

FIRST CORINTHIAN COMMENTS

Much of this collection of Notes can be described as “First Impression” that were jotted down during devotional readings of this letter of Paul’s to the Church at Corinth. For more detailed comments on specific chapters and verses see the other documents listed for this book.

CHAPTER 1

1-3 Our “place” in the body -- our ministry -- is not by our own will, but by the will of God. Our ministry and message is primarily to those who are called out of the world. Just as Moses was used by God to call the Israelites out of Egypt, once the called-out ones were assembled, the message was to them and not to the Egyptians they left behind. Most of the messages of the Bible are to God’s people and not to the world. There is an expectation of those who “call upon the name of our Lord” to be holy or set apart for use in the Kingdom of God.

4-8 Anything in us that is of any merit (that others may be thankful for) is there because we are in Christ. All the gifts those in the church at Corinth manifested are confirmation of the truth that Paul preached to them. God is not stingy in His giving -- not lacking in any spiritual gift -- and we should be as He is in generosity. Our focus must be on the outcome -- our motive, our drive and purpose should be that the Lord Jesus be revealed (in us) by the operation of the gifts, holy lives, generous spirit, and absence of sinfulness -- all made possible by His strength operating through us.

9-10 Our unity is based on all of us being in Christ and Christ is not divided. We need to be saying what He says and not our own imaginations. The mind of Christ, if allowed to operate, will cause us to be united in motivation and our rationalization.

11-12 The flesh (carnal) nature that exalts itself against others (and ultimately against God) is an ever present threat to the work of the Kingdom of God. It is the reason we are to take up our cross daily and say “no” to self interest.

13-17 The Church is not to become a personality cult that focuses on an individual. Those who have been used by God in a mighty way to lead many to salvation can be tempted to think it is their own dynamic personality and innate charisma that caused it to happen. When we think that it is the individual that is making it happen, then we deny the atonement of the cross.

There is an interesting parallel in the above passage with the message Moses gave to the Children of Israel in the first chapter of Deuteronomy. God chose Moses and God chose Paul. He called them to similar ministries. Both the Israelites and the early church members were blessed by God’s power operating in their midst and both were fed with “heavenly” food. Factions developed in both groups and both needed to have the carnal nature die. In the case of the Israelites an entire generation died, in the case of the church each person must die to self by the continuing work of the cross. Jesus told us that we are to take up our cross daily.

18-21 Since the fall of mankind, man has attempted to live by his wits. In his pride, he has concluded that he is self-sufficient. The need for a Savior from an external Source clashes with fallen man’s view of the cosmos. Those so-called wise, scholarly and philosophical ones see things of the spirit as utterly foolish, yet they believe their own ideas to be ultimately rational. This pride prevents those wise in their own eyes from coming to know God and the consequence of this loss shows how foolish they actually are. The plan of salvation, of God becoming a man, living a sinless life, dying as a substitute for sinful man, and rising from death is foolishness to the pseudo-intellectuals.

22-25 Those who are perishing are found among the religious and the intellectuals. Each has a different expression of their human wisdom. The Jews were looking for some miraculous demonstration of power and the Greeks would find their salvation in educating and improving the rational man. Neither was ready for a salvation that came out of a self-sacrificing demonstration of love. Those who respond in faith to God, find in Christ all the power and wisdom they need. What once seemed foolish is the ultimate wisdom. What appeared to be weakness in dying is now seen to the ultimate in strength.

26-29 God did not limit His gift of salvation to those of wealth, wisdom (human), or those in positions of power. In fact, these can become impediments to salvation. Man will cling to the tangible and physical rather than the spiritual. God has preordained failure in all that we do in our own strength so that we will be able (if not willing) to acknowledge our weakness and dependence on him rather than increase in pride

30-31 Our salvation is not of our own doing -- even our acceptance of Jesus and our position in Him is a result of His grace. The wisdom that is Jesus is defined for us as righteousness, holiness, and redemption.. Since God provides the salvation and also provides the means to enter into this salvation, we can have our confidence in Him and

never in ourselves.

CHAPTER 2

2:1a Paul was the initiator of the relationship he had with the church in Corinth. This is the pattern that God set in that while we were yet in our sin, He came to us to bring salvation. For us, the lesson is that the lost are **not** going to be beating a path to the door of the church, we are instructed to go to them.

2:1b We do not have to have a college education or be a seminary graduate to tell what God has done for us. It is not ability that we lack, it is rather willingness.

2:2 We must put first things first and make sure that we don't confuse people with perplexing doctrinal issues. The basic truth of John 3:16 is a must issue.

2:3 When we grasp the realization that we have absolutely no power to save ourselves and certainly none to save anyone else, then we sense how insignificant our ability is relative to anything of eternal value. We should be struck with awe at the infinite power that God has to save (or destroy) and the great love that God has for man. When we know that He is working in us to accomplish His purposes then we will be shaken.

2:4-5 In 1Thes 1:5 Paul reminded them of the gospel coming to them "not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." We have gotten away from the expectation of seeing the power of God manifest when the word is preached. Consequently, people tend to think that their opinion is as good as what the Bible says.

6-8 Though the message of the Gospel does not make sense to secular wisdom, it is profound in spiritual wisdom. Those who are spiritually dead cannot comprehend the wisdom that comes from and is revealed by God. Evidence of this fact is that people crucified Jesus. If we drift away from God we will be depending on the world for our light. (In His light, we see Light.) If that happens, then we find ourselves doing things that make good sense to the secular mind but are deadly to our spirit.

9-10a Physical man is limited to the physical world. We cannot comprehend the greatness of God apart from the revelation we receive from God through His Spirit.

10b-11 Just as we cannot know even the thoughts of another person, we cannot know the thoughts of God unless He shows us what they are.

12-13 Since the Spirit that has been given to us knows the mind of God, then we would be foolish to ignore the wisdom that come from Him. If we can operate in both realms, why would we choose to operate on the lower plain of life. We have been taught the way of the world and the way of the Spirit has been revealed to us. Therefore, our thoughts and words should focus on the best.

14-15 An interesting situation for the Christian. The world does not understand the basis for what we do and therefore judges us as ignorant or unsophisticated. On the other hand, the Christian understands both worlds. We are able to discern (make judgements) regarding the happening of the worldly and the spiritual BUT we must not accept the assessment of the world regarding what we do since they are baseless in their judgements.

16 This sounds like the challenge that God gave to Job. The things that God does are mysterious to mere man. Yet, in giving us the mind of Christ, God has shared the mystery with us. We can know that He is working to bring all things under the Lordship of Jesus. We can know that all things really do work together for good for those who love Him and that "good" is that we be transformed into the image of His Son.

CHAPTER 3

3:1-3 When we cross the Red Sea and come through the blood of Jesus, we have left behind the Egypt of our old life. We have entered in to a new realm of spiritual reality; however, our mind set is thinking "the way of the world" or the way of Egypt rather than the "way of the Cross." We hinder the growth of our spiritual nature by not providing adequate room for it to grow. The only way to provide the room is to remove the old nature that had filled our lives while we were in Egypt -- before we came to Christ. This points out the futility of trying to merely reform the old nature -- it will still be there taking up precious room that hinders the growth of the spiritual man. A "nice" old nature has the same effect as a "mean" old nature. The only way to make room for the new is to take up our cross daily. The old man must die to make room for the new man that is after the likeness of Christ Jesus. This truth was demonstrated in the wilderness experience of the Israelites. We must come to the point of realizing that in Christ we are NOT mere men but Children of the Living God just as the Israelite needed to learn that they were not just any ragtag group of Semitic people but were God's chosen nation.

4-8 Getting focused on human leadership leads to disappointment. Paul cautioned those in Corinth to view their

leaders as “only servants.” As such, each had a role to fulfill but the real “leader” is the Lord God. A similar situation was present in the nation of Israel: Moses was the servant of God and he served well. Yet God called and used another servant (Joshua) for another phase of the work He wanted to accomplish. The purpose that God was accomplishing through Moses was the same as the one he was going to accomplish through Joshua. This points out the need for us to know the purpose of God and to direct all our efforts toward accomplishing that purpose as we work as His “servants.”

9 There are many analogies we can use to related the work of the Kingdom of God. It can be agricultural, construction, business or whatever speaks to the people so they can understand the relationship we in the church have with our Head, the Lord Jesus. Whatever the analogy it is important to realize that we are call to be workers.

10-12 In the old Testament, the foundation that Moses laid was based upon the Person of God and the Ten Commandments. In the New Testament, the foundation is Jesus, the Living Word of God. The foundations (the Ten Commandment and the Lord Jesus) are sure; however, care is needed to ensure that what we put on the good foundation is good. Moses had to remind the Israelites “to do all that the Lord had commanded” and to not add to nor take from the laws and decrees. Paul’s analogy is that of quality of building materials. The gold, silver and costly stones are God’s ways while the wood, hay and straw are the ways of the world.

13-15 While we are constructing the building we may unconsciously use the world’s materials or just do it as an expedient. It may appear to work for a while, but then when the time of testing comes, the wall will buckle or fall down. This testing can be in “history” or in eternity. We suffer loss in this life because of ignoring and neglecting God’s best and the same will be true regarding our heavenly rewards and responsibilities in the Kingdom of God. If we have built on the proper foundation, then that will survive but there is no reward other than survival. Those who have built on a false foundation will not even survive.

16-17 Just as the Israelites were the people of God and would serve as a witness to the world of the great and mighty power of the One True God, we are “containers” that are filled with God. God inhabits the praises of His people and He is resident in them. The Israelites were taken out of the smelting pot of Egypt and they were not to be like the other nations -- they could not do as others did. So we are to be set apart and different so as to show the validity of the wisdom of God and to bring judgement on the sinfulness of the world. People claim that God is not fair, that no one can meet His righteous demands. In Christ, we satisfy all the requirements of God. If we are failing to walk in Him, then we are in the flesh and the consequence of that is death or destruction. We see this in Rom 8:12-14 “Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”

18-20 Being wise according to the standards of the world is like serving the gods of the heathen nation. This is displeasing to God and we wind up leaving the position of protection and blessing we have in Him. God did not move. He did not abandon us, but we left His way. We will be “judged” by the world as being unsophisticated, foolish or ignorant, but God has already declared the most wise of the world to be foolish, even their light is darkness. So we must decide if we are going to be pleasing to the world or pleasing to God. Are we going to serve (worship, obey) the world system (and the god of this world) or the One True and Only God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?

21-23 In Christ we become inheritors of ALL things since ALL things will be put under Him. If we are in Him, then we will reign with Him and live eternally with Him. Nothing else really matters.

CHAPTER 4

1-5 People try to interpret us and what we do. In our humanity we tend to “care” what people say or think about us and what we do. We can define our role and communicate it to others; however, the assessment of how well we carry out that role is left up to God. His is the only opinion that really matters. Even we are not to judge our own performance. We may think that we are doing very well but that does not mean we are. Others tend to judge us on the basis of outward appearance and we tend to judge ourselves on the basis of what we think others are thinking about us. On the other hand, God judges on the basis of the intent of the heart. If we want to be able to judge ourselves before the “appointed time,” then we must be able to distinguish between the “thought and intents of the heart.” The Word of God is sharper than a two-edged sword and is able to separate these.

6-7 God’s word to us is uncluttered in its basic form. Moses told the Israelites that God spoke the words of the Ten Commandments and added nothing to it. The purpose of this simplicity is that the application of these precepts can be customized by the Holy Spirit to fit my and your individual situation. God may call me to a work (ministry)

that is far different from the work (ministry) that he called you. We tend to judge everyone else by our own experience and we conclude that those who have not attained to the same level of spiritual maturity that we have are baby Christians and those who have gone beyond our level as fanatics. A proverb of that day is perhaps needed for our day: "Do not go beyond what is written." Any differences we have are a result of what God has given. This is not to say that we bear no responsibility for what He chooses to give us. He may give us conditions that are designed to correct errors in our walk. He may give us conditions that will open up ministry opportunities where He has sovereignly decided what we should do. Regardless of the situation or circumstances, we have no place for pride and boasting.

8-10 In the wilderness, we have manna to eat and water to drink. Our clothes do not rot and our shoes do not wear out. We could think that we have it made. Christians today have become "satisfied" and think they have arrived. Some who are on the leading edge of what God is doing are suffering and dying for their faith and we really have no empathy with them. We haven't experienced those circumstances. Consequently, we don't even pray for their situation. We rest before the battle has been won. We have defeated Og and Sihon and have moved into our houses while the rest of our brothers have crossed over Jordan to continue the battle for the land. We think that God has "honored" us because we were born in this nation. It is not that He has honored but that He has equipped and called us to finish the job to take the gospel to all nations starting in our own Jerusalem. If we can't take the gospel to our next door neighbor, then why do we think we can fulfill the spirit of the Great Commission by giving to the Annie Armstrong and Lottie Moon offerings?

11-13 If we observe all these commandment then we shall prosper and be successful and enjoy a long life. Yet those who will live godly lives in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. Our response to persecution is prescribed by the Sermon on the Mount. In Col 1:24, Paul wrote, "Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. Paul realized that the suffering he was going thru had a purpose of putting the carnal nature to death. He took up his cross daily.

14-17 If we compare our lives to that of Paul or to the Christians at Corinth, then we come closer to the Corinthians than to Paul. Paul's warning to them is also for us. We have need to know the fellowship of His sufferings and being made conformable to His death -- Phil 3:10. There will be some among us to remind us of the right way of life.

18-20 So many Christians have not submitted themselves to sufferings but have "stood up for their rights." This arrogance hinders the work of the cross in our lives to transform us into the image of the resurrected Christ. The lack of dying to self robs us of the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We want to hold on to our earthly power and ability, not realizing that it is a hindrance to spiritual power in the Kingdom of God. Jesus told the Pharisees, "But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you." Paul said earlier that the gospel message came to them not in word only but in power. So much of the message of the time in which we live is in word but not in power.

21 Our concern should not be with a visit from Paul or some other minister. Our concern is what will Jesus find when He comes.

CHAPTER 5

1-13 [Overview] As God (through Moses) warned of the consequences of failure to wipe out the pagan influences in the promised land, God (through Paul) tells us how to deal with the influences of the sinful world in our churches.

1- Blatant immorality is not prevented by having ones name on the roll of a church.

2- All the membership should be in grief and act in one accord to deal with sin in the fellowship. Our problem is that so many of the members are carrying guilt of unconfessed sins and hidden ongoing sins that we are reluctant to take action. A return to moral purity in the body is a necessary first step.

3- We do not have to wonder what the proper action is to take in such cases. The word of God has already been spoken on the subject.

4-5 We must exercise tough love in such cases. I'm not sure what Paul means by "hand this man over to Satan." It could be that the church is to have nothing to do with him and to let the sin run its course of destruction so that he "hits the bottom" and comes to his senses and repents.

6-13 There is a difference in dealing with Church Members who are caught up in sin and who will not repent compared to Non-church Members. We must judge in the church and then expel them from the fellowship because the "Christian" has a choice of how he/she will conduct his/her life. Those who have never know Christ are serving the god of this world and have no choice in the matter. Our approach with them is to continue associating with them -- this is the only means of evangelizing them. We are not to judge them, God has already judged them and unless they

are won to Christ they will surely perish.

CHAPTER 6

1-6 We are not to adopt the ways of the world. The church (the called out ones) are different and that difference is the presence of the Holy Spirit in every believer. We are spiritual and our priorities must be related to the Kingdom of God and not on material matters. If we need help in deciding a matter, then another brother or sister in Christ is a wiser council than an ungodly judge who does not have access to the Spirit of God.

7- There can be no spiritual victory if we are controlled by the physical and material. This is turn the other cheek, go the second mile, and give your cloak also when someone demands your coat.

8-10 We have no problem believing that sexual perversion and murder and all the grossly offensive (to us) sins will be denied inheritance in the kingdom of God. But have we faced up to the fact that greed and gossip are in the same list of those who will not inherit the kingdom?

11 All these sins were typical of our past. They are of Egypt. We do not take these into the Promised Land. They either drown in the Red Sea or they must die in the wilderness.

12-14 We must be careful to know let our liberty in Christ become license to do things that are not beneficial to us or to the Kingdom of God. We do not want our liberty to lead us to unrestrained freedom that turns into anarchy. We must realize that we cannot separate the spiritual and the physical part of our lives and therefore do physical things that are destructive to our spiritual well-being. If the same power that raised Christ from the dead dwells in us (in our spirits), then that same Spirit will also give life to our mortal bodies. God has redeemed us totally: spirit, soul, and body.

15-17 Since we really cannot separate ourselves into three separate divisions, then anything that happens in one part of us affect the others. If we are united with the Lord in our spirits then our body becomes a part of Christ. We then defile the Body of Christ if we defile ourselves.

18-20 In areas where temptation is strong, having a way of escape rather than trying to fight is OK. Therefore, in certain area we are to avoid the confrontation. Sins against the body have a devastating effect on the rest of our life. They effect our emotions, our ability to think clearly, our resolve and they can be a hindrance to our spiritual growth. We should realize that caring for the physical body can be an act of worship offered to God since He resides in us.

CHAPTER 7

1-2 In similar passages, Paul restates the item or claim put forth by the Corinthians in the letter to him. He then gives his answer. In Ch 7 it is not at all obvious where “the question” ends and the answer begins. It could easily be that the assertion posited by the Corinthians is the statement “It is good for a man not to marry.” What then follows is Paul’s reply. It would be as if he had said, “That’s OK, but since there is the issue of fornication . . .”

3-4 These verses may be items stated by the Corinthians in their letter to Paul.

5 Perhaps Paul’s replay to their statement about the body of the wife/husband belonging to the husband/wife. Paul apparently agrees with the basis statement but gives a more general interpretation and the reason why this is a proper thing to do.

6 Paul is appealing to them to consider the logical thing to do rather than having to have a rule that can be used by one of the marriage partners against another.

7 Not every person should marry. Some do quite well as single and God can use both the married and the single persons in His kingdom.

8-9 It is OK to be single. Marriage is not for everyone. I’m glad Paul prefaced these remarks with the fact that this was his opinion and not necessarily a work from God. To marry as an alternative to control of passion does not seem like a good alternative.

10-11 Apparently, from what follows in later verses, this is God’s word to believers. Believers are not to divorce. Obedience to God’s word in our relationships should be sufficient. Love and forgiveness are foundational. Does God’s word apply to non-believers? The cause and effect aspects of doing or not doing what God says will apply to all; however, for those who are without Christ, it is a moot point otherwise.

12-13 Somewhere in the middle of God's requirement for believers and the "do what feels good" of the unbelievers is the situation of an "unequally yoked" marriage. If the non-Christian wants to continue the marriage (a right and God-honoring decision), the Christian partners should continue. Even the lost when they obey the commands of God prove the validity of the word of God.

14- A mystery to be sure: unbelievers who associate with believers sense the special protection enjoyed by the believers. The protecting influence extends to those with whom they associate. Since God has set apart the Christian, then the person who is at one with the Christian is also set apart.

15 A continuation of the thoughts of verses 12 and 13. The unbeliever is under no compunction to obey God's words since the unbeliever does not honor God as Lord of his or her life. If the unbeliever will not honor the laws of God, then God considers the marriage null and void.

16 Any close relationship of believer and non-believer should be viewed as an opportunity God has provide for the believer to share the love of God and His plan of salvation in Jesus Christ. This may be why God allow the path to cross.

17-24 Paul continues teaching the same principle he was discussing regarding marital status. These are different examples. A new Christian should not seek to divorce a non-believing spouse just because he or she has become a Christian. In the same way, a Gentile should not adopt the Jewish ritualistic customs when he becomes a Christian. This argument seems far removed from us today since we do not see the close connection of Judaism and Christianity. Application to day might raise a question regarding whether a Christian should change his or her job upon becoming a Christian. What jobs might not qualify for a Christian. Most Baptist would think that a Christian should not be a bartender. But should a Christian work for the Jack Daniels Company. What about working for R J Reynolds? Or would this apply to those who produce filter material for cigarettes? Just as circumcision and uncircumcision are nothing, these other things are nothing -- keeping God's commands is what counts.

25-40 God has a plan for each life and for some that plan would include marriage and a family. If all devout Christians avoided marriage, then the world would soon be populated by people with not Christian heritage. The important thing here is that whether we are married or not married but whether we know and do the will of God. In all situations into which we are called, we must balance the responsibilities of the situation with obedience to the word of God.

This judgement of Paul considers the "present crisis." Paul was likely convinced that Jesus would return in his lifetime as he stated, "the time is short." Had he known otherwise his judgement may still have been the same as he gave here.

The lesson for us is that we are not to be so encumbered by any relationship or by what we "own" as to be inhibited in following where God leads.

CHAPTER 8

1-3 Before Paul addressed the subject at hand: food and its relationship to religious rites, he gives us a brief preview of the discourse he will present in Chapter 13 on the subject of love. It is good for us to know about the implications and impact on a person's conscious regarding consumption of ceremonially unclean food. It is more important that we deal with each other from a basis of self-sacrificing love.

4-6 Many verses written by Paul in the letter to the church at Corinth were simply restatements of what they had said to him. It appears that beginning with the middle of verse 4 and continuing through verse 6 is such a restatement. This was the essence of the argument by those who said it was OK to eat meat sacrificed to idols. Paul had referred to "knowledge" in the previous verse and we see that to which he was referring starting with the words "we know .." We read those statements and can see the logic behind them. With that logic we can conclude that some person chanting some mumbo-jumbo over a piece of meat does nothing to its food value and it has no spiritual significance to those who are in Christ Jesus.

The practitioners of the pagan religion believed that they would take on the character of the idol by eating the food that had been offered to the idol. This is similar to the belief that drinking blood from an animal would give the consumer the strength and courage of the animal. At Corinth, Christians were faced with the problem of giving others the impression that they were "practicing pagan religions" by eating food that had been sacrificed in the temples. One group of believers argued that since there is only One True God that the beliefs of the pagans were just superstitions and that it was a shame to let good food go to waste. These two different perspectives were causing division in the church. The group that thought it was wrong to eat the food was being influenced by the group that argued that

Christians are free from such superstitions.

7-13 The real problem was not whether to eat meat or not but was really the trouble that such concerns were stirring up in the church. The attitude of the group that argued that since we are free that we should eat whatever we wish was not an attitude of concern and love for others. They were willing to ignore what influence and harm they were doing to others in an effort to preserve their "rights." This group would have fit in well with the "me first" generation that is causing so much difficulty in our society today.

If we limit our freedom by love for others, then we are really and truly free. If we are driven to have our own way and get the most for ourselves, then we are going to miss the point of being free in Christ. Paul knew the freedom that came from giving consideration to others above yourself and he was not hesitant to use himself as an example to follow. Each of us should live our lives in such a way that we would not be reluctant to say to someone else, "Follow my example." You know, even though we don't really say it with our mouth, we really do, through the influence that we have, encourage someone to follow our example. Knowing that, make sure that others have a good example to follow.

CHAPTER 9

1-11 In the area of our country called the Bible Belt there are many churches. A lot of these are small congregations and the pastors have a second job. Most of these preachers are not seminary trained but simply believed they have been called to preach. They are referred to as bi-vocational ministers. Many of the people in these smaller congregations believe this is the right thing to do. Larger churches not only have full-time ministers but multiple ministers. They are paid salaries comparable to other college-trained professionals who live in the area. Even in these larger churches, some members resent the "high salaries" paid to these ministers. I remember a story about a church searching for a pastor and one of the deacons prayed: "Lord, all we are looking for is a poor and humble preacher. You keep him humble and we will keep him poor."

In Israel, God had set aside the tribe of Levi as ministers and priest. They were not given any land when Israel took the area of Canaan. They were not to spend their time in farming and commerce but were to minister unto God and to the needs of the people. When the people brought their sacrifices of animals and grain, the priests were to use a portion for their family needs. I don't recall reading anything about the others resenting this arrangement.

When the stewardship of the plan of salvation was transferred to the Church, there was no "priestly tribe" whose members served as ministers to the people. God set apart individuals: some apostles, some prophets, some evangelist and some pastors and teachers for the work of the ministry to build up the body of Christ. In the "church" there was not a book of rules and regulations such as Moses had prescribed for the operation of the Tabernacle and the duties of the priest and the responsibilities of the people toward the Tabernacle and the priests. As God had promised Jeremiah, He would write His law on the hearts of the people. This was the ministry of the indwelling Holy Spirit. If we are sensitive to the leading of God's Spirit, then we will know how to deal with such situations.

In the early churches, as in our churches today, many were not spiritually mature. They had difficulty in following the Holy Spirit and did not operate from the standpoint of a generous spirit. Apparently, Paul had sensed or heard complaints about providing support to people in the role of spiritual leadership in the church. As a result, he chose to be independent of financial support from those churches. His teaching on this matter came out in his first letter to the Corinthians as part of his argument about being morally free to follow a particular path but choosing to do something more restrictive so others would not be offended.

12-18 Paul used the principle given in the 14th chapter of Deuteronomy regarding the tithe being used for the support of the Levites to define the responsibility of the church to support its leadership. While Paul may have "had the right" to receive support, he did not demand it nor was he willing to accept it. Paul was not doing what he did because it was his occupation but because he was compelled to do so. It was not a choice he made but was something that he was driven to do because of the awesome responsibility of the call of God on his life. Since he had been called to preach, he had no other purpose in life and this was the reason for the "woe to me." The benefit of Paul not being financially compensated for his preaching was that he had a more complete freedom to use whatever methods might be most effective in getting the job done.

19-22 Paul realized the need to be "debt free" regarding the freedom it gives. Being totally free and sure of who we are give us the confidence to do whatever it takes to get the job done. In the situation of Jesus washing the disciples' feet, John told us that "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands" got up and took on the role of a servant. We can do things that are "beneath the dignity of our position" if we have the confidence of who we are

in Christ Jesus.

23-27 We have to discipline ourselves to prevent slipping back into attitudes that are of the world. We need to know our purpose and walk according to that purpose. It takes discipline of spirit, soul, and body.

CHAPTER 10

1-5 Passing through the sea and under the cloud are pictures of baptisms. The Children of Israel had been saved from Egypt and they had tasted the good things of God and knew how great and loving God was. Yet they lacked faith that would let them walk in the promises of God and enjoy His full blessing. Without faith it is impossible to please God. The consequences of not pleasing God in their case was that they died in the wilderness.

6-11 God's judgement in history is not always (hardly ever) repeated. He clearly showed the consequences of idolatry, sexual immorality, and grumbling against God. These consequences will surely come to pass, if not in this life, then in the next.

12-13 As Christians we have no excuse to yielding to temptation. However, we must be diligent and watchful and careful. We must rely on the promise of God to provide a way out and then take the way out when it happens.

14-22 The early church emerged from a society of paganism and paralleled the problems of the Israelites as they came out of the pagan society of Egypt. There was a tendency to attempt to relate and even combine the rituals and observances of the temple of God (or the ordinances of the Church) with what was happening in the pagan society in which the people of God found themselves. We have the same problems today. Our culture is a blend of pagan religious practices and Christianity. We blend a questionable Christian practice of honoring dead saints with a ceremony regarding witches and evil spirits. We blend the birth of the Savior with a Druid belief that the trees and woods contain spirits. We mix together the resurrection of Jesus with a pagan belief about a goddess being hatched from an egg each spring. Paul was on target when he advised us to flee from idolatry.

23-24 The statement "Everything is permissible" appears to be something Paul is quoting from what they had stated in their letter to him. While the statement is *prima facie* truth, the application of this truth must be in love. Not everything that is permissible is good or would tend to build up or edify. We must consider the consequence of what we do relative to how others will be impacted.

25-29a "Eat anything . . . without raising questions since it all belongs to God." This may be another assertion of the Corinthians. Paul's response calls for moderation and being flexible enough to forego eating the food if it becomes a point of controversy for someone else.

29b-33 "Should I limit my freedom because of the misconception of others?" If there is a possibility of seeing a lost person saved or a weak person strengthen in the Lord, then the answer is a resounding "Yes."

CHAPTER 11

1-2 Leadership is needed if people are to work together. The alternative is everyone doing his or her own thing. The only leadership that is worth following is that which is patterned after Christ. We often think about the responsibilities of the leader but those who follow also have obligations if the church is going to be effective. We must pray for the leaders and follow the teachings.

3-9 There are many different leadership-follower relationship in life. We are to "stand in proper order" or submit to one another for things to work effectively. In a family unit the husband is held accountable by Christ for how that family functions. A man cannot use the excuse that he was just doing what his "spiritual leader" or "accountability group" told him to do. His accountability is to Jesus. This is the implication of praying or prophesying with his head covered. On the other hand, a wife is to follow her husband's leading and she can legitimately say, "I was faithfully doing what my husband told me to do." He is the covering for her head.

10-16 In verses 10 and 11, Paul appears to be presenting two sides of an argument. One side of the argument would advocate that since woman was made for man and not man for woman, since man is the glory of God and woman is the glory of man AND because of the spiritual battles that we must wage in our prayer, THEN a woman should bear a (physical) sign that she is protected by another. The other side of the argument would follow the "however" of v. 11. In the Lord we are not independent of each other, we are all of God. If we rely on nature regarding long hair or short hair, then we might be deceived. In the Greek society, men did wear short hair and women long hair. This was primarily a result of a military need.

One might ask the question if, in the spiritual battles, the enemy looks on the outward appearance or not. A woman may cover her head physically but not be in subjection to her husband and therefore not be under his "headship." In the same way, a man may attempt to engage in spiritual battles and not be living in subjection to the Lordship of Jesus and, therefore, be exposed to attacks from the spiritual enemy.

Paul lay the argument to rest: v 16 essentially says, "If you want to argue about this issue, just know that none of the other church have any such rules and regulations about women praying with their head covered. It is not an issue anywhere else except at Corinth." The NIV includes the word "other" which is not in the Greek.

17-19 If our coming together does more harm than good, then we have missed the point of fellowship in the body of Christ. We should be supportive of each other and work to build up the body. This does not mean that differences will not ever surface. When differences are discovered we should see these as opportunities to find the "mind of Christ" in the matter. These, if approached in love, will work to draw us together rather than push us apart.

20-22 The original Lord's Supper, was carried out at the end of a larger meal that celebrated the Passover. This practice was probably being carried out at Corinth in that the Lord's Supper was being conducted after an evening meal in which the church came together to eat. The meal before the Lord's Supper was becoming the focal point of the meeting and the members were missing the reason for getting together. Paul then reminded them of the purpose of the Lord's Supper.

23-26 This noble experience should never be used as a means to hurt other people. The symbolism of the broken body and the shed blood remind each one of how much God loves us and what a great sacrifice He made in our behalf. It is also to call us to follow His example of self-sacrificing love. The fact that Jesus asked His disciples to eat the bread and drink from the cup symbolized that they were to be participants not only in the benefit of His sacrifice but also in following His example. When we do anything we should try to carry it out in "remembrance of what Jesus had done" and not as a means to help their own selfish interests.

27-28 This is a solemn warning. None of us is worthy to partake of the Lord's Supper since we have nothing with which to commend ourselves to God. Our worthiness comes only from the fact that we are in Christ. To partake of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner should be a continuing concern for all of us. The purpose of the ordinance is for us to remember what Jesus did for us in establishing a New Covenant by giving Himself to be broken and His blood to be shed. If we use the occasion for other purposes, then that would be an unworthy manner.

The celebration of the Lord's Supper is a time to closely examining ourselves as to our motives and actions. Sometimes we tend to drift away from what God would have us do. We get caught up in the routine and forget that we are on mission for the King of kings. We can also drift back into selfish ways and forget that Christ died to deliver us from domination by our selfish nature.

29-34 The consequences of not properly recognizing the Body of Christ can have two aspects. The failure to recognize the Body of Christ could occur in the partaking of the elements of the Lord's Supper or it could be referring to a failure to recognize that some other members of the church are members of Christ's Body regardless of their station in life. The damnation or judgement that Paul mentions is related to physical sickness and death rather than eternal judgement and damnation. Many modern Christians have a lot of trouble believing that sin in a person's life can result in physical sickness. This does not mean that all sickness is directly attributable to sin; however, sin can cause physical illness.

Whatever we do in life should be done in recognition of the Lordship of Jesus. Whether it is partaking of the Lord's Supper or going to the store to buy groceries we should be aware of the fact that He is Lord of all of our life. The only way that we can accept the salvation that He offers is to accept His claim to be Lord of all. He paid the price for that salvation by the things that the Lord's Supper symbolized. Since that act of His dying on the cross for our sins is the most important event in the history of the world, then we ought to hold everything associated with it in highest reverence and awe.

CHAPTER 12

1-3 Every Christian has one or more spiritual gifts. Ignorance about the gifts is a problem in many of our traditional churches today. Many Christians are not informed or they are misinformed about spiritual gifts and the result is that the church is not as influential and effective as it could be.

It is clear that all Christians do not function in the realm of Spiritual gifts. Part of the reason is that many leaders have never experienced the power that come when the Holy Spirit is allowed to operate through the church. There are three elements to Scripturally based ministry: Training, Authorization, and Empowerment. Ministers get

the training in seminaries and are authorized via some commissioning service; however, there is little evidence that there is any empowerment present in the operation of their ministry. The spiritual gifts are the enablement of God to do the work of the Kingdom of God. Therefore, spiritual gifts are not only desirable in the Church, they are absolutely necessary if we are to carry out the will of God on this earth.

4-11 The various gifts have various purposes relative to the functioning of the church. For example, the power gifts (miracles, healings, faith) are equipment for evangelism. The inspirational gifts (tongues, interpretation and prophecy) are for functioning in the church among believers. The revelation gifts (word of wisdom, word or knowledge, and discerning of spirits) are essential to the functional operation of such office gifts as exhorting, teaching, and giving. All these areas are quite different and yet all are needed for the successful operation of the church. God is the source of all legitimate power in and for the church and even though there are differences in gifts, there should be unity in the church since all the gifts are from the same source, and that Source is God.

12-13 The church is the Body of Christ and it should not be surprising that there would be different abilities and function among the members in the same way that our physical bodies are made up of parts that have different functions. The unifying factor for the church is the fact that all who are in the Body of Christ have the same Spirit residing in them. This is the Gift of the Spirit as opposed to Spiritual Gifts. The Gift of the Spirit is simply the Holy Spirit of God resident within the believer. Every Christian has a measure of the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:9 says that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. All that are in the Church came in the same way and that was by a spiritual rebirth and it was the same for everyone whether he is rich or poor, black or white, Jew or Gentile, slave or free.

14-26 Apparently, there were controversies in the church about which gifts were the most important. Some were puffed up and others were put down. Paul tried to show how ridiculous such arguments were by comparing physical body parts. Which is least important, your foot or your hand? Same way with sight or hearing -- both are important. It is the same way in the Body of Christ. There are no unimportant members or parts of the body.

We could learn from the example of the physical body to help us operate better in the church. If evangelism is not a very strong ministry in a church, then not many people get upset because evangelism may not be their "thing". On the other hand, if your left foot were not very strong, then the whole body might suffer from it because you would not be able to do all the things you might like to do. All area of the church ought to be functioning and doing so in a strong and vigorous manner and each area ought to help the other areas to make sure that it happens.

It is important for us to realize that the Holy Spirit gives the various gifts and offices to the church so that all can benefit from those abilities. All believers have been gifted and are to contribute to the good of entire body of believers. All the gifts are important and I'm sure that it grieves God to see His children boasting over their gifts at the expense of another person with a different gift. We all need each other in the church in much the same way that each part of the physical body needs the other parts to function and be healthy.

27-30 Paul appeals to the practical part of us in listing all the various offices and ministries of a local body of believers that is needed for an effective overall ministry in the place they are located. If everyone has the same gift, then the effectiveness is low.

31 I think Paul is saying that is OK to want the gifts that best build up the body of Christ. However, even if we possess the "greater" gifts, the way we use them and our attitude toward the gift and each other is extremely important.

CHAPTER 13

1-13 (Overview) Almost all things that we associate with godliness can be imitated by the flesh except self-sacrificing love. Agape can function only as the flesh (self) is put to death. It is the missing element of "religion." Everyone of the "gifts" can be imitated by the evil one. From speaking in tongues, to prophecy, knowledge, and faith; the enemies of the cross can show their own version at one time or another. Buddhist monks take serious vows of poverty that would shame the pitiful material sacrifices of most Christians, the *kame kazi* pilot of Japan gave their bodies to be burned, and the communist party members had fervent belief in their dogmas and were loyal to them. The humanist are faithful to what they believe. The mark of the Christian is and will always be how we love each other even as Christ loved us. Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples." In the end, our hope will survive because it is founded on the word of God, our faith will remain because it is the evidence of things hoped for, and our (agape) love will be there since it is the eternal nature of God.

All of us have been fascinated by the natural talents and abilities of people. For those of us who are in Christ, we have superimposed on the natural realm a supernatural reality in which we are endowed with a variety of spiritual gifts. These spiritual talents are separate from and generally not related to natural talents. The Bible tells us that

spiritual gifts are given to the saints to enable them to carry out the work of the ministry that builds up the Church (Eph 4:12).

The context in which talents or gifts find expression greatly influences the effectiveness of these capabilities. We have heard of the "prima donnas" of the theater or the spoiled "super stars" of professional and amateur sports. Typically such people have limited influence beyond the expression of their narrow talent. Many of these fail to find a full and meaningful life. The same concern regarding the context in which natural abilities are expressed applies to spiritual gifts, also. The gifts may operate perfectly but have an imperfect impact if the context in which the ministry is delivered is defective. The more *excellent way* is for every ability to find its expression in the framework of *unselfish love*.

In the midst of Paul's discourse about Spiritual gifts and how these are to operate in the church, he interjected a powerful teaching about the framework in which God's gifts are to operate.

1-3 If life were a sporting event and the Trinity made up the panel of judges, the scoring might be such that the individual scores for each event (action) would be multiplied by a factor that would depend on the intent of our heart. Only "selfless love" would have a factor of **one**. All other intents and attitudes of the heart would get a **zero**. The fact that God gave the gift or spiritual ability does not gain us any points no matter how perfectly we perform if the intents and attitudes of our hearts are wrong. We might be able to preach and teach and prophesy in the most eloquent manner and with exact agreement of what God has revealed; however, if we are doing so simply to draw attention to ourselves rather than love for the people to whom we minister, then we accomplish nothing in God's viewpoint.

It is very difficult for us to determine the motive behind what we do. It is next to impossible to make that assessment for someone else. You would think that giving all of one's possession to the poor or especially becoming a martyr would be motivated totally by unselfish love. This is not necessarily the case. We can imagine a situation in which a person is trying to make a name for himself or is giving his or her money away to spite a family member who might otherwise inherit the money. Only the word of God that is sharper than a two-edged sword is capable of separating the "thoughts and intents of the heart."

4-7 If unselfish, Godly love is the **only** acceptable basis (motivation) for a Christian's thoughts, words and deeds, then that love will find expression in what we think, what we say, and what we do. When a person becomes a Christian, this kind of love is put into the essence of our very being (God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit . . . Rom 5:5). This kind of love IS the nature of God. When this love finds expression in us, it is, in a very practical sense, a result of *God being present in us*. For the old nature, love of self comes "naturally." For the new nature (if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature) selfless love comes "supernaturally." As Christians, we are endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable characteristics. We are no longer able to excuse ourselves with a plea of "I'm only human." Such a confession denies the **new birth** and the indwelling presence of God in us which does NOT dwell in those who are of the world.

Our new "supernatural" behavior (thoughts, words, and deeds) should, in reality, be totally NATURAL for us *as Christians*. In Paul's list of characteristics (vs. 4-7) we can see a mixture of ways of thinking, ways of expressing ourselves and actions. Unselfish love in the heart of the believer produces patience, kindness, and good will. It causes us to realize that we are nothing apart from Jesus and that our boast is only in Him. Selfless love has no motivation to promote *self*, since *self* died on the cross in Christ. Petty slights and put downs by others do not cause anger since "selfless love" believes the best about others. It causes us to hear criticism as an opportunity for us to grow in the Lord and become more like Christ by putting more and more of self to death as we take up our cross each day. The kind of love that Jesus showed us transforms our ideas about what gives us pleasure and causes us to recognize and value truth. Just as God is the protector of the helpless and poor, we too will see opportunity to help those who cannot help themselves. Finally, *true Godly love* produces optimism and causes us to press on toward the goal "being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." (Phil 1:6)

8-13 I guess when all is said and done, "the bottom line" is all that really matters. To a lot of people "the bottom line" simply means *what it costs*. Instead of thinking about the costs, we need to think of *what will remain* after everything else is taken away. In other words, what are we "counting on" for the future? Where does our focus lie?

As Christians, we should be well removed from having to be convinced that money, material things, power, and fame are not points in which we should put any confidence. Before we became a Christian, bank accounts, investments, insurance, careers, positions and the like were "the important things" or the bottom line issues.

After becoming a Christian, we still need to be careful. It is possible to get caught up in a completely new set of bottom line issues. We could put our focus and confidence in the fact that we have certain spiritual gifts. It may be a great gift, having value to the church, such as *prophecy*. Our gift might be at the other end of the spectrum such

as *speaking in an unknown tongue*. It may be that God has given us the *gift of knowledge*. Whatever it is, there will come a time when prophesy will not be needed since we will be fully united with Jesus and not be hindered by the “veil of the flesh.” We will be able to fully communicate with God (Spirit to spirit) and not have a need for *interpretation*. There will be full knowledge for all since we will be in His presence. What will be our focus or our point of confidence then?

At that point, if someone were to raise the question, “How do you know you are doing God’s will?” what would you say? Now we might say, “God gives our church prophetic messages through me.” Some might say, “I speak in unknown tongues.” Others may find their identity and focus in great healing ministries or evangelism and they might say that so many were healed or so many were saved under their ministry. I know people who put their confidence in their giving. While all these are wonderful and great and God can use them, they are limited in scope. They are not “the big picture” issues and they will pass away. So what IS the bottom line? The **only** answer that can be acceptable is “I am in Christ Jesus and He is in me.” This affirmation is an exercise of **Faith** that is based on the **Hope** found in the word of God. However, the evidence of His presence is the essence of His person: God is **Love**. This is foundational.

God is eternal. He is permanent. If we are in Him, then we, too, are eternal. That is really is the **heart** of the matter.

CHAPTER 14

1 After we have addressed the environment (agape) in which we are to operate, then we still need to be about the work of the kingdom of God and that requires operation of spiritual gifts. One of the more important gifts is telling forth the word of God.

2-3 If speaking in tongues is speaking to God (part of devotional life), then that aspect of what we do does not relieve us of responsibility to minister to others -- the word of God strengthens, encourages and comforts.

4-5 Just as our devotional life will help strengthen our personal walk with God, those who share the message of God with others in the church help strengthen the entire body. It is good to have a good strong devotional life (and all should have one), but that does not automatically mean we will work to edify the church, which is a more important result. The first helps support the second.

6-8 If glossolalia has any place in the congregation, it must be accompanied by clarification and interpretation. Otherwise, no one benefits from it.

9-13 In the congregation, it is important to be about the business of building up the body. If that is to happen then that which is spoken must be understood. It matters little if the speaker is unable to relate to the hearer because his message is too esoteric or if the words are beyond their vocabulary or it is really a manifestation of glossolalia. The outcome is the same without interpretation.

14-15 Paul tells us that praying in a tongue (that one does not understand) is the person’s spirit praying -- by-passing our mental comprehension. This could be described as the spirit being in control of the physical tongue (speech). He does not say that this is bad. It is just not enough. We should pray with our spirits and with our understanding.

16-19 Corporate worship calls for intelligible speech and just because you do speak in tongue is not a good reason to do so in the corporate worship time.

20 We should be naive only in matter of the evil that is in the world. If someone tells an off-color joke, then we should be glad if we “don’t get it.” However, in matters of the spirit and in the operation of the church and our interactions with people, we must be mature.

21-22 Based on the context of the passage and the conclusion that Paul makes, these two verse appear to be the contention of the people at Corinth. They took an Old Testament verse and attempted to apply the phenomenon of glossolalia to it. In doing so, they reached a conclusion that “tongues” was to impress (a sign to) unbelievers and that prophecy (understandable speech) was for believers. This conclusion is totally in error.

23-25 Paul concluded just the opposite of what they did. This is a place where being mature (adult) in our thinking is the way to go. An unbeliever would conclude that a bunch of people speaking in tongues were crazy since he would not realize that the people were worshipping God in their spirits. Prophecy, on the other hand, would be understood and the convicting power of the Holy Spirit would work through the words and lead the person to repentance.

26-28 As a result of a worship experience, God would have us move toward growth or building up the church. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, each member should have something to share with the others. It may be a spiritual song, a word of teaching, it may even be a message to the church in an unknown tongue or an interpretation of such a message. Each church (local body) is in process of being “put together” or built up. In the creation of the earth, it

did not stay formless, empty, and dark. God took the chaos and created something. Paul urged the Corinthian Christians to let these spiritual gifts be used in such a way that the body of Christ is built up. Whether it is sharing a song, insight into a doctrinal issue, or a message in "tongues," do it in such a way as to avoid confusion. He spoke specifically about "tongues." If there is no one to interpret, then Paul's advice was to not speak aloud.

29-33 The same cautions would need to be heeded with exercising the gift of prophecy as with speaking in tongues. The prophets would speak one at a time. Others would be allowed to speak as they were inspired and the first speaker would allow that to happen. Each of us should have something to share that will help someone else. The way we conduct our "church services" today, it is rare that we learn from each other. We fear that the situation may get out of control and we tend to avoid letting people give a word from God to the church. This should not stop us from sharing insights with our friends and family in other settings. Sunday school classes should be places where people would feel free to share spiritual insights with each other. Wherever it is done, the results should be to strengthen the church. Any type of behavior in our lives that brings confusion and doesn't move us from chaos to creativity should be questioned.

Just as in the Creation there was a time for chaos and a time for order. So it is in our worship. The touch of the Spirit should re-arrange us. We should expect God to be in control of our worship times. This requires that we yield ourselves to His creative influence as He produces in us spiritual growth that comes out of the worship experience. As we yield, then God can put us in His order and we then become what He wants us to be rather than what we want ourselves to be.

34-36 Paul's somewhat sarcastic rhetorical question in v. 36 causes me to wonder if vs. 34 and 35 are "doctrines of the Corinthians." If 34 and 35 are merely doctrines of the that local body, then earlier passages regarding women praying or prophesying with their head covered or uncovered could have been dispatched with a simple comment that since they are not to speak at all, then it doesn't matter what is on their head.

37-40 The bottom line is that God is not divided and that He desires to build His church in an orderly way.

CHAPTER 15

1-2 The operation of the church in all its outworking and gifts is founded on the gospel. We must never get so caught up in prophesying, teaching, healing, or whatever that we forget the gospel message. Without that foundation, even though we may embrace all other aspects of Christianity, we are not saved.

3-8 The testimony they received is confirmed by many witnesses. The Scriptures confirm it and many eye witnesses saw Jesus.

9-11 None of us deserve the love of God. The fact that He does not function based on who we are but based on His nature (goodness, grace, love) is an essential part of the gospel. Anything we do after we are saved is still attributable to the grace of God operating (not on us, but) in us.

12-13 The "higher criticism" heretics of today have managed to go beyond the heretics of Paul's day. Some (at Corinth) were admitting that though Christ rose (bodily) from the dead, there would be no resurrection of the body for Christians. Today some liberal theologians deny even the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Paul's argument in his day was "if that were the case, then we could not count on the authenticity of the resurrection of Jesus." Of course, this is exactly what the Humanistic heretics of the New Age are preaching.

14-16 The consequences of the resurrection of Christ being false is that the basis for Christianity is nothing more than the moral teachings of a philosopher. Christianity would then be something good to use to help people become better and cope with their situation in life. It would not have any power to exchange the old life for a new life. It would not have any power to counteract the "curse of the law" (the soul that sins shall die). It would have no power to deliver us from the power of sin. It would be reduced to a choice in the cafeteria of world religions, that "one is as good as another."

17-19 The bottom line is that unless the resurrection true, then we have deluded ourselves and are no better for our believe than someone who practices the power of positive thinking.

20-23 The firstfruits were offered up to God as a sacrifice that symbolized that all of the harvest belonged to Him. It was the finest of the crop and was an example of all that was to come in later. Not only is He the firstfruits of the harvest, He also become the progenitor of a new species that does not have the genetic defects of the original species. We then are the progeny who come after him with new genes that provides for us life rather than death.

24-28 In the fullness of time, all other species that contain the "death" gene will be eliminated. At that point everything will be "in Him" and since He is the Head all things will be under Him. At that point all is submitted to

the Father God so that He is all and in all.

29 This is the only mention of the practice of “people being baptized for the dead.” Paul was using this as an example to strengthen his argument that people would not carry out this practice if the resurrection did not have some basis. (It may be a weak argument, since many people diligently practice many activities that have no basis.)

30-32 Paul sincerely believed and was so convinced that the doctrine of the resurrection was true that he put his life in danger everyday because of that surety. If he did not believe it with every fiber of his being then he would be out to “grab all the gusto he could” since there would be nothing to come after this life.

33-34 If we bring in false philosophers and have them teach us false philosophy, then we will be corrupted. We must not embrace any teaching that is contrary to the word of God. It is foolish to do so.

The confirmation of the covenant of the New Testament is the Resurrection of Christ. That act is the proof that He is Who He said He is!

35-49 The concept of a resurrected body that is different from the body of flesh that we now have is nearly impossible for us to understand. The term “spiritual body” is almost an oxymoron. We think in terms of a body as being physical and think that spiritual things are without form or substance. Yet when Jesus rose from the dead, His body was “touchable” and He could eat. He started a fire by the sea of Galilee and cooked breakfast. He also appeared in the midst of His disciples without coming through the door. He disappeared from the view of the two disciples He met on the road to Emmaus.

In our present condition we have an earthly (earthy) body and we have a spiritual being associated with that body. The two are in reality incompatible. At the resurrection, that incompatibility will be corrected and we will have a spiritual body to be with our spiritual being.

50 Jesus said, “Lay not us for yourselves earthly treasures (physical, flesh and blood) but lay up for yourselves heavenly treasures (spiritual). Our greatest treasure is our lives. We can choose to build up the carnal side of our being or the spiritual side. The carnal side will not translate into the eternal realm, the spiritual side will. Therefore, we would do well to make more room for the spiritual side by daily putting the carnal side to death. This will give us greater “treasures” in the heavenly realm.

51-53 At a given point in time, we will transition from a dual nature to a single nature. All that is carnal will disappear and all we will be left with is the spiritual. It will happen in an instant.

54-56 Death will be defeated because there is nothing left for which death can have any effect. Death operates in the realm of the flesh (carnal) as does the principle of sin and the law. Without the fleshly nature, these have no place of operation.

57-58 The way out of our fleshly nature and into the spiritual nature is via the Cross -- it is by the Cross that Jesus defeated and crushed the devil and it is by the Cross that we gain victory over the flesh. Our faith in this will keep us where we ought to be and will fuel our faithfulness.

CHAPTER 16

1 In Deuteronomy, God’s people are told to obey all that the Lord commanded and they would prosper. They would be lender and not borrowers, they would be the head and not the tail. In the first century church, the Christians in Jerusalem were being obedient to God and yet there was extreme hardship on them. What’s going on? The judgement of God was coming upon the nation of Israel and specifically upon Jerusalem. They had failed to “get it right” in the 490 years that God had allotted to them. Those Christians in Jerusalem (though they were in God’s will) still suffered hardship just because they were near. When general hardships come because of judgement on a land (floods, earthquakes, etc.) then individuals will also suffer.

2-4 Helping our fellow Christians should be a financial priority in our lives. We need to have a storehouse against the bad times -- example of Joseph in Egypt -- so that we are not into crisis management every time some incident comes up.

5-7 The work of the Lord takes time to be with people to teach and to build relationships where discipleship can be effective. We are trying to accomplish it with “a passing visit.” We use mass evangelism and great rallies and television broadcast, but there is no substitute to one-on-one discipleship.

8-9 We must be careful that we do not schedule the work God wants us to do out of our lives. When God opens the door for us to be effective, then we must be willing to cancel other plans and take advantage of what He has provided. We also must be careful to not let the circumstances of opposition or cooperation determine what doors God has opened. Paul recognized an open door, yet many opposed what he was doing.

10-12 The work that God is doing is not limited to just what I am doing. God is using many people to carry out various aspects of His purpose and plan. Paul endorsed the ministry of both Timothy and Apollos to the church. Many times people are not willing to accept ministry from anyone except the “senior pastor.” People will be in the hospital and they will feel slighted if the only person who visits them from the church is “just my deacon.”

13 We must always be diligent and watchful, strong and courageous and keep the faith. This message is similar to the words that Moses spoke to Joshua.

14 Paul returns to the theme of Chapter 13 as a reminder.

15-18 We can receive ministry from a variety of people if they are properly related to the Lord. Paul is endorsing the ministry of several others to the Corinthians. He is giving testimony why they are to be respected by other Christians.

19-20 The greeting from others who were aware that Paul was sending a significant document to the young church at Corinth.