

# 1 Corinthians

## Introduction

These outlines on First Corinthians are meant for the use of the preacher and the Bible teacher.

I have attempted to present them, for the most part, as logical divisions of this New Testament book.

Of course, no outline serves well unless we put some "meat" onto it.

An outline is a skeleton and we must lay solid teaching on it.

I have attempted to make these outlines include enough teaching to get the thought process started.

I would suggest that the use of several good commentaries on First Corinthians be used as a means of gathering material to add to the points.

The book of First Corinthians deals with about every problem and attitude we find in the church today.

I feel that I have witnessed the proof of the relevancy of this book in my own ministries.

As I have checked over my records, I find that a period of growth and evangelism can be found each time I preached through this book or used it as an adult Sunday school curriculum.

# 1. Paul and the Corinthians

## 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

### Introduction

- A. This letter was sent to the church at Corinth.
  - 1. Everything about this letter is relevant to the church today.
  - 2. This church had many problems even though it seemed to have all the spiritual gifts ([v. 7](#)).
- B. Most of the attitudes and problems that cause trouble in today's church are addressed in this letter.

### I. The Author.

- A. The author is Paul. His background and conversion are recorded in [Acts 9:1-31](#), [Acts 22:1-21](#) and [Acts 26:1-29](#).
- B. He is an apostle. He met the resurrected Christ. The word "apostle" means "one sent." Paul was sent, or commissioned, by Christ in [Acts 9:15](#).
- C. Much of the book of Acts is a record of Paul's activities.
- D. Paul wrote a major part of our New Testament.

### II. The Corinthians

- A. A record of the establishment of this church is found in [Acts 18](#).
- B. In spite of their problems, Paul said they were "called to be holy" ([v. 2](#)).
  - 1. There is positional holiness. We are set apart and positioned in Christ when we accept him as Savior. The Corinthians had this positional holiness.
  - 2. There is practical holiness. This applies to our Christian growth and lifestyle. The Corinthians were not doing well with this aspect of holiness.
  - 3. Positional holiness must come first. We must be in Christ before we can grow in Christ.
  - 4. This phrase, "called to be holy," is translated "saints" in other translations. A Christian is a saint, one set apart to one. It originally referred to a committed marriage relationship.

### III. Paul's Greeting to the Corinthians ([vv. 3-9](#))

- A. "Grace and peace" ([v. 3](#)).
  - 1. "Grace" was the popular Gentile Christian greeting.
  - 2. "Peace" was the most used Jewish Christian greeting.
- B. Paul expresses thanksgiving ([vv. 4-7](#)).
  - 1. He thanks God for grace ([v. 4](#)).
    - a. We need to emphasize grace ([Ephesians 2:1-10](#)).
    - b. This grace comes through Christ.
    - c. The biblical plan of salvation is the means of appropriating this grace.
  - 2. He thanks God that they have been "enriched" ([v. 5](#)).
    - a. "in every way—in all your speaking and in all your knowledge"
    - b. The testimony about Christ was confirmed in them.
    - c. They had all of the spiritual gifts.
- C. Paul mentions the second coming of Christ ([vv. 7-8](#)).
  - 1. This motivates us toward the future.
  - 2. There is strength to be received from a knowledge of the second coming.
  - 3. We will be blameless when he comes ([Ephesians 5:25-27](#)).

### Conclusion

- A. Paul reminds them that they are in fellowship with Jesus Christ ([v. 9](#)).
- B. This is the real basis of unity.

### Illustration

Once I was conducting an evangelistic meeting with the great song writer and singer, Virgil Brock. We used the song, "Where He Leads Me I Will Follow," as an invitation hymn. He interrupted the invitation in a gracious way and said, "The next verse begins with the words, 'He will give me grace and glory.' Remember, you must receive the grace before you can have the glory." How true! I have never forgotten it.

## 2. Who Is Leading You?

### 1 Corinthians 1:10-18

#### Introduction

- A. Paul is not discussing the differences that exist between denominations and brotherhoods. In his day, there were no denominational or brotherhood divisions.
- B. Paul, in this passage, is striking out against division in the local congregation of the church.
  - 1. However, division is wrong wherever we find it and this passage has application to nearly all cases.
  - 2. Most division in the local congregation today is not over matters of faith, but rather the result of personalities that are in conflict.
- C. Paul is writing from Ephesus and [verse 11](#) tells how he learned of their problems.
- D. The problem was a burden, not something to be covered up. They went to an inspired apostle with the problem. We can often do that by going to the Scriptures.

#### I. The Divisions of This Church

- A. The word division means to "rip" or "tear" ([v. 10](#)).
- B. We might sum up the divisions in this way:
  - 1. *I follow Paul*—This group may have taken the attitude that Paul started this church and he will always be our leader. These are the traditionalists.
  - 2. *I follow Apollos*— These people may have put great emphasis on knowledge of the Scripture. Apollos was mighty in his use of the Word ([Acts 18:24, 25](#)). These may have been the Bible intellectuals.
  - 3. *I follow Peter*—These may have put great emphasis on the church and were taking the attitude that Peter had been given the keys to the kingdom, instituted the church on Pentecost, and they would follow him. They may have been great "church" men without going further.
  - 4. *I follow Christ*— These may have been saying, "We don't need anyone or anything but Jesus."

#### II. The Questions Paul Asked This Church

- A. *Is Christ Divided?* This means, "has Christ been split up with different parts given to different groups?" Would He want His body, the church, fragmented?
- B. *Was Paul crucified for you?* Paul directs them to the cross. He focuses on the atonement.
- C. *Were you baptized into the name of Paul?* They had been baptized into the name of Christ. In [verses 14-17](#), Paul makes a statement that some had tried to downplay the necessity for baptism. Paul is not against baptism. They had been baptized. In all of this, the people were guilty of putting the messenger ahead of the message.

#### III. The Significant Facts Paul Gave to This Church

- A. We could obscure the message of the cross by flaunting our own intellect and eloquence ([v. 17](#)). Paul depended on the simple message of the cross even though he had great intellect.
- B. The message of the cross is absolute foolishness from the standpoint of the world ([v. 18](#)).
  - 1. Message doesn't refer to the preaching, but to the fact.
  - 2. Foolishness is from the root word for "dull" or "stupid."
  - 3. Power is from the word for "dynamite."

#### Conclusion

Who is leading you? Are you following Biblical teaching? Many are led by peer pressure, religious opinions formed without knowledge and ideas without Biblical foundation, etc.

#### Illustration

Study [John 19:17-24](#). Tell the story of the crucifixion. Roman soldiers divided the earthly belongings of Jesus, but they gambled for His seamless robe rather than tear it. These were hardened men, but they saw the beauty of that robe and refused to tear it. I have heard that the early church used this seamless garment as an illustration of the unity of the church. To divide the church was to "tear" or destroy something of great value and beauty that belongs to Christ.

### 3. The Power of the Cross

#### 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

#### Introduction

- A. God has given us a message of salvation through the cross ([v. 18](#)).
- B. God's Word instructs us to receive this message by faith ([Romans 3:21-26](#)).
- C. The cross is the central fact of the Gospel. Paul wants the Corinthians to focus on the cross. We should do the same.

#### I. The Jew and the Cross

- A. Jews looked for signs ([v. 22](#)).
  - 1. It was a time of false messiahs.
  - 2. Jewish leaders asked Jesus to show them signs ([Matthew 12:38](#)).
  - 3. Signs and miracles confirmed the message of God but did not save people from their sins.
  - 4. Jesus performed many signs and miracles to prove he was the Messiah.
- B. The cross was a stumbling block to the Jews ([v. 23](#)).
  - 1. "Stumbling block"—from the Greek word "skandalon." We get our word "scandal" from this.
  - 2. The Jew considered the cross a "scandal" because of [Deuteronomy 21:23](#) (a curse).

#### II. The Gentile and the Cross

- A. Gentiles (Greeks) looked for wisdom ([v. 22](#)).
  - 1. They loved oratory and they loved to argue. The dogmatic message of salvation through the death of a Savior seemed too simple.
  - 2. [Verse 20](#) seems to indicate that they did not come to know God by studies in man's wisdom. [Verse 21](#) shows us that worldly wisdom can keep people from knowing God through the message of the cross.
- B. The cross was "foolishness" to the Gentiles ([v. 23](#)).
  - 1. God wouldn't act that way, in their opinion.
  - 2. They tried to make God fit into their framework of logic. The cross wouldn't fit, so it was viewed as foolishness. However, many of the mighty acts of God are not logical.

#### III. The Christian and the Cross ([vv. 25-29](#))

- A. God often does things that seem foolish. He often uses things that seem weak.
  - 1. David and his sling.
  - 2. Namaan and the Jordan River.
  - 3. Jesus healing the blind man with mud and spittle.
- B. The cross is the "power of God" to the Christian ([v. 18](#)).
  - 1. It is God's way of salvation and life.
  - 2. Human nature often tries to devise its own ways of salvation ([Romans 10:1-4](#)).

#### Conclusion

- A. Our attitude is all-important. Attitudes cause churches to grow or stay small. Attitudes lead people to accept the Savior or reject Him.
- B. The attitudes of the Jew, the Gentile, and the Christian are prominent in our society today.

#### Illustration

Study [1 Chronicles 13:1-14](#) and [1 Chronicles 15:1-28](#). Tell the entire story of David's failed attempt to bring the ark of God into Jerusalem. Point out the fact that David admitted the reason for the failure in [1 Chronicles 15:11-15](#). When they acted in the "prescribed way," they were successful.

Our logical plans for God and salvation fail. God has a "prescribed way" in the cross and the plan of salvation.

## 4\_Let's Think About God's Wisdom

### 1 Corinthians 2:1-16

#### Introduction

- A. Use the illustration of the ministry of Jonah. His message to Ninevah was negative. However, he faithfully proclaimed his God-given message and had great results. In some way God worked through that message.
- B. We are being taught that God works through His Word. That must be our message.

#### I. The Message Paul Preached (vv. 1-8)

- A. Paul did not depend on eloquence or his own wisdom. This is made clear in [verses 1, 3](#) and [4](#).
- B. His message was Christ and the cross ([v. 2](#)).
- C. Consider the meaning of some of his words in this passage.
  - 1. *Weakness*— this can mean "simplicity" ([v. 3](#)). Fear means that he was anxious to perform a duty, he trembled.
  - 2. *Demonstration of the Spirit's Power*— God caused something supernatural to happen when the message was preached ([v. 4](#)).
- D. The message of the Savior has always been in God's plan ([vv. 7, 8](#)).
- E. God's secret wisdom—this message is the wisdom of God ([v. 7](#)).

#### II. The Work of the Holy Spirit (vv. 9-10)

- A. [Verses 9](#) and [10](#) are often applied to Heaven. Heaven is wonderful, but that is not what Paul is talking about.
- B. He is teaching from [Isaiah 64:4](#).
  - 1. No one could comprehend what God would bring about through Christ and his cross.
  - 2. The great things of salvation are revealed through the Spirit. [Ephesians 3:5](#) casts more light on this.
- C. God's wisdom is revealed by God's Spirit.

#### III. The Condition of the Human Race (vv. 11-16)

- A. You are the only one that really knows your mind. The Spirit is the one who knows the mind of God ([v. 11](#)).
- B. The Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures give us the thinking of God.
- C. The Holy Spirit works through the Scripture. He indwells the Christian. It is all supernatural.
- D. [Verse 14](#) speaks of "the man without the Spirit."
  - 1. This is the person who sees nothing beyond this present physical life.
  - 2. Spiritual things seem foolish to a person like this.
- E. [Verse 15](#) speaks of the "spiritual man."
  - 1. The true Christian is dependent on God and does not seek the approval of the world.
  - 2. [Verse 16](#) teaches that the Christian has "the mind of Christ."
    - a. This doesn't mean that we know everything.
    - b. It means we look at life through the teaching of Jesus.
- F. Faith in Christ will come through the wisdom of God.

#### Conclusion

There are two groups of people. The world is made up of those without the Spirit and those who are spiritual.

#### Illustration

Study 2 Chronicles, chapters 10, 11 and 12. Tell the story of Rehoboam pointedly and briefly. Emphasize [2 Chronicles 12:14](#), "He did evil because he had not set his heart on seeking the Lord."

# 5\_A View of the Church (Part 1)

## 1 Corinthians 3:1-9

### Introduction

- A. The Corinthians were proud of their gifts and their wisdom. They seemed to be critical of Paul's simple message.
- B. Paul tells them he must keep his teaching simple because they are "mere infants in Christ" ([v.1](#)).
- C. I wonder what this did to their pride?
- D. Paul goes on to give three different viewpoints of the church. We will deal with the first two in this message.

### I. Paul Views the Church as a Family ([vv. 1-4](#))

- A. Paul calls them "brothers" ([v.1](#)). He goes on to say they are not "spiritual" because they are "worldly" and "infants."
  - 1. They need to be taught but they have already accepted Christ as Savior. Edification or teaching is a constant need in the Christian life.
  - 2. The new birth gives us entrance into Christ as infants. We should grow.
  - 3. Mature Christians are, in a sense, older brothers or sisters to the immature Christian. They need to help in the growing process.
- B. The Corinthians were living on "milk" ([v.2](#)) and Paul wanted to give them "solid food." Are we mature enough to take "solid food?" Are we growing spiritually?
- C. Their "jealousy" and "quarreling" ([v.3](#)) were proof of their immaturity.
  - 1. Mature people have good relationships; children fuss and pick fights.
  - 2. Children pick heroes. These immature Christians were arguing over preachers ([v.4](#)).
  - 3. Progress is evident in the growth of children. Do some remain spiritual infants?
  - 4. Children follow and imitate others. What lessons in your life teach others in the church?

### II. The Church as a Field ([vv. 5-9](#))

- A. The word "servants" ([v.5](#)) is the word we translate as "deacon" or "minister" in some other passages.
  - 1. They were servants through whom the Corinthians first heard the gospel which resulted in their belief in Christ.
  - 2. It was not their intent to develop followers for themselves.
- B. God uses us to make things happen in His church ([vv. 6-8](#)).
  - 1. We do different things but God makes it successful ([John 4:34-38](#)).
  - 2. Our purpose should be that of serving God. We will be rewarded.

### Conclusion

- A. The church as a family speaks of growing in spiritual maturity.
- B. The church as a field speaks of quantity growth.
- C. Both kinds of growth need to be in the local church.
- D. There is a third view of the church in the next outline.

### Illustration

John the Baptist said of Jesus, "He must become greater; I must become less" ([John 3:30](#)). Tell the story of this Scriptural scene and emphasize that this should be the attitude of every Christian worker.

## 6\_A View of the Church (Part 2)

### 1 Corinthians 3:10-23

#### Introduction

- A. Review: In the last sermon we saw that the church was viewed as a *family* and a *field*. Now, we see the church presented as a *building*.
- B. This has an individual application but it is still in the context of the church. It is dangerous to bring damage or destruction to the church. This warning often goes unheeded.
- C. Paul is pointing out that God will judge our labors as they are related to the church.

#### I. Jesus Christ Is the Only Foundation (vv. 10, 11)

- A. *I laid a foundation*— Paul spent about eighteen months in Corinth. He was the one who laid the foundation (v. 10).
- B. He laid the foundation that was already given by God, Jesus Christ (v. 11).
- C. The foundation is extremely important. Jesus told a story about two men who built houses (Matthew 7:24-27).
  1. The story never indicates that one house was better or more expensive than the other.
  2. The difference was that only one had a foundation.
  3. So we face two questions: First, is our local church really on the foundation? Second, have you laid the only acceptable foundation for the superstructure of your life?

#### II. Our Deeds Determine What we Build on the Foundation—(vv. 12-13)

- A. Some deeds of the church and the individual are like "gold, silver and costly stones." These things last.
- B. Other deeds are like "wood, hay or straw." These things simply do not last.
- C. We must review the program of the local church. Are we fulfilling our God-given purpose?
  1. Remember, things do not go to heaven; only people go to heaven (Matthew 6:19-21).
  2. As a church and as individual Christians, we must build up people.

#### III. The Judgment of God will Test our Deeds—(vv. 13-15)

- A. "The fire will test the quality of each man's work" (v. 13). I believe this refers to the judgement of our deeds.
- B. Have we neglected the doctrine of rewards? The good deeds of a Christian will be rewarded (v. 14).
- C. Verse 15 is a word picture of one whose house has burned. He got out but lost everything else.

#### IV. The Church and the Individual Must Examine Themselves

- A. I doubt that verses 16 and 17 refer to suicide. Could it apply to our own lack of productivity? Could it apply to destroying another Christian by slander, bad example, etc.?
- B. We can't run the church as the world runs a business. Christians are "in the world" but we are not to be "of the world" (vv. 18-23). The church must see the needs of the world but not operate by the wisdom of the world.

#### Conclusion

Have we placed our lives on the right foundation? What are we building on that foundation?

#### Illustration

Suppose I meet you tomorrow and you are celebrating. I ask you about the occasion. You tell me that your house burned down and you lost your belongings, your family and a large sum of money in the fire but you are celebrating because you got out. People do not celebrate at a time like this. Apply this to those who say they will be happy if they just make it to Heaven.

## 7\_ The Right View of Judgment

### 1 Corinthians 4:1-7

#### Introduction

- A. The word translated "servants" ([v. 1](#)) was used commonly to refer to those who pulled the oars on the lower deck of a galley.
- B. Christians are servants. We should not be seeking status or recognition.

#### I. Think About Faithfulness—([vv. 1-2](#))

- A. Those *entrusted*. This phrase is from the Greek word for "stewards." As Christians we are stewards and we are to be faithful to our trust.
- B. *The secret things of God*. This is from the Greek word translated "mystery" in other places. It does not refer to things difficult to understand, but to things not revealed before the Gospel was given.
  - 1. The mystery is that we are all one in Christ and the church.
  - 2. Paul is still on the subject of division in the church.
- C. The real leaders are those who serve others. Jesus taught this in [John 13:1-17](#).
- D. Paul had caught the spirit of faithfulness to service. Evidently many of the Corinthians had not.

#### II. Think About Judging—([vv. 3-6](#))

- 1. The Corinthians were evidently very critical because of their immaturity.
- 2. Paul says some things about judging that will help us in all of our relationships.
- A. The appointed time of judgement ([v. 5](#)).
  - 1. Only God can see into people's hearts. We are to be servants, not judges.
  - 2. Jesus is coming! He will judge ([John 5:22](#)).
- B. The basis of their judgement.
  - 1. The Corinthians were judging by their likes and dislikes.
  - 2. The basis of judgement is "that which is written" ([v. 6](#)).
  - 3. "I do not even judge myself" ([v. 3](#)). While we are to evaluate ourselves, if our self-judgement is the final word, we will be despondent. God forgives us, but many times we won't forgive ourselves.
- C. The reason for their judgment.
  - 1. Their reasons were wrong. They criticized some in an attempt to build up the man they liked.
  - 2. Much criticism of others is a vain attempt to build ourselves up.

#### Conclusion

Whatever they had came from God ([v. 7](#)). If they were different, God had made them that way. Whatever we have from God is a trust. We will be judged in the way we use it (study [Matthew 25:14-30](#)). In the parable of the talents, the men were judged, and rewarded, on the basis of their service. The one who had not used what was given was condemned.

#### Illustration

I heard a camp vesper speaker say, "we do not use the sword of the spirit as often as we use the spirit of the sword." I heard Knofel Staton refer to his days as an air traffic controller. He pointed out that the destination of a plane was decided upon before it took off. We have received salvation. God has decided our destination. Let's live like the place we are going to. A Christian is a citizen of heaven.

## 8\_A Group of Contrasts

### 1 Corinthians 4:8-21

#### Introduction

- A. *A spectacle to the whole universe* ([v. 9](#)). Paul is using a word picture very familiar in the Roman empire.
  - 1. Prisoners were paraded through the streets by the conquering general.
  - 2. The apostles were like those "on display at the end of the procession" ([v. 9](#)).
  - 3. They were conquered by Jesus Christ and ready to die for him.
- B. This furnishes the background for a number of contrasts in this passage.

#### I. The Contrast Between the Rich and Poor in the Gospel ([vv. 8, 9](#)).

- A. "Already you have become rich! You have become kings—and that without us!" ([v. 8](#)).
  - 1. They were self-satisfied and thought they were mature.
  - 2. They felt they did not need help.
  - 3. They wanted to rule when they should be serving.
- B. They were "like men condemned to die in the arena" ([v. 9](#)).
  - 1. Paul tells them he wishes he could be a king like they thought they were. He infers he is like a poor prisoner.
  - 2. The apostle knew he had to suffer for the Lord ([vv. 11-13](#)).
  - 3. We should not take this same attitude.
  - 4. We are poor spiritually and need help from the Lord.

#### II. The Contrast Between Wise Men and Fools ([v. 10](#))

- A. They were worse according to their own worldly standards.
- B. Paul was a fool for Christ.
  - 1. He could have compromised the Gospel and avoided persecution.
  - 2. When Paul met Jesus he asked, "Lord, what would you have me to do?" and he really meant it.
  - 3. When the Bible is our authority, we appear foolish to the world.

#### III. The Contrast Between the Strong Person and the Weak Person ([v. 10](#))

- A. Strength that depends on itself will become weakness.
- B. Weakness that depends on God will become strength. A study of [2 Corinthians 12:9, 10](#) will confirm this.

#### IV. The Contrast Between the Honored and the Dishonored ([v. 10](#))

- A. The Corinthians were concerned about worldly honor.
  - 1. They wanted to associate with great people.
  - 2. They seemed unconcerned about honor from God.
- B. Paul and the apostles were not honored by the world.
  - 1. Paul supported himself as a tent maker. Many Greeks looked down on the person who worked for a living.
  - 2. We are not popular with the world when we live with the Bible as our authority.

#### Illustration

I heard Professor W. O. Lappin tell about the man walking down State Street in Chicago wearing a sign board. On the front it read, "I am a fool for Christ's sake." Those who turned to look saw that the back of the sign read, "whose fool are you?"

I visited with a young Christian woman taking graduate work in psychology. She sounded dismayed when she said, "anyone who holds to Christian ethics is now considered abnormal." I thought, "The Christian is nearly always considered abnormal."

# 9\_ When the Water Gets in the Ship

## 1 Corinthians 5:1-13

### Introduction

- A. Here is an old saying, "As long as the ship is in the water, everything is alright. When the water gets in the ship, there is big trouble."
- B. We might say, "the church must be in the world until Jesus comes. When the world gets into the church, there is big trouble."
- C. Paul tells the Corinthians that they are letting the world into the church.

### I. The Attitudes Toward Sin (vv. 1-5)

- A. This was a shocking sexual sin. It was repulsive even to pagans.
  - 1. Leviticus 18:8 forbids this sin.
  - 2. The woman evidently was not a Christian. No judgement is pronounced on her.
  - 3. Paul seems shocked at their attitude (v. 2).
- B. Our attitude toward sin is important (2 Peter 2:20-22).
  - 1. "Hand this man over to Satan" (v. 5).
  - 2. This discipline was designed to make the man see that he was headed for Hell.
- C. Paul says he is with them in this (v. 4) just as Jesus is with them in their assembly (Matthew 18:20).

### II. The Nature of Sin (vv. 6-8)

- A. Sin will affect the whole church like yeast placed in dough.
- B. Yeast seems to be symbolic of sin. Before Jewish families ate the passover, they were to get all yeast out of the home. Christ is our passover and we are to get sin out of the church and our lives.

### III. Our Attitude Toward the Sinner (vv. 9-13)

- A. How were they to "hand this man over to Satan?"
  - 1. They were to put him out of the church (v. 13).
  - 2. This man had made this sin a lifestyle.
- B. Now Paul deals with another sin problem in verses 9 and 10.
  - 1. They would not associate with non-Christians who were sinful. Paul says it is necessary to do so.
  - 2. They had been associating with a Christian who was sinful. Paul told them not to do it.
- C. Love will always discipline. Parents who love their children discipline them so that they will do right.

### Illustration

The NFL team, the New Orleans Saints, lost several games in a row during the 1980 pro football season. Their fans came to the stadium wearing brown bags over their heads. Many of the bags had "AINTS" written on them. When the "AINTS" finally won a game they had a bag burning ceremony.

The Corinthians hadn't been acting like Saints.

# 10\_Belief Must Change Actions

## 1 Corinthians 6:1-20

### Introduction

- A. The Greeks had a highly structured court system and their society had great involvement in the courts. Is the U.S. becoming this way?
- B. The Corinthians were openly accepting toward a Christian who was living in sin, but they became vindictive when they were wronged by someone in the church.

### I. The Concern About Their Lawsuits (vv. 1-8)

- A. Christians were suing each other in a pagan court system.
  - 1. Paul was not concerned over the possibility of unfair judgement. These courts may have been fair.
  - 2. Paul was concerned that they had so little respect for the ability of the church to settle disputes.
    - a. They were presenting a poor testimony to the unsaved (v. 6).
    - b. They claimed to have great spiritual gifts in the church. Why didn't they allow them to be used?
- B. Christians were showing a wrong attitude in going before the pagan court system.
  - 1. If Christians are to judge the world and angels, can't the church be trusted to make judgements now? (vv. 2, 3).
  - 2. Their lawsuits were a sign of spiritual defeat (vv. 7, 8).
  - 3. It was better to be wronged than to sue another Christian.

### II. The Concern About Their Christian Character (vv. 9-20)

- A. A catalog of sins (vv. 9-10).
- B. Some of them had been guilty of some of these sins before their conversion (v. 11).
- C. Now they have been "washed" and "sanctified" and "justified." (v. 11).
- D. They are to remember the warning in verse 9.

### III. The Concern About the Definite Sin of Immorality (vv. 12-20)

- A. The Corinthians argued that their Christian freedom allowed them to do anything (vv. 11-13).
- B. Paul argues that he will not let anything master him (vv. 11-13).
- C. Our bodies are meant for the Lord not immorality (v. 13).
  - 1. Our body is so important that God will resurrect it (v. 14).
  - 2. Our bodies are members of Christ. We must be careful how we use them (vv. 15-17).
- D. Verses 18-20 give reasons to flee sexual immorality.
  - 1. It's a sin against our own body.
  - 2. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. Don't defile the Spirit's temple.
  - 3. We are bought with a price.

### Conclusion

The Christian should not be as concerned about his or her rights. Christians should be concerned about their debts to God. Christian belief must change the way we live.

# 11\_Marriage Problems and Problems About Marriage (Part 1)

## 1 Corinthians 7:1-16

### Introduction

- A. We must remember that Paul is responding to questions.
- B. Paul directs his teaching to people in three different situations.

### I. The Marriage of Two Christians (vv. 1-11)

- A. Some seem to be gifted for singleness (vv. 6-8).
  - 1. This does not make them more spiritual.
  - 2. The marriage relationship is for most people (Genesis 2:18).
- B. Paul gives definite commands (vv. 10-11).
  - 1. In Christian marriage, there is to be no divorce.
  - 2. If there is a divorce, they should remain unmarried and seek to be reconciled.
- C. Jesus did give a reason for divorce (Matthew 19:1-9).
  - 1. The reason of "marital unfaithfulness." (v. 9)
  - 2. Divorce was not commanded. Repentance and forgiveness could restore the marriage.

### II. The Marriage of a Christian to a Non-Christian (vv. 12-24)

- A. Some became Christians but their marriage partner did not.
  - 1. The Christian is commanded to keep the marriage together (vv. 12-13).
  - 2. The influence of the Christian partner can be powerful (v. 14).
- B. If the non-Christian leaves, the Christian is no longer obligated (v. 15).
  - 1. There is often very little that the Christian can do under such circumstances.
  - 2. Does this give the Christian the right of divorce and remarriage?
    - a. If the unconverted person takes another partner, it would be adultery and the Christian would be free.
    - b. We must be reminded of the teaching of repentance and forgiveness.
    - c. Many believe that this teaching allows divorce and remarriage for the Christian.

### Conclusion

- A. God intends that marriage be one man to one woman until death parts them.
- B. We must take a Biblical outlook on marriage, not a world-dominated view.
- C. Marriages are happy when the Biblical formula is used (Ephesians 5:22-33).
- D. Many marriages fail because there is no fulfillment of the marital duty (vv. 3-5).

### Illustration

I once heard Dr. Crave, the practical psychologist, say that he had saved more marriages by his "Compliment Club" than by his psychology.

His aim was to get each marriage partner to sincerely compliment the other two times a day for 60 days. By the end of that time, the husband was showing love to the wife and she was responding by respecting the husband. They were beginning to live the perfect formula for a successful marriage.

# 12\_Marriage Problems and Problems About Marriage (Part 2)

## 1 Corinthians 7:17-40

### Introduction

- A. There are problems about marriage that are not problems within marriage.
- B. Paul gives advice as one who represents the Lord ([v. 25](#)).
- C. What about Christians who are not married.

### I. Paul Teaches That Conversion to Christ Does not Always Change a Persons Relationships

- A. Stay in the situation you were in when you became a Christian ([vv. 20, 24](#)).
  - 1. Circumcision is used as an illustration ([vv. 17-19](#)).
  - 2. Slavery is used as an illustration ([vv. 21-23](#)).
- B. This does not mean that the unmarried Christian cannot get married. It means that they do not have to get married ([v. 28](#)).

### II. Paul Addresses the Circumstances of His Time ([vv. 25-31](#))

- A. It was a time of crisis for these people ([v. 26](#)).
  - 1. Because of this, it was better for some to remain unmarried ([v. 27](#)).
  - 2. The married, however, are not to divorce ([v. 27](#)).
  - 3. Some of the married might have to live as if they were not ([v. 29](#)).
  - 4. Remember, these instructions are not for the normal situations in life.
- B. They were viewing marriage in the light of their service to God ([vv. 32-35](#)).

### III. Paul Again Reminds Us of the Intent of Marriage ([vv. 39-40](#))

- A. God's original intent is that marriage is dissolved only by death ([v. 39](#)).
- B. Remarriage is always allowed in this situation ([v. 39](#)).
- C. Christians are to marry only those who belong to the Lord ([v. 39](#)).
- D. Paul gives his own judgement ([v. 40](#)).

### Conclusion

- A. This Scripture drives home the teaching that marriage is sacred.
- B. This Scripture also teaches that the subject of marriage is complex.

### Illustration

Two Christians, a man and a woman, came to me with a problem. They were "living together" but each was married to someone else. They tried to impress me with the fact that they would marry each other when their divorces were final. They also stated that their relationship was led by God.

I had to remind them that God does not work contrary to his Word and that the Word of God stated that they were living in adultery. They scoffed at my viewpoint and left.

It is always this way with those who put feelings and emotions ahead of the Scripture.

# 13\_Knowledge and Love

## 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

### Introduction

- A. Some sins are easily recognized as sin. Things like immorality, dishonesty, jealousy, etc.
- B. Many things fall into an area that is not as clear-cut. How do we make decisions on these?
  - 1. The Corinthians had a problem in this area.
  - 2. [Verses 1](#) and [4](#) state the problem of eating meat sacrificed to an idol.
  - 3. The Scriptural answers to their problem ought to help us make decisions in the so-called "gray" areas.

### I. Two Fine Helpers are Knowledge and Love ([vv. 1-8](#))

- A. Knowledge.
  - 1. Remember, Paul was educated but he gives warnings about knowledge.
  - 2. "Knowledge puffs up" ([v.1](#)).
- B. Love.
  - 1. The Corinthians had knowledge.
  - 2. Some scholars think that Paul refers to their knowledge in [verses 4-6](#).
- C. Knowledge and love must be kept in balance.
  - 1. Knowledge without love can lead to pride and legalism.
  - 2. Love without knowledge can lead to wrong doing.

### II. Factors That Help Balance Knowledge and Love ([vv. 9-13](#))

- A. Be careful about freedom ([v.9](#)).
  - 1. We have more freedom as we mature physically. This same truth holds in the spiritual realm.
  - 2. Don't use your Christian freedom as a stumbling block to others who are not spiritually mature.
- B. Be careful about conscience ([v.10](#)).
  - 1. Conscience operates in accordance with the way we are taught.
  - 2. A "weak conscience" may be overly sensitive and judgmental.
  - 3. [Verses 10](#) and [11](#) can be applied to many questions of right and wrong.
  - 4. Our actions and lifestyle must always consider our influence on others ([v.13](#)).

### Conclusion

- A. There are some things we do not do because of others.
- B. We may also live by some rules that we must not force on other Christians.
- C. Make every attempt to keep knowledge and love in proper balance.

### Illustration

As a child, I was constantly warned by my mother about things that could hurt and harm. As a mature person, I no longer need those warnings. However, my maturity gives me an obligation toward those who are immature. I must not leave situations that might harm them.

I have read that conscience might be viewed as an "internal court." It comes to me that courts in different counties may be regulated by different laws and come to different conclusions. Our conscience must be regulated and educated by the word of God.

# 14\_A Really Touchy Subject

## 1 Corinthians 9:1-14

### Introduction

- A. Paul begins to talk about his rights as an apostle.
- B. Much of what he says can apply to the treatment of Christian workers.

### I. Paul's Apostleship (vv. 1-6)

- A. Paul has condemned certain sins in the Corinthian church and it seems that some strike back with criticism of him.
- B. They charged that he was not really an apostle, so, there was no need to pay attention to him.
- C. They charged that Paul couldn't be an apostle because:
  - 1. He was converted after the ascension of Christ.
  - 2. Had no wife like other apostles.
  - 3. Took no pay.
- D. Paul defends his apostleship.
  - 1. He saw Jesus the Lord. Verse 1 tells of his experience in Acts 26:15-18. He was a witness of the resurrected Lord.
  - 2. He is doing the work of an apostle (v. 2).
  - 3. He has the right to have a wife with him and take pay like the other apostles (vv. 3-6). It seems that he has not chosen to exercise this right.

### II. The Christian Worker Is to be Paid (vv. 7-14)

- A. Human experience teaches this (vv. 7-8).
  - 1. Three illustrations are used. He speaks of a soldier, a vineyard, and a flock.
  - 2. These illustrations are to be applied to the Christian worker.
- B. The Old Testament law teaches this (vv. 8-10).
  - 1. He quotes Deuteronomy 25:4. He uses this same teaching again in 1 Timothy 5:17, 18.
  - 2. He views payment of workers as a basic spiritual principle (vv. 10-11).
  - 3. The priests and Levites received support from the sacrifices and offerings brought into the tabernacle and temple (v. 13).
- C. Jesus teaches this (v. 14).
  - 1. The Greek word translated "commanded" is the strongest word for command.
  - 2. Jesus teaches the same thing in Luke 10:7, 8 and Matthew 10:10.

### Conclusion

- A. Paul uses himself as an illustration of what he taught in verse 12. He has these rights, but he doesn't use them for the sake of the Corinthians. It is often good to receive support from another source in starting a church. Paul supported himself and seems to have received support from other churches.
- B. The Christian has the freedom to restrict his own freedom in order to be effective.

### Illustrations

A friend of mine, a preacher, was in a supermarket and was asked if he was a school teacher. He replied, "no I am the minister of \_\_\_\_\_ Christian Church." The person immediately asked, "what do you think about Jim Baker and Jimmy Swaggert?" My friend told me, "I was guilty by association. I could see it in that person's eyes."

In 1989, I received the results of a survey stating that seven out of ten who go into full-time ministry quit within the first five years, usually because they feel underpaid or unappreciated. For every Christian worker you can name who is getting rich, I can name 200 who are underpaid and over-worked.

# 15\_ The Disciplined Christian

## 1 Corinthians 9:19-27

### Introduction

- A. [Verses 19 through 23](#) might sound like the words of a hypocrite to those who do not know Paul's teaching.
- B. He is really giving illustrations of how he adapts his ministry to win people to Christ.
- C. He now uses athletic terms and illustrations to get across his teaching on Christian discipline ([vv. 24-27](#)).

### I. The Race

- A. In a physical race, there is only one winner ([v. 24](#)).
  - 1. In the Christian race, everyone can be winners.
  - 2. Watch the way you run.
- B. Those who compete physically go into strict training ([v. 25](#)).
  - 1. Spiritual training should be a Christian lifestyle.
  - 2. We should set aside everything that might hinder us in living for Christ ([Hebrews 12:1-3](#)).
- C. In the physical race, the crown will not last ([v. 25](#)).
  - 1. The crown was often a wreath. It represented honor but it was not lasting.
  - 2. Our crowns, or rewards, as a Christian are eternal.
  - 3. We should be more willing to exercise discipline because of a lasting reward.
- D. We are not to run aimlessly ([v. 26](#)).
  - 1. Every race has three characteristics.
    - a. A starting point.
    - b. A marked course.
    - c. A goal or finish line.
  - 2. The Christian race has the same three characteristics.
    - a. The starting point is the new birth ([John 3:3](#)). This is our acceptance of Christ as our Savior.
    - b. We have a marked course of Christian living. The fruit of the spirit, in contrast with the acts of the sinful nature, illustrate this ([Galatians 5:16-25](#)).
    - c. Our finish line is Heaven.
  - 3. No one can run a race successfully if they do not abide by these three characteristics.

### II. The Fight ([v. 26](#))

- A. Paul may be referring to so called "shadow boxing."
- B. This is a real fight.
  - 1. It is a fight between good and evil.
  - 2. It is a fight between Heaven and Hell.
  - 3. It is a fight between Christ and Satan.
- C. Every Christian is a part of this fight. We are not just to go through the motions of fighting.

### III. The Discipline ([v. 27](#))

- A. Paul reminds us that he controls his body. He makes it his slave.
  - 1. Some philosophies had taught that the body was evil and it made no difference how we used it.
  - 2. Paul teaches that the way we live in the body is very important to God ([Romans 12:1-2](#)).
- B. Paul doesn't want to be disqualified.
  - 1. We are qualified by Christ ([Colossians 1:12](#)).
  - 2. We must not be disqualified by a lack of discipline.

### Conclusion

Read [2 Timothy 4:6-8](#). Paul lived out his teaching. He tells us that he "fought the good fight," he "finished the race," and he will receive the "crown."

### Illustration

In the great Indianapolis 500, it is the car that is qualified, not the driver. The driver qualifies the car. Christ qualifies us when we come to him as Savior ([Colossians 1:12](#)).

# 16 Christian Freedom

## 1 Corinthians 10:14-33

### Introduction

- A. Jesus loves us, and bought us to set us free ([John 8:36](#); [Galatians 5:13](#)).
- B. Paul warns these people not to play around with temptation and with their Christian freedom.
  - 1. He wants them to have unity.
  - 2. The Lord's Supper communicates that unity ([vv. 16-17](#)).
  - 3. The word "participation" means a "fellowship" or a "partnership" ([v. 16](#)).
  - 4. This kind of participation can take place in a meal that has been sacrificed to idols.
- C. Christians should never participate in pagan worship experiences.

### I. The Christian and Idols ([vv. 14-22](#))

- A. What is idolatry?
  - 1. It is having any false God.
  - 2. Two of the Ten Commandments have to do with idolatry.
  - 3. Everyone worships something, even the atheist worships his own understanding.
  - 4. Idolatry can be anything that takes us away from worshipping the true God in the right way.
- B. Idolatry offends God ([v. 22](#)).
  - 1. An idol is nothing ([v. 19](#)).
  - 2. Idolatry is pagan. Paul indicates that pagan worship is not offered to God, but to demons ([vv. 20-21](#)).
  - 3. Check your life for idolatry. Are you putting habits, hobbies, sports, or philosophies ahead of God?

### II. The Christian and Freedom ([vv. 23-33](#))

- A. Buy what is sold in the meat market without question ([v. 25](#)).
  - 1. It all belongs to God ([v. 26](#)).
  - 2. Don't create difficulties unnecessarily.
- B. If a pagan serves food to a Christian ([v. 27, 28](#)).
  - 1. Eat it and ask no questions.
  - 2. Reject the meat if you are told it has been sacrificed to an idol.
  - 3. We assume [verses 28](#) and [29](#) refer to being told by a Christian who has a weak conscience or by a pagan who is trying to test the Christian.
- C. Do not be a cause for stumbling ([v. 32](#)).
  - 1. We have a greater responsibility to others than we have to ourselves.
  - 2. Christian freedom must be used to help, not hurt.

### Conclusion

The lessons of Christian freedom and idol worship can be applied to many questionable things in our society.

### Illustration

The word "jealousy" is used in [verse 22](#) and the Old Testament often reminded the Israelites that God is a jealous God. We must remember that "jealousy" has two meanings:

- 1. We can be jealous for completely selfish reasons. This kind of jealousy is a work of the flesh according to [Galatians 5:20](#).
- 2. We can be jealous because of our concern for others. This kind of jealousy is "strong zeal." It leaves "self" out of the picture because of concern for others. This kind of jealousy is seen at the cross. Satan has the other kind; he is concerned about his own will not about others.

# 17\_ Women in Worship

## 1 Corinthians 11:1-16

### Introduction

- A. These women had found Christian freedom.
  - 1. They seemed to think they had no obligation to observe any of the customs of their land.
  - 2. They evidently knew the teachings of Paul that we find in [Galatians 3:26-28](#).
  - 3. These women seemed to be casting off the customs of modesty.
- B. The Jewish and Greek religions were male dominated. This newfound Christian freedom was being carried to extremes by the Christian women in Corinth.

### I. The Question of Submission ([vv. 3-8](#))

- A. With the exception of the temple prostitutes, women had long hair and wore a covering in public.
  - 1. In my study, I find scholars disagree on the type of covering and the hair style.
  - 2. But it is clear, these women in the church discarded the accepted hair style and covering.
- B. There is a definite order of headship in the kingdom of God ([v. 3](#)).
  - 1. Christ is the head of man, man is the head of woman, and God is the head of Christ.
  - 2. A man dishonors Christ if he worships with his head covered ([v. 7](#)).
  - 3. A woman dishonors her husband if she worships with her head uncovered ([vv. 5, 6](#)).

### II. The Testimony of Creation ([vv. 9-12](#))

- A. The woman was created for man ([v. 9](#)).
  - 1. If someone rebels at submission, Paul would remind them that Christ was submissive ([Philippians 2:5-9](#)).
  - 2. Yet, the idea of the inferiority of woman is not in the Scripture. It is a matter of souls. Man is to protect and defend her ([vv. 11-12](#)).
- B. Why the mention of angels in [verse 10](#)?
  - 1. This may be teaching that angels are present in public worship.
  - 2. It may be teaching that we should conduct ourselves as if we are in the presence of heaven.
  - 3. The word "angel" means "messenger." It may be that she is being told to enhance the message of the "messenger" by her obedience.

### III. The Necessity of the Appropriate ([vv. 13-16](#))

- A. The "very nature of things" shows that there is to be a noticeable difference between men and women ([vv. 13-14](#)).
- B. Other Christian congregations accepted these guidelines. Why did the Corinthians want to be different? ([v. 16](#)).

### Conclusions

- A. Men and women are equally important in Christ, but there must never be a reversal of roles.
- B. There is to be modesty and submission.
- C. The Christian lifestyle must have a good appearance to the culture around it.
- D. The main lesson, I believe, is not to let Christian freedom become a stumbling block to either the church or the world.

# 18\_Let's Get Serious About the Lord's Supper

## 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

### Introduction

- A. Jesus instituted two ordinances. They are baptism and the Lord's Supper.
  - 1. He participated in both ([Matthew 3:13-17](#); [26:17-30](#)).
  - 2. The church is to be faithful to these ordinances.
- B. Paul taught these ordinances to the church at Corinth when he established it.
- C. Both baptism and the Lord's Supper are essential to salvation and the Christian life.
- D. The Corinthians were misusing the Lord's Supper ([vv. 17-22](#)).
  - 1. Fellowship meals, often called love feasts, were a part of the program of the early church.
  - 2. Some in the church had plenty, others went hungry, and some got drunk.
  - 3. They came together to take the Lord's Supper. However, when it was connected to such a situation, it was being perverted. It also caused division.
- E. The Corinthian church, and the church of the present, must get serious about the Lord's Supper.

### I. The Reasons for the Lord's Supper

- A. It is the one way that Jesus asked us to remember Him.
- B. It teaches us that we are all saved the same way.
  - 1. We have salvation by Christ and His cross.
  - 2. There are no exceptions to this divine plan.
- C. It is the greatest memorial service.
  - 1. It looks back as a reminder of what Christ has done. It reminds us of the incarnation and the atonement.
  - 2. It speaks to the present. It is a symbol of our unity and reminds us of the intercession of Christ during our lifetime.
  - 3. It points to the future. We proclaim His death until He comes again. It points to our complete redemption and glorification.

### II. The Wrong Attitudes That Prevail at the Lord's Supper ([vv. 27-29](#))

- A. The "unworthy manner" of partaking of the supper ([v. 27](#)).
  - 1. We must not take the Lord's supper casually. We must think about the basic reasons for observing the Lord's supper.
  - 2. It is a sin to take it in an irreverent manner.
- B. The lack of self-examination ([v. 28](#)).
  - 1. This is a time for confession of sin—a time to thank God for His grace.
  - 2. It is wrong not to think about our need of salvation and God's provision for it.
- C. The failure to recognize the body of the Lord ([v. 29](#)).
  - 1. This can refer to our salvation through His atonement ([Colossians 1:22, 23](#)).
  - 2. It may also refer to the church which is the body of Christ ([Ephesians 1:22, 23](#)).
  - 3. We need to recognize both our salvation and our unity in Christ.

### Conclusion

The Christian is to be faithful to the Lord's Supper. Our faithfulness should center not only around attendance, but also around the area of self-examination.

### Illustration

Years ago I preached and served communion weekly in a home for the elderly. One lady would always refuse the Lord's Supper with this excuse, "I can't take it. My daddy always told me you have to be perfect to take it and I'm not perfect." I could never make her see that the word "unworthy" in the King James Version ([1 Corinthians 11:27](#)) was the equivalent of an adverb modifying "manner." It speaks to our attitude while partaking of the Lord's Supper.

# 19\_ The Spiritual Gifts (Part 1)

## 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

### Introduction

- A. Spiritual gifts are not talents.
  - 1. Unbelievers have talents.
  - 2. When people become Christians, they still use their talents. They often use them differently.
  - 3. Spiritual gifts are for Christians. They are one of the results of salvation.
- B. There are a number of different spiritual gifts ([v. 4](#)).
  - 1. The gifts are for service ([v. 5](#)).
  - 2. The word translated "worship" ([v. 6](#)) is the source for our word "energy." God energizes gifts in different ways.
- C. Did Paul emphasize the number of different spiritual gifts because the Corinthians had focused on the spectacular ones? ([v. 7](#)). Let's look at the whole list of gifts.

### I. Wisdom ([v. 8](#))

- A. This refers to the ability to apply the Gospel teaching.
- B. Preachers and teachers need this gift in order to apply the Scriptural teaching to the needs of the congregation.

### II. Knowledge ([v. 8](#))

- A. This gift may have been given to people before the New Testament was completed to help them understand facts they had not learned.
- B. The gift may enable some to organize Gospel facts for great teaching.

### III. Faith ([v. 9](#))

- A. We have to have faith to be a Christian.
- B. This gift refers to some who have great vision and believe that God makes it a reality.

### IV. Healings ([v. 9](#))

- A. This is a plural. I do not believe it refers to the ability to heal in all cases.
- B. It may refer to different gifts required for different kinds of healing. There are other kinds of healing besides physical healing.
- C. I admit that I have a problem understanding this gift.

### V. Miraculous Powers ([v. 10](#))

- A. The signs of an apostle ([2 Corinthians 12:12](#) and [Hebrews 2:1-4](#)).
- B. Was this gift limited to the apostolic church? This is not to deny that miracles take place today. How can we limit God?

### VI. Prophecy ([v. 10](#))

- A. "To speak forth" or "to proclaim" is the basic meaning.
- B. This does not necessarily mean predictive prophecy.

### VII. Distinguishing Between Spirits ([v. 10](#))

- A. The early church did not have the New Testament Scriptures. This gift enabled certain people to know whether preaching or teaching was from the guidance of the Holy Spirit, or some other spirit.
- B. God may give some the ability to show false teaching for what it is.

### VIII. Tongues and the Interpretation of Tongues ([v. 10](#))

- A. These gifts have been abused and confused.
- B. The word "tongues" is a plural word. It speaks of different kinds of languages.
- C. The word translated "tongues" was not used to refer to ecstatic speech.

### Conclusion

The Holy Spirit brings unity through the variety of these gifts. The spiritual gifts show that God works through individuals.

## 20\_ The Spiritual Gifts (Part 2)

### 1 Corinthians 12:12-20

#### Introduction

- A. The body is composed of many members ([v. 12](#)).
  - 1. It is so with the body of Christ, the church.
  - 2. Every Christian is baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ ([v. 13](#)).
- B. Many of the most important members of our physical bodies are not seen or valued. It is the same with the church.

#### I. There Can be Unity Even Though There Is Great Diversity in the Church

- A. Jesus is not here in a physical body. He wants to work through us ([v. 12](#)).
  - 1. A normal physical body should have unity.
  - 2. The body of Christ should have unity.
- B. The body functions because its parts do different things ([vv. 14-17](#)).
  - 1. It would be a disaster if all members did the same thing ([v. 17](#)).
  - 2. We are different and God wants to use us.

#### II. There Should be Right Relationships Among Christians in the Church

- A. We need each other ([vv. 19-21](#)).
- B. We must respect each other ([vv. 22-25](#)).
- C. We should encourage each other ([v. 26](#)).

#### III. There Is a Basis for Proper Unity and Relationships in the Church

- A. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the basis ([v. 13](#)).
  - 1. He puts us into the one body.
  - 2. He gives gifts to the members.
- B. Must apply [Acts 2:38](#) and [Galatians 3:26-27](#).
  - 1. The "gift of the spirit" ([Acts 2:38](#)). Evidently the Holy Spirit Himself.
  - 2. "In Christ" ([Galatians 3:26-27](#)). This is a word picture of people putting on a garment.

#### Conclusion

We have been united in one body by the work of the Holy Spirit as a result of receiving Jesus as our Savior. We are important to God, to the church, and to each other and God wants to use us.

#### Illustrations

I bought a cheap writing pen, the kind that used capsules filled with ink. I used all the capsules and went to a store to buy some. I saw the pens but not the capsules of ink. I went to a second store, but could not find the ink capsules although I knew what they looked like. I was about to leave the store when I noticed a bin of long yellow and blue boxes—the ink capsules! The first store had had them, too. I couldn't find them because I had a preconceived idea that the boxes were another color.

We often come to the Bible this way and overlook great truths. This is often true with the subject of the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts.

If I hurt my thumb, my whole body responds and feels it. This happens because of the unity of my body. The Christian who can't see or feel beyond what they are involved in has not even started to understand the unity of the congregation.

# 21\_Love Is the Greatest

## 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

### Introduction

- A. The church at Corinth was lacking in love.
  - 1. It had "gifts" and it was a busy church.
  - 2. It is often easier to be busy than to extend love.
- B. "God is love" ([1 John 4:16](#)). Jesus wants His followers to demonstrate love ([John 13:35](#)).

### I. The Setting of the Love Chapter ([1 Corinthians 13](#))

- A. This chapter may be the greatest thing Paul wrote. It is one of the greatest of writings found anywhere.
- B. This great passage is central in a discussion of "spiritual gifts."
  - 1. The possession of "gifts" did not always make them spiritual.
  - 2. Paul has already informed them that they were "worldly" ([1 Corinthians 3:1](#)).
- C. Many were promoting themselves because of lack of love.

### II. The Source of Christian Love

- A. The love of God is called "agape."
  - 1. The word was seldom used in the Greek writings but is used often in the New Testament.
  - 2. This word does not refer to sexual love, romantic love, friendship or sentiment.
- B. This chapter gives us a definition of "agape" love.
  - 1. "Agape" is a sacrificial love for others even when they are unworthy. "Agape" is more concerned with giving than receiving.
  - 2. Consider these Scriptures: [John 15:9](#); [Colossians 3:14](#); [1 Thessalonians 3:12](#); [Hebrews 10:24](#).
- C. The real basis of "agape" love is commitment.

### III. The Strength of Christian Love ([v. 13](#))

- A. Love is the greatest because it is the very nature of God ([1 John 4:7-11](#); [John 3:16](#)).
  - 1. Faith and hope are important.
  - 2. When we love, we show the nature of God.
- B. Love is the greatest because it leads others to the Savior ([1 John 4:10](#)).

### Conclusion

- A. Love is a command, but it is also a work of the Holy Spirit ([Galatians 5:22](#)). We must express our love for it to be the real thing.
- B. Faith will be replaced by sight when we get to Heaven. Hope will become a reality, but the love of God will always remain.

### Illustration

I am always several years behind on my filing system. Years ago I found a note that I had neglected to file. The date on the note was over 20 years in the past. The note was a reminder of a time I walked through the kitchen of our home, hugged my wife on impulse, and said, "Pat, I love you. I don't know why, but I do." As I went out the back door, my wife said, "Well, love is like that. If it wasn't, it wouldn't be love. It would just be generosity." I think that's good! I'm going to file it someday.

## 22\_Prophecy, Tongues and Edification

### 1 Corinthians 14:1-19

#### Introduction

- A. There are many different ideas about the teaching in this chapter.
- B. Most of the Bible is clear-cut but some of this teaching is difficult because we are far removed from the local situation.
- C. Some seemed to be losing control as they worshipped. Paul gives principles that should govern the assembly.

#### I. The Definition of Prophecy and Tongues

- A. Prophecy?
  - 1. The Old Testament prophet?
    - a. Sometimes predicted the future and was always completely accurate.
    - b. Usually was anointed by God to apply God's message to society.
  - 2. The New Testament prophet?
    - a. A gift to the church ([Ephesians 4:11](#)).
    - b. The prophet sometimes proclaimed far off events. John did in the book of Revelation. He sometimes made short-term prophecies as Agabus did ([Acts 21:10, 11](#)).
    - c. The main function of the prophet seemed to be receiving and passing on revelations of God's will.
    - d. The office seems to have ceased in the local church. The Scripture is completed. The church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets ([Ephesians 2:20](#)).
  - 3. The gift of prophecy today? To speak God's Word with power and authority carries with it the idea of a relevant proclamation to the situation at hand. Those who have the ability to teach and preach the word of God and apply it.
- B. Tongues?
  - 1. The tongues in [Acts 2](#) on the day of Pentecost were real languages not known to the speaker.
  - 2. Were the tongues in Corinth ecstatic utterances?
    - a. This was popular in the Corinthian mystery cults.
    - b. Tongue speaking of this type has been popular in pagan religions.
- C. We have few problems with the subject of tongues if we follow the conclusions of Paul in this chapter.

#### II. Prophecy and Tongues as They Apply to Edification

- 1. *Edifies* was a construction term ([v. 4](#)). It means to "build up."
- 2. The Corinthians wanted to be personally edified and neglect the body of Christ.
- A. Prophecy speaks to people. Tongues speak to God—or only to the speaker.
  - 1. Prophecy was best ([v. 3](#)).
  - 2. God wants us to be in communion with Him. This can be done without tongues.
- B. Prophecy builds up the church. Tongues build up the speaker ([vv. 11, 12](#)).
  - 1. Paul did not deny that tongues have some value.
  - 2. The tongues must be interpreted for the message to do the church any good ([vv. 13-17](#)).

#### Conclusion

- A. Those who spoke in tongues were to abide by the rules. They were also to make sure it was founded on love.
- B. Those who did not speak in tongues were not unsaved.
  - 1. Jesus never spoke in tongues.
  - 2. Tongues are not in the qualifications for church leaders ([1 Timothy 3](#) and [Titus 1](#)).
- C. Give great consideration to [verses 12, 18](#) and [19](#).

# 23\_Tongues, Prophecy and Understanding

## 1 Corinthians 14:6-25

### Introduction

- A. Heathen cults in Corinth taught that their followers could be possessed by the false gods they worshipped.
  - 1. They believed they could speak in utterances that were controlled by the heathen deity.
  - 2. God expects us to think, to use our minds.
- B. The gift of tongues appeared three times in the book of Acts. Each time it resulted in the conversion of another people group.
- C. Tongues in Corinth may have been different. There are four possible sources for these tongues.
  - 1. They may have been a wrongly used spiritual gift.
  - 2. They may have been phoney.
  - 3. They may have come from Satan. The so-called gift of tongues is often found in the occult.
  - 4. They may have resulted from the sincere emotions of the person.
- D. Tongues are no problem if we follow the scriptural instructions.

### I. Illustrations That Apply (vv. 6-12)

- A. Musical instruments like the flute and harp.
- B. The trumpet which sounds the call for battle.
- C. Spoken languages:
  - 1. People must understand what is being said (vv. 10-11).
  - 2. These things only bring confusion unless they are understandable to the listener.

### II. Applications That We Must Make (vv. 12-25)

- A. For the speaker (vv. 12-15).
  - 1. Spiritual gifts should build up the church (v. 12).
  - 2. Understanding is more important than excitement (vv. 13-15).
- B. For the Christian (vv. 16-20).
  - 1. Everything in public worship should edify others (vv. 16-17).
  - 2. He didn't oppose real "tongues" but he emphasized the importance of understanding (vv. 18-19).
  - 3. The Corinthians were acting like children. They seemed to be playing with these gifts (v. 20).
- C. For the non-Christian (vv. 21-25).
  - 1. The unsaved person may think the whole church is crazy if everyone is speaking in tongues (v. 23).
  - 2. Prophecy, speaking and applying the Word of God, may result in conversion (vv. 24-25).

### Conclusion

- A. Verse 21 is a quote from Isaiah 28:11-12.
  - 1. It refers to an invasion by the Assyrian army.
  - 2. Their different language was a sign that God had judged Israel.
  - 3. The Gospel was being preached in different languages. It was not limited to the nation of Israel.
- B. Israel loved "signs."
  - 1. At Pentecost the gift of tongues was a sign to the Jews.
  - 2. It took Peter's very understandable sermon (prophecy) to bring conversion.

### Illustration

For 32 years, I preached and ministered in areas where "tongues" were prominent. I never saw tongues as they are described at Pentecost in Acts 2. I became convinced that some may have been very sincere in their experience in "tongues" but were no stronger in their Christian life than those who never had a "tongues" experience. I was also convinced that some of what I heard and saw was phoney.

## 24\_Tongues, Women and Order in the Church

### 1 Corinthians 14:26-40

#### Introduction

- A. The Corinthian church had a problem of disorder in their assembly services.
- B. They were using their spiritual gifts to please themselves instead of using them to help the church.

#### I. Tongues and Prophecy (vv. 27-33)

- A. Paul saw "tongues" as the biggest problem.
  - 1. Study his clear guidelines in verses 27-31.
  - 2. He tells us that prophets can exercise self-control (vv. 32-33).
- B. How do we apply this now that the New Testament is a completed revelation?
  - 1. The Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit.
  - 2. We must test all teaching by the Scripture.
  - 3. "Self control" is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:23). The ministry of the Holy Spirit will bring order.

#### II. Women in the Church (vv. 34-35)

- A. Some women seemed to be starting arguments in the church service.
- B. "Women," (v. 34), should be translated "wives" in my opinion.
  - 1. They should ask their husbands (v. 35).
  - 2. I would assume that unmarried women would inquire of the church leaders.
- C. The words "should remain silent" in verse 34 does not mean "the absence of sound." It means that the woman should not enter into clamorous debate.
- D. Remember, Paul has already talked about women praying and prophesying in the church (1 Corinthians 11:5).

#### Conclusion

- A. Paul reminds these people that the Word of God did not come from them and they are not the only people who have received it (v. 36).
- B. There is something wrong with the person who claims to have spiritual gifts but will not follow Scripture (vv. 37-38).
- C. Tongues are not forbidden. Speaking in an understandable language is encouraged.
- D. They were concerned about having spiritual gifts. Paul was concerned about the use of those gifts. Just because a person has a spiritual gift is no sign they use it correctly.

#### Illustrations

A speaker at a men's rally gave a long discourse on "spiritual gifts" and their use and misuse. However, he concluded his scholarly discourse by saying, "The key is found in 1 Corinthians 14:12. If everyone claiming spiritual gifts would abide by this verse, the problems would, for the most part, be solved immediately."

I have always seen the value of Paul's teaching on love being located exactly where it is. Chapter 12 and Chapter 14 tell us about spiritual gifts but Chapter 13 is the discourse on love.

I need to keep love in the middle of all of this. I am likely to become either too excited, or too legalistic, over spiritual gifts. As a result, I may become discouraged with the whole subject if I don't keep love in the middle.

# 25\_The Importance of the Doctrine of the Resurrection

## 1 Corinthians 15:12-19

### Introduction

- A. Paul has already given evidence for the resurrection.
  - 1. The Scriptures and his authoritative teaching ([vv. 3-4](#)).
  - 2. The eyewitnesses ([vv. 6-8](#)).
- B. They believed in the resurrection of Christ but, because of their philosophy, they had trouble believing in the resurrection of the human body.
- C. Paul says you cannot have one resurrection without the other ([vv. 12-13](#)).
- D. He gives several consequences of their teaching against the resurrection of the dead.

### **I. Christ Would not be Raised ([v. 13](#))**

- A. We would not have a Savior.
- B. The Scripture would be wrong.

### **II. Gospel Preaching Would be Useless ([v. 14](#))**

- A. A dead savior cannot fulfill the Gospel promises.
- B. A dead savior has not overcome death, therefore, there is no good news to preach.

### **III. Our Faith in Christ Would be no Good**

- A. Faith, too, would be useless ([v. 14](#)).
- B. All of the great stories of faith in the Bible would be meaningless.

### **IV. The Eyewitnesses Would be False Witnesses ([v. 15](#))**

- A. How could we trust their testimony on anything else?
- B. To deny the resurrection is to deny the Scriptures, the apostles and the prophets.

### **V. We Would Still be in Our Sins ([vv. 16-19](#))**

- A. All dead Christians are lost ([v. 18](#)).
- B. We would have no hope ([v. 19](#)).

### Conclusion

Paul says ([v. 20](#)) that Christ has been resurrected and this means that Christians will be resurrected. This is our hope!

### Illustration

It is strange that these Christians in Corinth had accepted a part of the truth of the resurrection and rejected another part of it. Such an attitude is still with us. The week I wrote this outline I called on a young lady. As we talked about her decision for Jesus Christ, it was plain to see that she wanted to accept Jesus but also reject part of the Scripture concerning the decision.

# 26\_The Order and Motivation of the Resurrection

## 1 Corinthians 15:20-28

### Introduction

- A. Jesus taught a resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous ([John 5:28-29](#)).
- B. Paul is talking about the resurrection of Christians. There are no promises here for the non-Christian.

### I. The Order of the Resurrection

- A. The Christ ([vv. 20-22](#)).
  - 1. He is "the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep" ([v. 20](#)).
  - 2. The term "fallen asleep" refers to the death of a Christian.
  - 3. The Israelites offered the "first fruits" of the harvest to God. The harvest could not be gathered until this offering was made.
  - 4. Death came through Adam. The resurrection comes through Christ ([vv. 21-22](#)).
- B. The Christians ([v. 23](#)).
  - 1. The offering of "first fruits" meant that the harvest would follow.
  - 2. The resurrection of Christians is the harvest.
  - 3. This will take place "when he comes."
  - 4. [1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](#) gives a good picture of this event.
- C. The Conquering ([vv. 24-28](#)).
  - 1. I do not understand this enough to explain it in detail.
  - 2. I understand enough to know that Christ has a victory and so do we.
  - 3. Death will be destroyed ([v. 26](#)).

### II. The Motivation of the Doctrine of the Resurrection ([vv. 29-33](#))

- A. It motivates people to salvation ([v. 29](#)).
  - 1. This is a very difficult verse, but it does not refer to "proxy baptism."
  - 2. Two explanations are often offered.
    - a. The filling of the ranks of those who have died.
    - b. The acceptance of Christ as the result of the testimony of those who are now dead.
- B. It motivates people to service ([vv. 30-32](#)).
  - 1. If there is no resurrection, there is no reward in heaven.
  - 2. Why would Paul sacrifice to serve Christ? Why should we?
  - 3. Christ is alive and our promises in him are real. We must serve him.
- C. It motivates people to holiness ([vv. 33, 34](#)).
  - 1. Be careful about the company you keep ([v. 33](#)).
  - 2. If a Christian has good sense, he will stop sinning ([v. 34](#)).
  - 3. The doctrine of the resurrection makes the Christian accountable to Jesus Christ.

### Conclusion

Christ is alive right now. He is coming again and we will be resurrected and changed and will be with him. Our eternal state requires a body and Jesus will give us one like his ([1 John 3:1-3](#)).

# 27\_ We Will Have a New Body

## 1 Corinthians 15:35-58

### Introduction

- A. The question in [verse 35](#) is in the mind of everyone at some time or another.
- B. These people had denied the resurrection of the body for at least two reasons:
  - 1. Their philosophy taught that the body was evil and only spirit was good. Therefore, they didn't want a body in eternity.
  - 2. They considered such a resurrection impossible. How can we admit God's existence and then limit His power? ([Acts 26:8](#)).
- C. The Corinthians also seemed to ask, "if the resurrection is possible, what will the resurrection body be like?"

### I. Paul Uses Three Illustrations ([vss. 36-41](#))

- A. The seed and the plant ([vss. 36-38](#)).
  - 1. The seed must die to grow into a plant.
  - 2. The seed determines the plant body.
  - 3. Our earthly body is the seed.
  - 4. As the plant is more than the seed, the resurrection body is greater than this earthly body.
- B. Flesh and animals ([vs. 39](#)).
  - 1. There is a difference in the flesh of men, animals, birds and fish.
  - 2. God created everything to fit into its environment.
  - 3. Our resurrection body fits us for our eternal state.
- C. Outer space ([vss. 40, 41](#)).
  - 1. The sun, moon and stars all have a celestial glory.
  - 2. They are all different; every star is different from every other star.
  - 3. In our glorified bodies, we retain our individuality.

### II. Paul Uses Five Contrasts ([vss. 42-49](#))

- A. Perishable and imperishable.
- B. Dishonor and glory.
- C. Weakness and power.
- D. Natural and spiritual. He did not say it will be a spirit body, but a spiritual body. The term "spiritual body" refers to that very real body the Christian receives in the resurrection.
- E. Adam and Jesus
  - 1. The natural comes before the spiritual.
  - 2. In Adam, we have the earthly likeness.
  - 3. In Christ, we have the heavenly likeness.

### Conclusion

- A. When Christ returns, the Christian will be resurrected and changed ([vss. 50-53](#)).
- B. This results in a complete victory over death ([vss. 54-56](#)).
- C. Let us give thanks and stand firm ([vss. 57, 58](#)).

### Illustrations

The seed that is planted determines the plant that will grow. You can't plant beans and have corn grow from that seed. In like manner, you can't plant a non-Christian and have a Christian resurrection. We still reap what we sow. Personality extends beyond the grave. My body is that through which I, as a living soul, express myself. The organist expresses her talent and abilities through the instrument. If someone destroys the organ, it does not mean that she ceases to exist. When this body is destroyed, I continue to exist. However, God will give me a new body for expression in my eternal state.

## 28 About the Collection

### 1 Corinthians 16:1-4

#### Introduction

- A. What a contrast! Paul turns from the subject of the resurrection to the subject of a collection.
- B. We are to lay up treasures in heaven ([Matthew 6:19-21](#)).
  - 1. People, not things, go to heaven. We are to give to help, and to save, people.
  - 2. Our giving will put our heart in the work of God.

#### I. The Reason for This Collection

- A. We must stay in the context of the Scripture.
  - 1. This was a gift to poor Christians in Jerusalem ([v. 3](#)).
  - 2. Those in Corinth had evidently known about this special offering for some time.
- B. Paul wanted this collection to be one of love and unity.
  - 1. Jewish Christians would be receiving an offering from a Gentile church.
  - 2. This would emphasize unity and concern.

#### II. The Instructions Concerning This Collection

- A. This was a special offering but there are teachings here that apply to Christian giving in general.
  - 1. "on the first day of every week" ([v. 2](#)).
    - a. They did meet on Sunday, the Lord's day.
    - b. Their giving was a part of their worship service.
    - c. They were to give regularly.
  - 2. "each one of you" ([v. 2](#)).
    - a. We are all to be givers.
    - b. We can all give something. The widow gave two small coins and Jesus approved because she gave out of her poverty ([Mark 12:41-44](#)).
  - 3. "in keeping with his income" ([v. 2](#)).
    - a. This was proportionate giving.
    - b. What proportion did they give? Every ancient culture knew the principle of the tithe.
- B. Paul was concerned about accountability ([vv. 3-4](#)).
  - 1. The gift was to be presented by men they approved. He would write letters of introduction.
  - 2. He was willing to take the gift and have these men accompany him.

#### Conclusion

- A. A study of the parable of the good Samaritan should convince us of the expectations of Jesus concerning our giving ([Luke 10:25-37](#)).
- B. God is the great giver ([John 3:16](#)). As children of God, we should strive to be like our heavenly father.

#### Illustrations

We are taught that we reap what we sow ([Galatians 6:7-8](#)). The Christian should give attention to giving in areas where he or she has need of a crop. Do you need friends? Then sow friendship. Do you need help? Then be helpful. We all seem to need money. Let's sow money in our giving and trust God.

In the area of sowing and reaping, it becomes certain that we have to sow if we want to reap. Keeping a field clean and bare will not produce a harvest unless we actually sow. Are you sowing to spiritual things? Keeping the weeds out of the field will not automatically bring a harvest anymore than not doing some things will make a person a Christian.

Sowing for eternal life starts with making Jesus our Savior.

## **29\_Paul's Principles for Living**

### **1 Corinthians 16:5-24**

#### **Introduction**

- A. Paul gets personal with the Corinthians ([vv. 5-12](#)).
  - 1. He tells of his plans for the future and his intended visit.
  - 2. He speaks of an opportunity.
  - 3. He tells them that they may receive a visit from Timothy.
  - 4. He speaks of Apollos.
- B. Then Paul gives several principles that apply to them and to us ([vv. 13, 14](#)).

#### **I. Be On Your Guard**

- A. This can mean to guard against things that would be a threat to the church and the Christian life.
- B. It could also mean to be alert.
  - 1. Alert to false teachings.
  - 2. Alert to opportunities.
  - 3. Alert to the Second Coming.

#### **II. Stand Firm in the Faith**

- A. This, I believe, has to do with doctrine.
- B. What we believe determines our lifestyle.
- C. Later, Paul told Timothy to watch his life and doctrine closely ([1 Timothy 4:16](#)).

#### **III. Be Men of Courage; Be Strong**

- A. He is telling them not to give in to the pressures of this world.
- B. The Christian is to be transformed ([Romans 12:1-2](#)).
- C. The Christian is to set his, or her, heart and mind on things above ([Colossians 3:1-2](#)).

#### **IV. Do Everything in Love**

- A. Love is the great problem-solver.
- B. His teaching in Chapter 13 would enable every church or individual to solve their problems.

#### **Conclusion**

- A. He greets people who have served with him and who have refreshed him ([vv. 15-18](#)).
- B. He extends greetings from others with a special mention of Aquilla and Priscilla ([vv. 19-20](#)).
- C. He closes this epistle with a greeting written in his own hand ([vv. 21-24](#)).

#### **Illustrations**

[Verses 13](#) and [14](#) have been very meaningful to me. There have been several times in my life when I have been tempted to compromise my doctrinal position for the sake of opportunities, popularity, or profit. It is at those times that I have remembered statements like, "be on your guard; stand firm in the faith." The principles Paul stated here have been a source of strength to me.

I often think of Nehemiah who faced great obstacles to faith in the power of God. When he was threatened by enemies, he was ready to fight in order to continue his work. When he was tempted to compromise, he said, "I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?" ([Nehemiah 6:3](#)).

"Be men of courage; be strong," commanded the Apostle Paul.