit. . . . By no means should anyone who is not a believing Christian pray for baptism in the Holy Spirit. . . ." Cornelius received it before he was a Christian.

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- b. Page 104 tells how one knows he has received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. “At this point you may actually *feel* the presence of the Holy Spirit, physically. His presence may come as a warmth enveloping you, or as a silent powerful Presence enfolding you. You may experience a tingling sensation or a gentle vibration as if touched by an electric current. But even if you feel nothing, rest quietly in the confidence that the Holy Spirit is now coming upon you in power and is about to furnish you with a new language of prayer and praise to God.”
- 3. Why all this confusion? Because of poor hermeneutics. People let their hermeneutics be influenced by their emotions and/or psychological needs.
 - a. Many people want to lump everything said and/or promised concerning the ministry of the Holy Spirit into one category—the supernatural baptism of the Holy Spirit.
 - b. This brief study proposes to show that there are definite, scriptural differences and distinctions:
 - (1) all ministries and works of the Holy Spirit are not alike in degree or manifestation.
 - (2) specifically, the power of the apostle Paul was not power to baptize anyone in the Holy Spirit, nor even power to become an agent through whom Christ would baptize anyone in the Holy Spirit,
 - (3) specifically, to show that Paul and the other apostles could impart only the charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit by the laying on of their hands, and that that power ceased when the apostles died.
- B. Paul did not give the “Baptism” of the Holy Spirit in Acts 19 because there are only two instances of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures.
 - 1. Acts 2, the Day of Pentecost
 - a. Nothing could be clearer than the fact that it was the Apostles and the Apostles only, who received Holy Spirit baptism on the Day of Pentecost.
 - (1) It was not some psychical or emotional experience for the purpose of converting those who received it—they did not need to be converted.

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- (2) It was an outward manifestation, a special miracle for a Divine purpose.
 - (a) It was something that could be seen and heard (not felt).
 - (b) There were immediate effects; they spoke with foreign languages; they spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance.
 - (c) Only the apostles spoke in other tongues; and very obviously, they spoke in the different native languages represented by that audience.
 - (d) They gave utterance only to the words which the Spirit placed upon their tongues. They themselves did not comprehend the scope of their utterances: Peter did not comprehend that the "promise was to all who were afar off."
- (3) Holy Spirit baptism was not for the purpose of converting anyone.
 - (a) Holy Spirit baptism was to be conferred by Christ as a promise to be fulfilled.
 - (b) Water baptism was a command to be obeyed by all who wished forgiveness and salvation.

THIS IS THE FUNDAMENTAL DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE BAPTISM OF THE GREAT COMMISSION AND HOLY SPIRIT BAPTISM. THE FORMER WAS A COMMAND TO BE OBEYED: THE LATTER WAS A PROMISE TO BE FULFILLED DIRECTLY FROM HEAVEN. The former to be administered by any evangelizer; the latter was administered only by Christ.

- (4) Holy Spirit baptism was a special miracle for
 - (a) clothing the apostles with divine authority, power and infallibility; and for incorporating the Jews (Gentiles in Acts 10-11) into the Body of Christ.
 - (b) With their authority and infallibility guaranteed and perpetuated in their writings, there was no longer any necessity for special authority or infallibility.
 - (c) Hence, we find no evidence in the New Testament that the apostles ever conferred their authority upon any other man or group of men. THEY HAD NO

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SUCCESSORS. THEY COULD NOT *BAPTIZE* ANYONE WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT. ONLY CHRIST COULD DO THAT.

2. Acts 10-11, Cornelius

- a. Nothing could be clearer than that even the Jewish apostles had difficulty accepting their own Old Testament prophets that Gentiles were to become members of the Messiah's kingdom.
 - (1) They persisted in preaching the Gospel to the Jews only for several years following the day of Pentecost.
 - (2) Finally, a series of divine interventions became necessary to break down this wall of prejudice and bring about the admission of the Gentiles.
 - (3) God did it in such a way as to leave no doubt in the minds of the Jews . . . by Holy Spirit Baptism. There are no Holy Spirit baptisms between Acts 2 and the one of Cornelius!
- b. What happened in connection with the conversion of Cornelius does not happen with any other conversion in the book of Acts,
 - (1) and even this did not cause the conversion nor was it a result of the conversion . . . it came directly and arbitrarily from Heaven.
 - (2) It certainly was not to give Cornelius faith.
 - (3) It was not to purify his heart.
 - (4) Nor was it to make Cornelius and his household Christians . . . they became Christians the same way all other persons became Christians in New Testament times, by repenting, believing and being immersed in water (Acts 10:47-48).
 - (5) That text substantiates beyond any possibility of doubt that the Holy Spirit baptism was a promise to be fulfilled directly from Heaven, whereas Christian baptism was a command to be obeyed by believers; and that the baptism permanently incorporated into the structure of the Church was *not* Holy Spirit baptism, but baptism in water!
 - (6) The Holy Spirit baptism of Cornelius' household demonstrated once for all that the blessings of the New Covenant were for Gentiles as well as Jews AND ON THE SAME TERMS!

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The *only* instances of Holy Spirit Baptism recorded in the New Testament (Acts 2, 10-11) had no connection with conversion regeneration or sanctification of the saints. It was not conferred for the purpose of giving faith to the non-believer or purifying the sinful heart; nor is there any evidence that it was bestowed in answer to prayer. It is not connected in any direct way with the remission of sins.

It was conferred upon the apostles as representative of the Jews at Pentecost and upon Cornelius as representative of the Gentiles to signify God's acceptance of both Jew and Gentile into the kingdom of Christ on the same terms. Those are the only two instances of which we have any scripture record of the baptism of the Holy Spirit (we may safely assume it was given to the apostle Paul as one born out of due season).

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit ceased when its ultimate end was accomplished. No person has any justification from the Scripture for asking for, expecting, or claiming Holy Spirit baptism today!

C. Paul did give the charismatic power of the Holy Spirit to some Christians.

1. The greatest measure of Spirit-power ever bestowed upon human beings was, as we have looked at, the OVERWHELMING MEASURE (or, the Baptism).
2. The charismatic power of the Spirit is inferior to the overwhelming.
3. This is not my attempt to impose limitations upon the operation of God's Spirit.
 - a. It is not a question of power, but of fact.
 - b. *How* The Spirit manifests Himself and the channels through which He exerts His powers are clearly indicated by Scripture.
 - c. Any other point of reference as to how He functions (human reason, emotion, alleged miracle) cannot be depended upon.
4. The charismatic power was:
 - a. conferred upon some Christians
 - b. in the apostolic age,
 - c. inferior to the Baptism of the Spirit,
 - d. conferred not by the Lord from Heaven, but by the laying on of the hands of the apostles.
 - e. primarily for evidential purposes, to confirm their message,

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- f. commonly designated “gifts” and listed by Paul in I Corinthians 12.
- 5. There are some cases of the conferring of the evidential power of the Spirit preliminary to Paul’s giving of it in Acts 19 which will help in over-all understanding of it.
 - a. The first case of miracles performed by anyone other than an apostle is described in Acts 8.
 - (1) Philip the evangelist, 8:6-8
 - (a) Philip given this power when the apostles laid hands on him, Acts 6:1-6
 - (b) He went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed unto them Christ, Acts 8:5.
 - (c) Simon the converted sorcerer continued with Philip; Simon was a baptized Christian, but did not have the power to do miracles; he wanted to buy the power.
 - (2) It was not until the apostles from Jerusalem went down to Samaria and laid their hands on the people whom Philip had converted that they received the charismatic powers of the Holy Spirit, Acts 8:17.
 - (a) Simon still did not have the power of the Holy Spirit the others had and sought to buy it.
 - (b) If the baptismal power or even the charismatic power of the Holy Spirit belongs to all Christians and can be gotten by prayer only, why didn’t the Samaritan Christians have it? Why couldn’t Philip, who did have it, pass it on to these Christians?
 - (c) If it is so imperative for every Christian to have, why didn’t Simon have it? He recognized that it came *only* by the laying on of the hands of the apostles!

OF COURSE THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WAS NOT FROM THE APOSTLES, PER SE . . . IT DID NOT ORIGINATE WITH THEM . . . THEY WERE THE SPIRIT’S INSTRUMENTS.

b. The case of Timothy

- (1) Some think that the “laying on of the hands of the eldership” (I Tim. 4:14) imparted to Timothy the charismatic gift of the Holy Spirit.

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- (2) We know that the laying on of hands was done by persons *other* than the apostles for purposes *other* than the conferring of charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:2; James 5:14, etc.).
- (3) Paul explicitly states in II Timothy 1:6 that Timothy did not receive his special gift of the Holy Spirit at the hands of the elders, **BUT BY THE LAYING ON OF PAUL'S HANDS!**
- (4) Timothy laid hands on some (I Tim. 5:22) but no mention is made that he conferred the charismatic power of the Holy Spirit in so doing.
- c. There is *no evidence whatever in the New Testament* that the early Christians who were not apostles, had the power themselves to confer these extraordinary charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit on others.
 - (1) It is clear that the impartation of the charismatic power of the Holy Spirit *required the personal presence of an apostle.*
 - (2) However much the apostle Paul may have desired to impart some charisma to his brethren at Rome, he could not do so without visiting them personally (Rom. 1:11-12).

Paul could not even confer these miraculous gifts by telling the Christians at Rome to "lay their hands on his inspired epistle" which they received from him and could touch! Paul could not even pray for them from a distance and confer charismatic power.

6. Paul in Acts 19

- a. We do not know why Paul asked them whether they had received the Holy Spirit.
 - (1) Actually the original Greek text omits the word *given*. 19:2 KJV ASV
 - (2) This may indicate they did not know the Holy Spirit *existed*.
 - (3) Regardless of their lack of knowledge, Paul knew immediately they had not been baptized in the name (authority) of Jesus Christ. If they had been baptized in water according to the Great Commission, they would have known the Holy Spirit existed.
- b. Paul's question as to whether they had received the Spirit

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when they believed, does not say whether he referred to the miraculous or the indwelling of the Spirit.

(1) However, we do know that when he saw something was wrong with their water baptism he baptized them.

(2) **HE THEN LAID HIS HANDS ON THEM AND CONFERRED THE HOLY SPIRIT IN A MIRACULOUS WAY!**

c. We cannot receive the charismatic power of the Spirit today as did those in Acts 19.

(1) If we could, it would mean that everyone who was actually baptized into Christ and saved, should have the apostle's hands laid on them that they might receive the Spirit.

(2) If that is so, we cannot be Christians today because there are no apostles to lay hands on us and confer the Spirit in this way.

(3) It would mean that if one were really a Christian, he would speak with tongues or languages and prophesy by inspiration of the Spirit.

d. Why did Paul confer the miraculous Spirit-charisma on these men? To prove that God approved of Paul's baptizing them again in the name of Jesus instead of allowing them to continue in John the Baptist's baptism. That was the purpose of Pentecost Holy Spirit miracles—to supercede John the Baptist's baptism.

D. The Purpose of the Charismatic Power of the Holy Spirit was *Evidential*.

1. Its primary and almost sole purpose was to confirm the Word that was preached by apostles, evangelists and other selected Christians.

2. It may have had a secondary purpose to establish the saints in their most holy faith—**BUT ONLY TO CONFIRM THE WORD BEING PREACHED TO THE SAINTS . . . IT WAS ONLY AS THE SAINTS OBEYED THE WORD PREACHED THAT THEY WERE EDIFIED . . . THE CHARISMATIC GIFTS SIMPLY CONFIRMED THE PREACHED WORD AS AUTHORITATIVE!**

3. Consider these scriptures: Mark 16:20; Rom. 1:11; Heb. 2:3-4; I Cor. 2:1-5; Rom. 15:18-19.

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4. In the infancy of the Church, when the local congregations everywhere were compelled to depend upon the oral instruction of the apostles and their co-laborers for guidance in faith and practice, God graciously confirmed the Word by signs and miracles in those selected to preach.
5. A child just learning to walk often has to rely upon its parents for the additional strength and guidance that it needs. So the Church. When the Church was still a child, she spake as a child, she felt as a child, she thought as a child; but when the Church became a grown integrated man, she put away childish things (I Cor. 13:11; Eph. 4:13-16). When the body of Christ was fully formed (both Jew and Gentile incorporated) and permanently established (with her elders, deacons and evangelists); when Truth was fully revealed and embodied in the New Testament THEN THE SUPERNATURAL SUPPORT BY WHICH SHE WAS SUSTAINED THROUGHOUT THE PERIOD OF HER INFANCY, THE CHARISMATIC MEASURE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WAS NO LONGER NEEDED, AND PASSED AWAY!
6. Most certainly, the special charismatic measure of the Holy Spirit was not given to the primitive Church as toys with which they were to amuse themselves in the presence of a cynical world. They did not need it to motivate them to go everywhere to preach the word; once the Word of Christ's death and resurrection was validated by preachers who proved their message by gifts, those who accepted went everywhere preaching it. Even the apostles did not have the power to use their gifts of healing whenever they had any sick person.
 - (1) Why would Paul leave his friend and traveling companion sick, having the power to heal him (II Tim. 4:20)?
 - (2) Why could not Paul, or some other Christian with charismatic power, remove Paul's thorn in the flesh? (II Cor. 12:7ff.).
 - (3) *The Handbook on Holy Spirit Baptism*, p. 22 says, "Just as there are reasons why people do not respond to the gospel message, so there are many reasons why people do not respond miraculously when a prayer for healing is offered." Page 24, "If those who insist the age of miracles has ended had lived in Jesus' day, the age of miracles might never have begun."

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Answer: The miracle of charismatic power in its working did not depend upon faith or expectation. Jesus worked miracles on people who could not have believed in Him, on people who did not believe in Him, and so did the apostles.

E. Duration of the Charismatic Measure of the Holy Spirit

1. The conclusion from the foregoing studies is that since no one but the apostles had the power to impart the charismatic measure of the Spirit; and this they did only by the laying on of their hands personally, **IT FOLLOWS THAT WHEN THE APOSTLES CLOSED THEIR EARTHLY LABORS AND WENT TO THEIR ETERNAL REWARD, THE POWER TO IMPART THE EVIDENTIAL MEASURE OF THE SPIRIT CEASED.**
2. What the apostles conferred was **NOT** the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Only Jesus from heaven, directly, conferred that measure of the Spirit and that in only two recorded instances.
3. When all those Christians died who had received this measure (charismatic) at the hands of an apostle, (the Christians scripturally unable to pass it on) the charismatic manifestations of the Holy Spirit naturally ceased to be wrought. **THIS IS MADE VERY CLEAR IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.**

CONCLUSION

The Holy Spirit

by Don DeWalt, College Press Publishing Company

5. What shall we say has happened to certain persons of our day who claim to have been baptized in the Holy Spirit?

We shall not at all doubt their sincerity, nor shall we say nothing of import has happened to them. We shall be forced to say by our study of the subject that their experience is *not* the baptism in the Holy Spirit as we find it described in the book of Acts.

What has happened to such persons is self-induced. Please do not forget that Mormons (Latter Day Saints), claim the very same experiences of speaking in tongues. Christian Scientists also claim supernatural healings. Mohammedans claim supernatural aid in their

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conquests for Allah. The simple fact that something strange happened to certain persons does not mean God has visited them.

We must never make the tragic mistake of believing in an experience, or in the testimony of an experience, and then attempting to support such experience with the Bible.

We cannot offer a logical explanation for every experience—it is not necessary that we do so—all we need is a knowledge of the Word of truth concerning the experience.

What has happened to a number of our brethren in the past few months might be explained in a number of ways—the important fact is, “Does the Word of God support it?”

From my study I cannot see Biblical support for present-day claims to the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

The Eternal Spirit, Vol. 2

by C. C. Crawford, College Press Publishing Company

Friend, you need not pray for Christ to come down from Heaven to save you; you need not pray for someone to come back from the dead to save you. You have the Word, the Word of faith, which is being preached in every community in the land, the Word that Christ died for your sins, that He was buried, and that He was raised up the third day (I Cor. 15:1-5), and that God's gift of salvation may be your possession on the conditions of your belief in Christ, repentance toward Christ, confession of Christ, and baptism into Christ. Miraculous manifestations, ecstasies, trances, visions, powers and endowments are not necessary at all to your personal salvation. You have the Word of the living God,—the Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation. You are fully capable of hearing, accepting and obeying that Gospel any time you desire and will to do so; and if you refuse or neglect to do so, you are utterly without excuse. If you will hear neither Moses nor the Prophets, neither Christ nor the Apostles, you would not be persuaded even if one should rise from the dead (Luke 16:31).

Special Study

IS THE CHURCH AN ORGANIZATION OR AN ORGANISM?

Definition of terms:

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary

Organism: "Any highly complex thing or structure with parts so integrated that their relation to one another is governed by their relation to the whole."

Organization: "An organism; any vitally or systematically organic whole; an association or society" with emphasis upon system and structure.

Thomas M. Lindsay, D.D., Principal of the Glasgow College of the United Free Church of Scotland in *The Church and The Ministry in the Early Centuries*, page 8.

"Organism, where the whole exists for the parts, and each part for the whole and for all the other parts."

"I devoutly believe that there is a Visible Catholic (universal) Church of Christ consisting of all those throughout the world who visibly worship the same God and Father, profess their faith in the same Saviour, and are taught by the same Holy Spirit; but I do not see any Scriptural or even primitive warrant for insisting that catholicity (universality) *must* find visible expression in a uniformity of organization . . ." page viii of Preface.

" . . . (the church is a self-governing society) where the individual rights and responsibilities of the members would blend harmoniously with the common good of all."

"The individual believer is never lost in the society, and he is never alone and separate. The bond of union is not an external framework impressed from without, but a sense of fellowship springing from within. The believer's union to Christ, which is the deepest of all personal things, always involves something social. The call comes to him singly, but seldom solitarily," page 7.

A. H. Newman in *A Manual of Church History*, Vol. I.

"When applied to Christians the word (ekkleisia) means in the New Testament: (1) The entire community of the redeemed,

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considered as an organism held together by belief in a common Lord and by participation in a common life and salvation, and in common aims and interests.”

International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Vol. 1, p. 652, article on “Church”

“And the unity of which Paul writes and for which he strove is a unity that finds visible expression. Not, it is true, in any uniformity of outward polity, but through the manifestation of a common faith in acts of mutual love (Eph. 4:3-13; II Cor. 9).”

“... if each believer is vitally joined to Christ, all believers must stand in a living relation to one another. In Paul’s favorite figure, Christians are members one of another because they are members in particular of the body of Christ (Rom. 12:5; I Cor. 12:27).”

Baker’s Dictionary of Theology, article on “Church” p. 123.

“... the one church of God is not an institutional but a supernatural entity which is in process of growth towards the world to come. . . . All its members are in Christ and are knit together by a supernatural kinship.”

What is the Scriptural definition of the church in relationship to “Organism” or “Organization”?

Read: I Corinthians, chapter 12, in its entirety

Ephesians, chapter 4, in its entirety

Romans 14:1 — 15:13 (the church functioning as an organism)

Thus the conclusion:

Although divinely appointed offices are provided for the visible church, the church on earth is essentially an *organism* and *not* a systematic, structuralized *organization*, as organization is commonly thought of today. The church is a living, vital organism wherein its members are so integrated and controlled by the Head, even Christ, that their relation to one another is governed by their relation to the Head and to the whole body. The church as an entity exists for the individual member and the individual member exists and functions for the edification of the whole and other members.

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Some pertinent comments on I Corinthians 12:12-31 from the *International Critical Commentary on I Corinthians* by Plummer and Robertson:

“ . . . though the gifts of God’s Spirit may be many and various, yet those who are endowed with them constitute one *organic* whole.”

“The ultimate aim of the Christian is the well-being of the whole body, of which the controlling power is Christ, who is at once the Head and the Body, for every Christian is a member of Him.”

“The Church is neither a dead mass of similar particles, like a heap of sand, nor a living swarm of antagonistic individuals, like a cage of wild beasts; it has the unity of a living organism, in which no two parts are exactly alike, but all discharge different functions for the good of the whole. All men are not equal, and no individual can be independent of the rest; everywhere there is subordination and dependence.”

“ . . . every individual has some function to discharge, and all must work together for the common good. This is the all-important point—unity in loving service. The Church is an organic body of which all the parts are moved by a spirit of common interest and mutual affection.”

“God made unity, but not uniformity; He did not level all down to monotonous similarity . . . every member cannot have the same function, and therefore there must be higher and lower gifts. But pride and discontent are quite out of place, for they are not only the outcome of selfishness, but also rebellion against God’s will . . . it was not our fellow-men who placed us in an inferior position, but God; and He did it, not to please us or our fellows, but in accordance with His will, which must be right . . . there is no such thing as independence in an organism . . . all parts are not equal, yet no one part can isolate itself.”

II. Discussion of Unity as it is related to the Nature of the Church, Organism or Organization.

A. The hue and cry in contemporary Protestantism is unity, visible unity at almost any cost.

1. Mostly liberals are pushing this movement.
2. Some evangelicals and their denominations are clamoring for visible unity.

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B. Even among the Restoration brotherhood

1. Some of the Disciples of Christ leaders and churches are planning on "restructuring" the brotherhood in preparation for merger with other denominations to form a visible, unified church.

C. The emphasis in this movement for unity is placed almost exclusively upon Organization, Structuralism, Federation.

1. Hardly, if ever, is oneness by spiritual brotherhood stressed.
2. Oneness of doctrine and faith is *deemphasized*.
3. Contemporary theologians now pressuring for structural unity interpret the nature of the church as an Organization—but is it?

III. What motives are behind the ecumenical thrust for an organizational church?

A. Ecumenists feel that a united church under one organization would be able to affect the larger affairs of human history and to control events here and now such as banning of atomic tests, elimination of racial segregation and many other problems.

But will the means such a "world-church" uses to accomplish these be political pressure or regeneration of men's hearts?

B. Ecumenists feel that a pagan world would be more impressed and more likely converted by a "world-church" organization.

But what is the true missionary situation today? The missionaries under national federations such as the N.C.C. are decreasing proportionately while the missionaries sent independently are increasing!

C. Ecumenists feel that one consolidated church would impress a religious stamp upon the culture of the world whereas now education, arts, professions, politics are being dominated by secularism.

1. But this secularism is not due to lack of organization, but simply because the church in every community has become too secularized—Sunday social clubs, having lost their vital message of salvation.

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2. We need not *reorganization*, but *regeneration*!

D. Ecumenists either fear or envy, or both, as they behold the visibly united Roman Catholic Church. Ecumenists believe that the influence of Catholicism (felt in government, labor, industry, communications, education, etc.) is due to visible organizational unity.

1. But Catholicism's basis for organizing is for political warfare and influence—union of church and state.

2. Separation of church and state is a basic tenant of Protestantism (and the Bible, we might add).

E. Ecumenists believe that the particularly visible unity for which our Lord prayed can only be realized within the framework of one ecclesiastical structure.

1. The Lord *did* pray for visible unity! John 17:21

2. The nature of that unity must be defined.

a. Would federal union of churches fulfill the will of God for visible unity?

b. Or is unity to be a spiritual, doctrinal harmony revealed authoritatively and exclusively in the New Testament?

IV. What of the Ecumenical Movement? Can the Church obtain unity through Organization or has she unity now Organically? What would the believer be called upon to promote or surrender in ecumenicism? **CAN AN EVANGELICAL BELIEVER OR CHURCH UNITE WITH THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT AND NOT SURRENDER THE "FAITH ONCE FOR ALL DELIVERED"?**

A. Christianity is the only true revealed religion; it is not of human origin. The Christian *must*, therefore, compare religious movements and philosophies with what God's revelation says.

B. What Christ will the ecumenical movement hold to?

1. The Christ of the modernist—human only.

2. The Christ of the existentialist—a mere subjective ideal.

3. The Christ of the syncretist—a conglomeration of all the Christs.

4. Or the Christ revealed in the Scriptures, human and divine,

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the Son of the living God, in whom only is salvation and immortality.

5. The question cannot be avoided, the church cannot live in a vacuum, if she is to preach a vital message of hope and life to a dying world.
- C. What will be studied by ecumenical preachers and taught by them?
 1. Will it be the social gospel of the liberal?
 2. Will it be neo-orthodoxy (agnosticism using scriptural terminology)?
 3. Will it be atheism or communism?
 4. Will it be the Bible as the supernaturally revealed Word of God?
- D. How inclusive will the ecumenical "world-church" be?
 1. C. C. Morrison writes, "What in a united church shall we do with our differences? There can be only one answer. They must be welcomed and embraced as essential to the fulfillment of the Christian life."
 2. To Mr. Morrison, diversities of belief and faith are a spiritual asset . . . **NO NEED FOR A UNIFYING FAITH AS LONG AS WE HAVE A UNIFYING ORGANIZATION.**
 3. But in this wide inclusiveness what divergencies will be tolerated?
 - a. Denial of the blood atonement by substitution?
 - b. Denial of the humanity and divinity of Christ?
 - c. Denial of the indwelling of the supernatural Holy Spirit?
 - d. Denial of Heaven and Hell and the immortality of the soul? **THE VERY SUBSTANCE OF CHRISTIANITY WILL BE LOST IF TRUTH BE SACRIFICED TO OBTAIN ORGANIZATIONAL UNION!**
- E. What of the ecumenical concept of the church?
 1. In its hysteria for organization will it demand membership in the external society in order to obtain salvation, fellowship and toleration?
 2. If so, God stands helpless until the church is properly functionalized . . . the heathen await salvation until it can be organized!

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3. Will not a centrally controlled church also mean centrally controlled clergy, laity, journalism, finances, etc., etc.?
 4. Will not this also bring about a bureaucracy similar to federal governments—more and more bureaus, offices, secretaries, building up of empires, funds.
- V. The Authority of Scripture is essential to the life and unity of the Organism (the Body of Christ—the Church).
- A. The proper function of the Body of Christ as an organism is dependent upon the authority of Scripture.
1. For it is in Scripture *alone* that the mind of Christ is expressed.
 2. For an organism to live and function it must receive instructions from and obey its head—Christ is the head of the church.
- B. The major cause for division and sectarianism in Christianity is the rejection of the authority and veracity of apostolic teaching.
- There is a real lack of Biblically authoritative preaching in the pulpits of the churches today.
- C. The ecumenical/organizational thrust is an outcome of the rejection of the authority of Scripture.
- The ecumenists want to replace Scriptural authority with organizational authority.
- D. The history of man testifies to man's own realization of his estrangement from God.
1. Neither by his own wisdom (I Cor. 1-2) nor by nature (Rom. 1) has man been able to find reconciliation or restored fellowship with God.
 2. A revelation from God Himself unto estranged man was needed.
 3. Christianity makes exclusive claim to be the only revealed religion and to have absolute claim upon the souls of men.
 4. All that is needful for the salvation of man and the maintenance of the Body of Christ has been revealed.

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5. The repository of that revelation is in the Bible.
 - a. **IN THE BIBLE WE HAVE OBJECTIVE TRUTH.**
 - b. And because it is *REVEALED TRUTH*, the written Word possesses authority to command belief from all men.
- E. The leading theological emphasis (control) within the ecumenical organization is the *authority of experience*.
 1. Most of the leaders of ecumenism are either neo-orthodox/existential or liberal.
 2. All religious authority for faith, life and action is, for them found by experience and subjectivity.
 - a. Religious truth and faith is based on how the individual feels about it—the Bible is only true if the man feels it is true!
 3. But, **WHOSE EXPERIENCE IS VALID?**
 - a. Shall we take a survey of the membership of the church to determine the authoritative message of God; or will the subjective judgments of church councils, religious leaders and professional theologians be accepted—
 - b. **OR SHALL WE GIVE THE CHURCH OVER TO COMPLETE ANARCHY AND CHAOS BY LETTING EVERY MAN DECIDE FOR HIMSELF WHAT IS TRUE AND RIGHT SIMPLY ACCORDING TO HIS FEELINGS?**
- F. If the church is to exist as a living, vital, compassionate, feeling organism—each member so integrated with the other yet functioning as a whole it must:
 1. Have one mind (the mind of Christ, its head).
 2. Partake of one food (the Bread of Life, John 6).
 3. Speak the same thing (one objective message of truth, Gal. 1:8-9).
 4. Have each member working its own “due measure” (Eph. 4).
 5. This oneness is not to be found in organizational structure—**ONLY WHEN EACH MEMBER SURRENDERS**

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HIMSELF TO THE MIND OF CHRIST AS AUTHORITY IN ALL MATTERS OF FAITH AND ACTION . . . AND AGREEING THAT THE MIND OF CHRIST IS FOUND IN OBJECTIVE REVELATION (THE SCRIPTURES)—Only then, will the church be a vital organism functioning for the salvation of mankind.

VI. Is Structural Organization the only way to the visible Unity for which Christ prayed in John 17:21—or may the church as an Organism attain it?

A. It is true that Christ's prayer (John 17:21) demands visible unity of believers.

1. How else could the world behold and believe? It cannot behold the invisible.
2. But notice also that the Lord defined the unity he desired with the clause, “. . . as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee.”

B. The same oneness that exists in the Godhead organism forms the pattern of unity for the organism which is the church.

C. One in DOCTRINE.

1. Father, Son and Holy Spirit taught the same doctrine.
2. John 7:16; 8:26-28; 12:49
3. Those who advocate structural unity in organization abhor the idea of oneness of doctrine.
 - a. They say doctrinal unity is impossible.
 - b. They fear that doctrinal emphasis will offend and destroy unity.
 - c. If doctrinal unity was essential between Father and Son, how can the church composed of fallible men exist without it?
4. Organizational union without organic unity in doctrine will NEVER impress the world.

D. One in PURPOSE.

1. There was mutual agreement in carrying on the work of redemption between the Father and Son (cf. John 5:19-29; 6:38-40; 17:4).

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2. The church must echo that agreement of purpose by proclaiming the same agreement in message (salvation).

The rapid growth of the first century church can be ascribed to the unity of its message of redemption.

3. The Organizational union in ecumenism today has multiple purposes.
 - a. Social gospelizing (improving living standards).
 - b. Political influence and pressure.
 - c. Enlarging the structure of church union.

E. One in LOVE.

1. There can be no doubt that Father and Son were one in love (cf. John 10:17).
2. The pagan world stood amazed at the demonstrations of love in the lives of Christians in the early centuries.
 - a. The church was of one heart and of one soul.
 - b. Each member felt what the other members felt; for what affected one affected all.
3. Generally speaking the ecumenical movement stresses economic necessity and ecclesiastical pressure as its cohesives.

A union which must be held together by the cold, lifeless and unfeeling necessities of economics and ecclesiasticism
HAS NO RESEMBLANCE TO A UNITY EN-
GENDERED BY LOVE . . . WHERE EACH MEM-
BER IS OF ONE HEART AND SOUL!

F. Now the question: How may the ecumenists argue for organizational unity from Christ's prayer in John 17:21? Does the Godhead form a corporate unity that can be seen?

1. In the Old Testament dispensation it was necessary to have physical representations of spiritual truths (sacrifices, tabernacle, priests, etc.).
 - a. The Israelites even demanded a physical king whom they could see. They were not content with the rule of the king of Heaven in their hearts.
 - b. It is still true of men today who are not content with the church as an Organism and the rule of Christ in their hearts, but must have an outward, structural world-church organization.

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2. The New Testament dispensation is on a much higher spiritual plane.

Its worship is more spiritual than visible and ritualistic.

3. When we understand the higher plane of New Testament revelation.

We will see more than organization in John 17:21.

G. The first century *does* reflect *somewhat* of the unity for which Christ prayed.

1. Unity of doctrine, faith, life and purpose

2. But even the early church never reached the fulfillment of His prayer.

3. Paul's epistle (Gal., Col., I & II Cor.) shows how he withstood the infiltration of false doctrine lest it divide the church.

4. In Ephesians Paul stresses the fact that knowledge of Christ and speaking the truth in love is one of the great necessities to unity.

H. Under no condition can the Lord's prayer, John 17:21, be interpreted as a prayer for:

1. "one over-all organization under central control," or

2. "a single comprehensive organization of the churches.

VII. Life and Unity is *in* Christ.

A. The Church receives not only her origin and position but her continuing life in Christ.

1. Cf. John 15:1-5

2. External connection with a visible organization does not save.

a. Men must be internally connected with Christ Himself.

b. A man might be entirely destitute of spiritual life and still be connected to a visible organization.

B. The ground of unity among believers is their spiritual union with Christ.

1. By surrender to Him in faith and obedience to His commands we are united to Him.

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2. Out of this union of each individual believer springs the organic unity that unites all in a fellowship whether separated by time, space, language or race.
- C. Hindrance to unity does not consist in the lack of one external organization to which people can cleave, but to the absence of internal connection with Christ.
 1. The building of world-church organizations means nothing in the sight of God if the churches are not *IN* Christ.
 2. Search as much as you like—**YOU WILL FIND NO DRIVING COMPULSION BY CHRISTIANS OF THE FIRST CENTURY TO ESTABLISH A WORLD-CHURCH ORGANIZATION WITH ECCLESIASTICAL HEADS AND COMMITTEES AND COUNCILS!**
 3. Winning ecclesiastical battles for amalgamation and merger means nothing in the sight of God if churches are not *IN CHRIST*.
 - a. To be *IN* Christ means a vital relationship to Christ as the Head—obedience to the Head.

VIII. To Be of One Mind (One Faith) is Necessary to the Life of the Church As An Organism.

- A. Rom. 15:1-7; I Cor. 1:10; Phil. 1:27; Eph. 4:4-6; John 14:1-11
- B. The ecumenical movement does not subscribe to the proposition of **ONE FAITH** as defined in Scripture.
 1. The World Council of Churches has openly declared war on the idea of **ONE FAITH** as being divisive, bigoted, prejudicial and intolerant.
- C. But the first cause of division in the early church was heresy (those who divided over the **ONE** faith) rather than schismatism (those dividing over non-essentials).
 1. Heretics are different than schismatics—heretics seldom desire to leave the church but prefer to remain and control the church to proclaim their false doctrines:
 2. **THE APOSTLES DID NOT BROADEN THE DEFINITION OF FAITH SO THAT ALL SHADES OF BELIEF COULD LIVE COMFORTABLY WITHIN THE CHURCH.**

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- a. They were pointedly restricted and confined to the ONE faith that revealed through the apostles (Gal. 1:6-9; Jude 3).
- b. They absolutely refused to accept peace at the cost of revealed truth.
3. If we say that all modes of faith have equal standing (as the W.C.C. does) **WE WILL SOON BE SAYING THAT NO FAITH IS NECESSARY.**
A faith that is not contended for has little value in the sight of men and will soon be the death of the organism of the Body of Christ.
- D. The ecumenists continually insist that all Christians may be united by having ONE *subjective* faith.
 1. **BUT WITHOUT ONENESS OF OBJECTIVE FAITH THERE CAN BE NO SUBJECTIVE FAITH!**
 2. Diverse gospels produce diverse subjective faiths and beliefs.
 3. Destroy the essence of Christianity (the ONE revealed, objective faith) and you destroy the organism which results from that objective faith!
 4. The system of doctrine contained in the Bible (especially New Testament) is itself AN ORGANISM—destroy one vital doctrine and terrible sickness and weakness will result.
 5. The church is responsible to God as “the pillar and ground of the truth.”
 - a. A world organization without a clearly defined Biblical doctrine (objective faith) is a violation of that trust.
 - b. **HOW CAN ORGANIZATIONAL VISIBILITY BE CONSIDERED MORE IMPORTANT THAN VISIBILITY OF UNITED TRUTH?**
- E. Genuine and permanent unity simply cannot exist without agreement on essential teachings of Christ.
 1. Stifling controversy over basic doctrines and minimizing differences may hasten the organization of a world-wide church, **BUT WILL THE END RESULT BE A CHRISTIAN CHURCH?**

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2. Unity of faith cannot be accomplished in a generation—especially in a generation that is scripturally illiterate.
 - a. Paul says it takes “diligence” (hard work) to have unity—patient, courageous *work*.
 - b. It takes teaching—“speaking the truth in love . . . *growing up*. . . .”

IX. The Church is An Organism Because it is A Universal Church.

- A. The existence of the church is not dependent upon visible organization.
- B. The church is not a matter of sight but of faith.
 1. If the essence of the church were her visibility, then there would be no need of faith to realize her existence in far distant places—unseen.
 2. If one organization were essential to unity then faith in the essential oneness of the church would be a delusion.
- C. The concept of universal organism appears in various figures of speech.
 1. The Body—church in Corinth was not in organizational union with the church in Jerusalem or Rome yet she is spoken of as the body of Christ.
 2. Bride—pluralities of brides do not exist in the sight of the Bridegroom.
 3. Temple—the Temple is one (cf. Eph. 2:21-22).
- D. Although organizational union is not essential to universal unity—that universal, spiritual unity must be of necessity manifested visibly.
 1. Recognizing and submitting to the absolute Headship of Christ is an outward and visible manifestation of spiritual unity.
 2. Observance of divinely instituted ordinances is a visible manifestation of spiritual unity. (cf. Acts 2:42)
 3. Holiness, Sanctification, Separation from the world is a necessary and distinctly visible manifestation of unity.
 - a. **WITHOUT HOLINESS THE CHURCH CAN NEVER EXPECT TO ACHIEVE UNITY UPON EARTH** (James 4:1).

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- b. Unjustified division finds root in the evil lust of the human heart.
- c. Let us seek first a holy church and unity will be added to her.
- 4. Discipline is an outward manifestation of unity.
 - a. There can be no unity if the church tolerates immorality and heresy.
 - b. **EVEN THOSE OF EVANGELICAL FAITH OFTEN EXPRESS THE FEAR THAT THE EXERCISE OF DISCIPLINE WILL DRIVE PEOPLE AWAY FROM THE CHURCH.**
 - (1) History reveals just the opposite to be true.
 - (2) Note the effect of discipline in Acts 5.
 - (3) The world beholds other societies exercising discipline over its membership while the church, checked by cowardice or false tolerance, fails to remove even the most flagrant violators of her laws. **NO WONDER THE WORLD SCORNS THE CHURCH!**

Conclusion

The Body of Christ

- A. The body (the church) receives life from the Head.
 - 1. Members of the body have union together *not* through external organization but by virtue of their spiritual union with Him.

Structural organization is not stressed in the New Testament.
 - 2. Compare these scriptural references.

Rom. 12:5; I Cor. 12:12-31; Col. 1:18; 2:19; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:1-16; 5:23-32
 - 3. These scriptures plainly teach that the body of Christ exists as an organic whole.
 - 4. An overall organization was non-existent in the 1st century church.
 - a. Because individual or groups of churches had separate organizations does not imply that the church was divided or fragmented.