

# Notes on

## Paulus' First Letter to the Korinthians

### Authorship and Date

This letter is one of the undisputed letters of Paulus of Tarsus, the envoy of Jesus whose conversion is told in the Actions of the Envoys. The date can be determined somewhat precisely, for Paulus had gone to Korinth for eighteen month (Ac 18:11) during one of his trips. Under Gallio, who was proconsul of Achaia only during the year 52 CE, the Roman government refused to hear complaints about Paulus and his colleagues. It is there that Sosthenes (Ac 18:17; 1C 1:1) is mentioned -- a former synagogue ruler who was beaten by other Jewish people in front of the tribunal for his acceptance of Jesus' teachings.

Paulus wrote from Ephesus (1C 16:8; Ac 19), not long after his visit to Korinth, making the date of the letter probably late 53 CE, and certainly not much later, for Paulus was only in Ephesus for a few months. A date of early 54 is the latest that ought to be assigned.

### Text and Commentary

((following p<sup>46</sup>))

*ONE*

*Paulus (a called envoy of Anointed Jesus through God's wishes) and Sosthenes the brother*

The author's brief self-introduction refers somewhat emphatically to his calling. He was both called and sent by the Messiah to do what he does. His partner (or perhaps scribe) Sosthenes is referenced by a term connoting equality.

*To God's assembly, made holy by Anointed Jesus, which is in Korinth, called holy ones, with each of those who call on the name of our Lord, Anointed Jesus, in every place (theirs and ours).*

After identifying himself, Paulus identifies his target audience. The letter's recipients were followers of Jesus in Korinth. He refers to them as holy ones, at the same time indicating off-handedly that such separation or dedication to God comes from following the teachings of the Messiah, Jesus. He identifies the Korinthians' partnership with him as being a brotherhood with every Christian.

**1:3** *Hello to you, and peace from God our Father and from Lord Anointed Jesus.*

The greeting is traditional, bridging the way into another traditional section: thanks on behalf of his readers.

*I always give thanks to my God about you, for that generosity of God which was given to you in Anointed Jesus, because in all things you were enriched in him--in all speech and all knowledge--just as the testimony of the Anointed One was established in you so that you are not lacking any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revelation of our Lord, Anointed Jesus. He will also establish you finally as blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus. God is trustworthy, through whom you were called into sharing with his son, Anointed Jesus our Lord.*

Paulus is thankful that his readers have come to recognize Jesus as Messiah and that they acknowledge his teachings. The news that has reached him concerns their treatment of the holy breath, the spiritual gifts that were distinguishing signs for Christianity (with respect to Priestly Judaism), and so Paulus praises their giftedness which had come through their having received Jesus' teachings. He does not doubt their commitment to God but praises Yahweh God for having called them into recognition of Jesus.

**10** *Now I am advising you, brothers, through the name of our Lord, Anointed Jesus, so that you would all say the same thing and so that there would not be a division among you, but that you would be completely united with the same mindset and in the same opinion. For it was pointed out to me about you, brothers, by Chloe's people, that there are rivalries among you. Now I am saying this because each one of you is saying, "Indeed, I am Paulus'," but, "I am Apollos'," but, "I am Kefa's," but, "I am the Anointed's."*

At this point, the first point of the author's letter is formally introduced. Paulus' advice is that they "say the same thing." About everything? No, but about this particular topic that Paulus is introducing. He wants them to agree together ("the same opinion") that it is wrong to be divided into rivalrous factions.

Paulus identifies several points of loyalty, each named for someone whose teachings they *claim* to follow. From the information that follows, it appears that the Paulus faction appears to favor gentile inclusion moreso than the others. Apollos was an Alexandrian Jew, and so it is possible that the faction named for him represents the desires of the Hellenistic (Greek-cultured) Jews. Kefa was the Aramaic term for the Greek name that we usually write as Peter -- a word meaning "rock." The fact that the term Kefa is used probably indicates that those who claimed to be following him were Palestinian Jews who were closer in their philosophy to favoring Jewish cultural ideas for the Christian group. Peter was one of the original Twelve envoys who had been sent only to Jewish people.

It also appears that some of them wanted to avoid any argument by not claiming to belong to any of the groups but simply to "the Anointed." No philosophy associated with this alleged group is referred to in this letter, and so most probably they represent the people who refused to choose sides.

*Has the Anointed One been divided? Or was Paulus crucified for you? Or were you baptized into the name of Paulus? I am thankful [to God] that I baptized none of you except Krispus and*

*Gaius, so that no one may say that you were baptized into my name. (Now I also baptized Stefanos's household. As for the rest, I don't know if I baptized any others.) For the Anointed One did not send me out to baptize, but to tell the good message, not in a saying of wisdom, so that the cross of the Anointed One would not be made worthless.*

Paulus' rhetorical questions are intended to evoke a triple negative response. "Has the Anointed One been divided?" Jesus himself had taught unity, not division. He had demanded equal community among his followers (Mt 20:20-9; 23:1-12), and so he had not sanctioned any division.

Paulus was not the Anointed One; nor were any of the others. Therefore, since it had not been Paulus who was the Messiah, none of them had been baptized into Paulus' covenant. None of them had acknowledge him to be the slain Messiah. They also recognized that neither Peter nor Apollos was the Messiah. Therefore, they were not worthy of being followed as such revered teachers (again Mt 23:1-12), for they were all equal partners.

Paulus did not regret having baptized people, but he was glad that he could honestly say that was not his mission and that he had baptized only few, for the Korinthians appear to have been concerned with their "pedigree". Who had baptized them? Whose school of thought were they part of? What teachers were more revered than the others? Paulus was happy to be able to tell his readers that no such things mattered to him, for he had only been sent to tell others that the Messiah had come. In fact, wrote Paulus, if he the envoy had drawn people after his own school of thought, this would have made the Anointed One's work worthless, for Jesus had taught a kind of love that he would never understand if he were authorizing such denominationalistic division.

Much of Paulus' criticism in this letter appears to have been directed at those who took his name. Many of the problems associated with the Korinthian group had come from gentile influences, such as their sexual problems and the issue of eating food that had been previously sacrificed to a false god. Therefore, Paulus' strong attack on the very notion of follow people was to be applied most strictly to the ones who said they were following him.

*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are being destroyed. But to those of us who are being saved, it is God's power. For it was written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise people and the reason of the reasoners I will put away."*

The message of the cross here is a selfless love for others, but separations between God's people on account of philosophical disagreements are the antithesis of love. Paulus says that such people will be destroyed, but love is integral to God's own nature. Therefore, for the true follower of Jesus, the message of love is God's power.

Giving up your own life willingly for others -- particularly in a manner as disgraceful as a criminal's execution -- this doesn't appear to make sense. But it had been told to Isaiah (29:14) that God was going to do things that would make people wonder, and that by doing so, he would utterly confuse people. The passage immediately follows a familiar one: "Because this people draws near to me with their mouth and honors me with their lips while their hearts are far from me, and since their fear of me is a human precept learned by rote,...." In its original context, it is

those who insisted on their ritual religion who would be unable to understand what God was doing. Jesus himself had applied the passage to his mission, and now Paulus reminds his readers of that application.

With the coming of the Messiah, there were things that would confuse those people who insisted on filtering him through their own paradigms. Their whole ways of looking at life (their "wisdom" or "reasoning") would be confounded.

*20 Where is the wise one? Where is the scribe? Where is the truth-seeker of this age? Didn't God make foolish the wisdom of creation? For when, in God's wisdom, the creation did not know God through its wisdom, God was well pleased to save those who trust by means of the foolishness of this heralding.*

A triplet of similar rhetorical questions is directed at the readers, as Paulus calls upon them to explain the wisdom of a great teacher willingly dying. Since they cannot explain it rationally -- except within the Christian paradigm of love -- don't they agree, then, that God has made all human wisdom foolish?

Paulus' questions appear to be searching for anyone with knowledge. "Where is the wise one?" This would be someone who is wise from birth or by natural talent. "Where is the scribe?" This was someone who had learned through Jewish philosophical schooling. "Where is the truth-seeker?" This was someone who had learned through the (Greek) Socratic method of discussion, and in fact, "truth-seeker" is literally "debater." By whatever means of human ability, which of them could explain Jesus' giving himself over to death? They could not.

But God's own wisdom is greater than human wisdom, and it was in God's wisdom that he chose to save people by trust, even though the actions of the same Anointed One that announced that salvation would be considered "foolishness."

*And while Jews are asking for signs and Greeks are seeking wisdom, now we are heralding an Anointed One who was crucified, a cause of falling indeed to Jews but foolishness to Gentiles. But to those who were called, both Jews and Greeks, the Anointed One is God's power and God's wisdom, because God's foolishness is wiser than people are, and God's weakness is stronger than people are.*

Paulus then generalizes both the "Jewish" and "Greek" paradigms of wisdom. "Jews are asking for signs," he wrote. Jesus' Jewish opposition were constantly asking for signs, but not so they could believe his message. They were asking for signs because they were having so much trouble accepting his teachings that they continued to insist that he prove his identity. His message that life was all about loving relationships ran contrary to everything that they had always thought. On the other hand, "Greeks are seeking wisdom." The Greek mind was not so impressed by omens; instead, they demanded to see the logical wisdom in Jesus' actions and in his teachings.

But in the midst of this atmosphere of skepticism by people who are supposedly wise, "we" -- the envoys -- "are heralding an Anointed One who was crucified." Instead of the miracle that the Jewish people wanted, Jesus had been crucified. Instead of the wisdom that the Greco-Roman

world sought, Jesus had given them his own death. Therefore, to all such people, the envoys had been sent out to tell them that God's chosen one had been crucified. No wonder both groups considered it "foolishness" (i.e., unwise) and "a cause of falling."

On the other hand, Paulus points out, within the paradigm of Jesus' teachings about trust and love, God's plan to send the Anointed One makes perfect sense. The fact that God accomplished such a great teaching to humanity establishes God's power and his wisdom. Therefore, the author wants to remind his readers that even if God were to have "foolish moments," his "foolishness" would be wiser than human wisdom, and his "weakness" would be stronger than human strength. With God's teachings coming from God, nothing else makes any sense.

*For you see your calling, brothers: that not many are wise according to the flesh. Not many are powerful. Not many are aristocrats. But God chose out the foolish things of creation, so that he would disgrace the wise. And God chose out the weak things of creation, so that he would disgrace the strong. And God chose the ordinary things and the things that are rejected and the things that do not exist, so that he would cause the things that do exist to pass away--so that no flesh would boast in the presence of the Lord.*

Now he asks the readers to judge from their own backgrounds whether God indeed has greater wisdom than humans can comprehend. After all, not many of his readers would have been considered "wise" from birth. Nor are they wealthy or privileged, and yet they belong to God, for they had been able to grasp the depth of God's message. Human wisdom, therefore, was not required.

"God chose the foolish things" -- the things that don't appear to make any sense -- in order to prove that the people that we sometimes consider to be wise in human terms are still confounded by God. Similarly, for those who look for "strength," God has selected something that appears "weak," for Jesus had allowed others to execute him. Yet there is both a wisdom and a strength in this love that disgraces the wise and the strong. Indeed, God proves that only he is supreme by finding perfect sense in those things that make absolutely no sense to the philosophical world. Therefore, all of the great philosophy that exists is made to pass away, so that no one would be able to boast about his own wisdom or strength in God's presence. Those who realize this are humbled to see the great foresight and majesty of God's loving plan.

**30** *But you are from him in Anointed Jesus, who became our wisdom from God, justification and also holiness and redemption, in order that (just as it was written), "The one who boasts should boast in Yahweh."*

Even though the wisest of the Jewish leaders and Greco-Roman philosophers cannot make sense of Jesus' teachings and life of love, Paulus' own readers ought to recall that they are capable of understanding, because their shared paradigm is Jesus' paradigm. In learning from him, their way of thinking "became" wisdom. And not only is there wisdom in viewing life through Jesus' eyes, but also there is justification from God by trust, bringing about holiness and redemption. Therefore, the wisdom of God -- as explained by Jesus -- is much more potent than the philosophical understanding found in human tradition. Instead of boasting about following any sort of human pedigree, only Yahweh God is worthy of such boasting.

The citation is from the oracles of Jeremiah (9:23-24), where we read: *"The wise one should not boast in his wisdom, nor should the strong one boast in his strength, and the wealthy one should not boast of his wealth. But the one who boasts should boast in this: that he understands and knows me -- that I am Yahweh, I who practice steadfast love, justice, and justification on the land; for I delight in these things," says Yahweh.*" And so we see that in adding "strength" to his discussion of boasting, Paulus has been closely following the passage in Jeremiah.

We do want to note that Paulus was generalizing. In fact, there were Greek philosophers (such as Epicurus) who revered some of the ideals that Jesus espoused, including a sacrificial love. But Jesus' interpretation of the Torah had been confirmed by God's power (see also below) and had been demonstrated in person by Jesus up through the moment of his death...and beyond. None of the philosophers had done such things.

*2:1 And when I came to you, brothers, I didn't come with superior speech or wisdom when I declared to you God's secret. For I decided not to make anything known among you except Anointed Jesus and the fact that this one had been crucified. And I happened to be with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling, and my message and my heralding were not with persuasive words of wisdom but with a display of spirit and power--so that your trust would not be in human wisdom but in God's power.*

Now, Paulus uses himself as an example of what he has written. When he had met the Corinthians in person and had first spoken to them about the Messiah, all he told them was simply that the Anointed One had come and had been crucified. He didn't try to persuade them that his ways were wiser than anyone else's. He didn't try to impress them with flowery speech. In fact, he never lectured them as a superior but discussed Jesus with them as an equal, making no great show of strength but seeming weak and fearful.

Instead of trying to convince them of the wisdom of his own way, he merely said what had happened, letting that truth stand for itself. He did, however, confirm the message with the miraculous holy breath, proving then that God had sent him. Instead of following him, as though he were a great philosopher, the focus should always be on God, who had demonstrated the truth of the message with his own power.

*Now we are speaking about wisdom among the complete ones, but this is wisdom not of this age nor of the rulers of this age (those who are passing away), but we are speaking about God's wisdom which was hidden in secret, and which God marked out for our glory before the ages. None of the rulers of this age knew it, for if they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. But as it was written, "Things that no eye has seen and no ear has heard and which did not go up into the human heart, God prepared these things for those who love him."*

The "complete ones" are those people who understand that life is not about ritual religions or philosophical ramblings but about practicing trust and love. These, then, are the followers of Jesus. "Wisdom among the complete ones" signifies wisdom according to Jesus' way of thinking, as contrasted with the so-called wisdom of others. Stepping into his own paradigm, which he shares with the readers, Paulus notes that the wisdom of the Messiah is not "the wisdom of this age." That is, it is not the wisdom found in Priestly Judaism (which was about to pass away). Nor

is it the wisdom of the "rulers of this age" -- the Jewish leaders whose religion was about to be destroyed by God. Instead, Jesus' wisdom had come not from human traditions but from God. To those who were not searching for it, this wisdom was "hidden," but God had always planned to send the Anointed One to reveal that "secret." In fact, that plan had started "before the ages" -- even before God initiated creation.

Paulus reasons that if the Jewish leaders had truly believed what Jesus taught, they could not have condemned Jesus to die. Jesus noted that although they knew what he was saying, they wanted no part of it, refusing to accept life without their religion, and it was certainly not love that they were practicing when they ordered the execution of their Messiah on false charges.

Therefore, "we" (the envoys) speak of the wisdom of Jesus' teachings as things that are incomprehensible otherwise, as the paraphrase from Isaiah 64:4 notes, but these greater things were prepared for the people who truly do love God -- the people who have truly learned what love is. By the way, Paulus' phrasing here was apparently similar to what was found in at least some Hebrew manuscripts of his time. Similar wording was the source for a much later Jewish "Apocalypse of Elijah," of which only fragments now survive.

*For God has revealed it to us through the spirit. For the spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For what human knows the ways of human beings except the spirit of the person (that is in him)? Likewise also, no one knows God's ways except the spirit of God.*

Here, Paulus begins a set of plays on the meanings of the word translated "spirit." It is the "breath" -- the miraculous gift received by first century Christians as a sign of distinction -- that allows "us" (the envoys) to search all things. But the spirit of someone is their inner essence also, and only someone's innermost essence -- the part of a being which is not physical -- truly knows him or her. Similarly, only God truly knows his own ways. But Paulus uses "God's spirit" instead of simply "God" in order to link back to the gift of holy breath. The prophetic guidance that the envoys had revealed to them God's true motives, his ways.

**12** *Now we have not received the spirit of creation, but the spirit from God, so that we may know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things also we are speaking about, not in teachings of sayings of human wisdom, but in spiritual teachings -- interpreting spiritual things to spiritual people.*

God's holy breath was not a physical thing -- a "spirit of creation" -- but an inner guidance. Therefore, the envoys knew most deeply that God was guiding them. He guided them from the very core of their beings with deep communication.

This stretched, then, beyond mere human reasoning and argument. God guided not with sayings that appeared sensical to philosophers but with spiritual teachings. Here, "spiritual" is contrasted with "physical," a contrast that occurs frequently in the NT. The "spiritual" teachings are not mere rituals but are tenets of guidance for the true (i.e., spiritual) person. But the spiritual teachings can only be understood by those who are "spiritual" -- those who are guided not by their physical desires but by their spirit in tune with God.

*Now a person of this life doesn't embrace the matters of the spirit of God. For they are foolishness to him and he is unable to know them, because they must be examined spiritually. But the spiritual person examines all things, but he is examined by no one. For "who knew God's mind? Who will school him?" Now we have the mind of the Anointed One.*

A "person of this life" is someone who is consumed by what (s)he can perceive with the senses, whether that is religious acts or human desires. Anyone whose focus is such things cannot understand spiritual teachings. Why not? Because without the proper focus, spiritual things will seem like "foolishness." They cannot be examined from an earthly standpoint -- with mere human logic -- but they must be examined spiritually (according to God's own intent).

On the other hand, the person whose focus is God's teachings is able to understand them all, even though no one can comprehend him. Even though such a person seems like a fool, the spiritual person is wise. How can the readers be sure of this? After all, it wouldn't seem to make sense to them? Paulus reminds them that from an ordinary standpoint people cannot understand God's ways, but God's Anointed One saw things differently, from the standpoint that God had given to him. The citation from Isa 40:13 actually reads, "Who directed Yahweh's spirit," again pointing to that deep understanding that must be spiritual. Now the envoys had the same attitude that Jesus had. Since they had that same mindset, they too understood the deeper spiritual things. Therefore...

**3:1** *And I, brothers, was unable to speak to you as though you were spiritual, but as fleshly people--as newborns in the Anointed. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, for you were unable then to eat it. But you are unable now, for you are fleshly. For where there are jealousy and strife and divisions among you, aren't you fleshly, and walking according to humanity?*

...the envoys, and Paulus in particular, were capable of saying spiritual things. But although he had been spiritual, the readers did NOT have the same mindset as Jesus. They could not understand what he told them, and so he spoke to them not as spiritual people but as fleshly people. They were not yet mature to the point of being able to grasp deeper spiritual truths, and so he treated them as unable to understand.

Even at the time of writing, it saddened Paulus that they still were not ready to learn spiritual things from him, for their willingness to lean on religious ritual and human reasoning showed that they were still focused on physical (fleshly) things.

Their deepest attitudes revealed even more. Jealousy, strife, and divisions do not consume the spiritual person -- the Christian, who is practicing trust and love -- but are characteristics of the fleshly person. Therefore, he asked them rhetorically, "Since you do such things, aren't you fleshly?"

*For when someone says, "Indeed, I am Paulus'," but another, "I am Apollos'," aren't you human beings? What then is Apollos? And what is Paulus? Servants through whom you trusted, just as the Lord also gave to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God made you grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but it is God who made you grow. Now*



*the planter and the waterer are one, but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's coworkers. You are God's farm...God's building.*

Following human beings, as in the manner of following human rabbis (preachers, teachers, or philosophers) is a characteristic of still being too physically-minded. It is the attitude of a "newborn" to depend on other humans, but Apollos and Paulus were merely human servants. They were not gods and should not have been regarded as superiors. In fact, Paulus likened them to gardeners. All they did was plant seeds and water the garden -- referring in metaphor to Paulus' having been the first to announce the message in Korinth and Apollos' having followed with more teaching. God was the one who did all the work in their hearts.

"The planter and the waterer are one" -- Apollos and Paulus were not divided, following human beings. They were in agreement, and each would receive his own reward for doing the work he had been sent to do. But God needed to be the object of the readers' attention; Paulus and Apollos were merely God's coworkers. In metaphor, the readers were God's farm or building -- God's property, God's work -- they didn't belong to either of the envoys but to God. Hence, it was inaccurate to say "I am Apollos'."

*I have laid down a foundation like a wise architect according to the generosity that was given to me, and another one is constructing. But each one should look at how he is constructing. For no one is able to lay down any foundation other than the one that was put there, which is Anointed Jesus. But if someone constructs on the foundation--gold and silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw--each one's work will become obvious. For the daylight will point it out, because it is revealed by fire. And the fire will test to see what kind of work each one's is. If the work that someone constructed remains, he will receive a reward. If someone's work is burnt up, he will forfeit it, but he will be saved, but saved as though having gone through fire.*

Although Apollos was helping the Korinthians, after Paulus had "laid the foundation," they had both been careful to say only what Jesus had taught. The teachings of Jesus form the foundation of Christian life, and if the envoys had contradicted those teachings in any way, it would have "become obvious." The author also indicates here that there would have been no purpose for Apollos to have said anything other than what Jesus taught, because his work would have been worthless. Apollos and Paulus were in agreement, but the Korinthians were fighting.

**16** *Don't you know that you are God's temple, and God's spirit lives in you? If someone makes God's temple decay, God will make that person decay, for God's temple is holy -- which you are.*

This is a spiritual notion. The Jewish people were accustomed to thinking of the temple in Jerusalem as a place where God lived. But God never lived in handmade temples. Paulus informed his readers that God's true temple -- his place of worship from which he was served -- was inside the hearts of those who follow him. God's spirit never lived in the temple, but it lives in those who are focused on him. How? Because we too can attune to what God wants and become spiritually-minded. In that sense, we become one with God's very essence as his attitude (spirit) lives in us.

The ones who wanted to make them go back into Judaism, or waver into the gentile way of life, were going to be judged by God. In the metaphor, whoever makes the temple (one of God's people) crumble (spiritually) would decay. He would cease to exist at the end of his physical life -- as his judgment -- because he had caused the corruption of one of God's holy people. And Paulus noted that all of his readers were God's people.

*Don't let anyone totally deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks to have wisdom in this age, he should become a fool so that he might become wise.*

To "become a fool" is to listen to Jesus' teachings rather than the rationalizations of the rabbis or reasonings of Greek philosophy. In this particular instance, Paulus urges his readers not to follow human beings as "teachers" but to realize that all people are equal under God. Anyone who thinks otherwise is deceiving himself.

**19** *For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it was written, "He is trapping the wise ones in their craftiness." And again, "Yahweh knows the reasonings of the" wise, "that they are worthless." And so, let no one boast in human beings, for all things are yours: Whether Paulus, or Apollos, or Kefa, whether the creation, or life, or death, whether things that are, or things that are about to be -- all things are yours. But you are the Anointed One's. Now the Anointed One is God's.*

God himself said that those who profess human wisdom (Jewish or gentile) are deceiving themselves. And while such "wise" people consider the ways of God to be folly, so also God regards their reasoning process as foolishness. The human "teacher system" of "wise people" is fatally flawed, for God told his people that these great rabbis or scholars would be "trapped in their craftiness."

The citation is from Job 5:13. That passage continues, "They meet with darkness in the daytime and grope at noonday as in the night." Just before the line quoted by Paulus, it reads, "He frustrates the schemes of the crafty, so that their hands achieve no success." Although by searching (intellectually), one can find God, it requires a shift in paradigm. God's ways cannot be found without attuning to his teachings. They cannot be understood by comparing them to what seems rational and reasonable (in either the Jewish or gentile way of thinking). One must leave those ideas behind, and the notion of human "wise men," in order to escape what God calls "foolishness."

The second quote comes from Psalm 94, where we read, "Understand, dumbest of people. Fools, when will you be wise? ... The one who teaches men knowledge, Yahweh, knows the reasonings of human beings -- that they are a breath" (vv. 8-11). The psalm talks about giving up the arrogance of human reasoning to attune one's self to God's instruction. Human reasonings are "worthless" (a Greek translation of the Hebrew, "a breath") because they are "a breath": an intangible wisp. The breath dissipates and is gone; so also human reasoning outside of God's way of thinking amounts to nothing. It is therefore worthless.

Therefore, boasting about human teachers and following human beings is meaningless. Why should they follow Paulus, Peter, or Apollos, when God has given them everything they need?

They belong not to Paulus' school of thought but to Jesus. If they believe Jesus' teachings and follow them, this is all that matters. They are Jesus', just as Jesus belongs to God.

#### FOUR

**4:1** *In this way, every human being should regard us as the Anointed One's assistants, and house-stewards of God's secrets. For those among the stewards who remain here, it is sought that each one be found trustworthy. Now to me it is a minute thing that I am being judged by you, or that I am under a day of human judgment. But I am not even judging myself, for I am conscious of nothing wrong in myself. But I have not been justified by THIS, but the Lord is the one who judges me.*

If the envoys are not great rabbis, what are they? They are mere servants of God. They are Jesus' helpers. For the readers who wanted to elevate them to become clergy, Paulus brought them down to a point of equality. The people who were so highly regarded by his audience were just house-stewards. Jesus was superior, and God is superior, but the envoys were no better than the Corinthians: servants hoping to be found trustworthy by their master, God. It doesn't matter to Paulus that his readers will no longer revere him as some of them do. Human esteem was irrelevant to him because he was God's servant and would be judged by God. Therefore, human justification or acclaim was not necessary.

*And so, don't judge anything before its season -- until the Lord comes. He will both enlighten the things hidden in the darkness and will make the plans of hearts appear. And then the praise will be to each one from God.*

The Jewish people were calling Jesus' followers back into Judaism. Perhaps it was the aim of the so-called Kefa faction to become less "gentile" and more "Jewish" in their ways. If so, nationalism was an important part of life. But Paulus reminded his readers that if they wait for the judgment on Israel, they would see that Jesus had told the truth about everything. All would be clear, and those who followed Jesus' teachings instead of returning to ritual religion would not merely praise God, but (in a reversal of expected roles), God would praise (bless) them.

**6** *Now brothers, I have applied these things to myself and to Apollos on your account, so that from us you might learn not to be more than what was written, so that none would be puffed up about one person, against another.*

What things has Paulus applied? The notion of NOT being great teachers, rabbis, or spiritual leaders. Since the envoys themselves did not understand themselves to occupy positions of leadership, nor to be superior in any way to others, the Corinthians were to realize that they were all equal to one another. None of them ought to boast in superior knowledge, following other human beings instead of following God.

*For which of you discriminates? Yet what do you have that you didn't receive as a gift? Now if also you received it, why are you boasting as though you didn't receive it? Already you are full, already you were wealthy -- you reigned without us, and I wish that you did indeed reign so that we might reign with you. For I think God put us (the envoys) out last, as though we were chosen*

*for death, because we were made a spectacle in the arena to the whole world, both to messengers and to people.*

Some of them were discriminating amongst themselves, thinking some people to be of higher prestige or rank than others. Paulus notes that whatever they have as a Christian is simply a gift. There is no boasting of superiority when what you have is just a gift. Therefore, Paulus wonders why they were boasting as though they had earned something prestigious. "Already you are full - - wealthy" -- was written in reference to their high-minded attitudes. The envoys (Peter, Paulus, Apollos) did not give them such an attitude. That superior attitude came without them. Thus, "you reigned without us." But in reality, they were not superior at all, and so Paulus continues to say, "I wish that you did indeed reign." After all, since he and they are all equals, if they really did occupy the status that they thought they occupied, he would be up there with them!

In reality, though, even he and the other envoys were merely "last," a laughing stock (or "spectacle"). They were nothing special whatsoever, either to God's messengers or to other people. Even the envoys, who were thought to be so great, were nothing.

*We are fools on the Anointed One's account, but you are thoughtful ones in the Anointed One. We are weak, but you are strong. You are glorious, but we lack honor.*

Since the envoys were thought to be so great, Paulus continues. The "thoughtfulness," and "strength," and "honor" here occur only in the Korinthians' minds. The Korinthians' believed themselves to be so great, but the envoys whom they admired realized that they were only weak fools -- that they had nothing good except what they had received as a gift.

*Up to the present hour, we are hungry, and we are thirsty, and we are naked, and we are being beaten, and we have no place to stay, and we are laboring (working with our own hands). When we are verbally abused, we say good things. When we are persecuted, we endure. When we are defamed, we provide comforting advice. Even until now, we have become like the scum of creation, the scraps of all things.*

Paulus now paints a more realistic portrait of the envoys. Instead of being great positional leaders, as though they were special, the envoys were (generally) poor working people. They labored with their own hands rather than take charity. They sometimes went without homes or food. Theirs was a life of bitter persecution, all of which they endured according to Jesus' teachings. Socially, they were regarded by the "great" ones in Jewish society as the dregs of society. Surely they were just mere men.

**14** *I am not writing these things to shame you; rather, I am admonishing you as beloved children. For though you have tens of thousands of schoolmasters in the Anointed One, you only have but one father. For I fathered you in Anointed Jesus through the good message. Therefore I advise you to become my imitators.*

Paulus then implies again that the Korinthians needed to realize that they were all equals. This was not a lesson to shame them; instead, Paulus' words were an admonition from a loving father

figure. Here, he claims that role in order to make a point, but his claim was legitimate in the sense that he had been the first one to bring Jesus' message any of them.

Therefore, he urged them to follow his own example in the matter. Instead of regarding themselves as superior to others, they ought to realize that there was nothing of merit that they had earned. Instead, they were only equals, and the non-Christian world regarded them too as "scum."

*For this reason I am sending you Timotheos, who is my beloved child and who is trustworthy in the Lord. He will remind you of those ways of mine that are in Anointed Jesus, just as I teach everywhere in every assembly.*

Timotheos was sent to them simply to remind. Paulus realized that they had already heard the teaching, but clearly they needed a reminder. Timotheos would serve as an example in their presence of God's teachings in action.

*Now some of you are puffed up, as though I were not coming to you. But I will come to you quickly if the Lord wants it, and I will know not the message but the power of those who are puffed up. For God's kingdom is not in a message but in power.*

This is a transition between the author's comments on their more general attitudes of superiority and his admonitions about certain specific matters in which their superior attitudes proved to be their moral downfall. Some of them had become arrogant to the point of telling the others that Paulus wouldn't really go there, even if things were bad. Maybe they said that Paulus didn't care what they did. But Paulus was going to Korinth to examine their lifestyles, for the message was not merely a bunch of words -- it was a way of life.

## *FIVE*

**21** *What do you want? Should I come to you with a rod or in love and in a spirit of meekness? Sexual sin is wholly heard among you, and sexual sin like that which is not even heard of among the gentiles -- such as one person having his step-mother! And you have been puffed up and did not lament instead (so that the one who did this deed might be removed from your midst).*

The author begins by intimating that if they changed their attitudes (and actions), he might not have to chastise them. While he would rather discuss matters with them meekly, their attitudes prevent him from doing so.

The problem here was simple on the surface: one of the Korinthian Christians was sleeping with his step-mother. But the complexity lies in the group's reactions. If the problem had been limited to one man, whose actions were not condoned by the Christian group, he might not have written about it at all. However, the deeper and larger problem was the group's acceptance (even support) for the man's actions. Instead of lamenting about it, they showed arrogance and continued to support him.

**5:3** *For indeed I have already judged the one who practiced this as though I were present -- I am absent bodily but present spiritually. You should be gathered together in the name of our Lord, Anointed Jesus, along with my spirit together with the power of Lord Jesus, to deliver up that person to the Enemy to the point where his flesh is ruined, so that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord.*

Paulus' problem is not so much with the incestuous man, whose sin was plain enough that Paulus could realize it for what it is at long distance, but with those Korinthians who accepted the man publically, even talking with outsiders about it. His concern is that their acceptance justly brings down the condemnation of outsiders upon the whole group.

*Your boasting is not a nice thing. Don't you know that a small amount of yeast leavens the whole loaf? Cleanse out the old yeast, so that you would be a new loaf, since you are unleavened. For our Passover Lamb, the Anointed One, was also slaughtered. And so we should keep the feast, not with old leaven (nor with the leaven of bad things and evil) but with the unleavened matters of sincerity and truth.*

Some of the Korinthians were bragging about the man's sexual exploits, and it was the group's response (not merely the man's struggles) that was bringing shame upon Christianity -- and therefore upon Jesus himself. Therefore, Paulus reminded them with imagery of the Passover that they could not show the slightest bit of support for such activity.

Just as Passover begins with a purging of every Jewish household of yeast, so also everyone who appeals to Jesus as their Passover lamb needs to purge themselves of all ways except his ways. In particular, if they were used to condoning such behavior before, the Korinthians have to realize now that the Messiah was a champion of sincerity and truth.

Here's another interesting point: Paulus was a stickler for details on matters of Jewish religious practice. His reference to Jesus as a slaughtered Passover lamb appears to support the tradition that Jesus' crucifixion occurred on the afternoon just before the beginning of Passover.

**9** *I wrote to you in the letter not to be close associates with those who practice sexual sins--not that you should avoid altogether the sexual sinners of this world, or the greedy people and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would have to go out of creation! But now I wrote to you not to be close associates with a brother, if he is named as someone who practices sexual sins, or a greedy person, or an idolater, or a slanderer, or a drunkard, or a swindler. Don't even eat with such a person!*

This is hyperbole. Jesus himself ate with sexual sinners, but never in a manner that indicated his support for their sin. When questioned, he didn't brag about being among sinners but noted that he had come to call sinners to mental change. Jesus had said that it was those people who really need his teachings, but some of the Korinthians were ignoring Jesus' teachings and accepting the sins along with the sinner. Paulus reminded them that we cannot accept greed, or slander, or drunkenness. It would indeed be better to avoid these people entirely than to become associated with them by accepting their sins. When associating with people who have problems, make it

clear that you do not support those problems. If all of Christianity is being judged because of your acceptance of someone's sins, it is better for you not to make such associations.

The reference to the greedy, slanderers, and swindlers foreshadows Paulus' discussion in the coming section about legal matters among Christians. The mention of idolaters refers to the discussion of food sacrifices that will also come later. The one-word reference to drunkenness may be applied to the self-indulgent participation in the Christian common meals that is referred to in chapter 11. In other words, Paulus has come up with a short description of his attitude regarding every one of the matters about which he has begun to write.

*For what is it for me to judge those who are outside? Judge the ones who are inside; God will judge those who are outside. "Purge the evil person from among you."*

Paulus clarifies one point. He has not been writing about all of the greedy (etc.) people in the world. Instead, he has been referring exclusively to attitudes and practices among God's people that are inappropriate for those who love the Lord. He leaves it to God to judge the rest of creation, but Jesus' followers are to judge one another's behavior and so assist one another in their failings. His concluding comment about what the Korinthians ought to do in order to restore honor to the name of Jesus came not from a legal statute or moral custom of the gentiles but from the Torah.

Paulus' citation comes from Dt 17:2-7:

*"If there is found among you (within any of your towns that Yahweh your god gives you) a man or woman who does what is evil in the sight of Yahweh your god -- in a way that abandons his covenant, someone who has gone to serve other gods (or the sun, or the moon, or the heavenly host) and worship them as I have forbidden, and if it is told to you and you hear of it, then you will investigate. And if it is true that such a detestable thing has been done in Israel, then you will bring that man or woman who did such a thing out to your gates, and you will stone that man or woman to death. The one who is to die will be put to death on the evidence of two or three witnesses; no one will be put to death on the evidence of one witness. The hand of the witnesses will throw first against him to put him to death, and afterward, the hands of all the people. In this manner you will purge the evil person from among you."*

The Torah indicates here that the penalty in Israel for idolatry (or for causing others to be idolatrous -- Dt 13:1-5) is death by stoning. Was Paulus applying that same passage here? Not directly. God's purpose in causing idolaters to be executed was to make positively certain that such a detestable influence did not invade the people. It was Paulus' judgment that the real horror in the Korinthians' problem was their own acceptance of the sexual sins. Therefore, they too must purge themselves of the cause for their own wanderings. They needed to get rid of the sexual sinner, no longer condoning his behavior. Paulus' language here is strong because this "yeast" effect was not something that he worried might happen; this was something that was already taking place, and the Messiah was being defamed because of it. But Paulus did not call for the man's execution -- only that they stay away from him.

**6:1** *When one of you has a business problem with the other, does he dare to be judged by the unjust ones, and not by the holy ones? Or don't you know that the holy ones will judge creation? And if the creation will be judged by you, are you unworthy to be the smallest tribunals? Don't you know that you will judge messengers? Why not then the matters of this life?*

Paulus has already indicated God's distaste for the greedy, the slanderers, and the swindlers, and at this point his letter turned to the Corinthians' legal problems. He has two problems with their behavior in this matter. First, they were making a public spectacle of God's people by taking their matters into public courts. Secondly, they shouldn't have been taking things that far in the first place.

Paulus contends that Christians themselves have a greater capacity for making accurate judgments than the Roman court system does. Therefore, it makes more sense for these people -- who in the afterlife would be judges themselves -- to judge among one another on civil matters, rather than allowing God's name to be dragged through the mud in a public forum such as a court.

*Therefore, if indeed you have judgments to make about matters of this life, select those people to judge it who were rejected in the assembly. I am saying these things to nourish you. In the same way, is there no one wise among you...not one who would be able to discern his brother in your midst? Instead, brother is judged with brother--and this by those who do not trust.*

Even those Christians whose opinions are most "rejected" are more fit to judge than the so-called judges of the politicized court system. Therefore, if the Corinthians recognized that there was even one person among them who had a modicum of wisdom, they should turn to that person rather than to the courts. The current situation, where Christians were suing Christians in the presence of non-Christian judges, was disgusting, and Paulus' reaction indicates that he is astonished that they would do such a thing.

*Indeed, it is already wholly your fault that you have lawsuits among yourselves. Why not rather endure injustice? Why not rather be deprived? But you are doing unjust things and are depriving -- and you do this to brothers! Or don't you know that the unjust will not inherit God's kingdom? Don't be deceived: neither those who sin sexually, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor unmanly men, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor greedy people, nor drunks --not slanderers, not swindlers-- will inherit God's kingdom.*

The matter at hand is greater, though, than who should be judge. For the fact that their disputes had sunk to such depths only indicated that they had stopped thinking of one another's needs and had begun putting themselves first. In short, they were rejecting a core portion of the message for which Jesus died. Therefore, rather than make a spectacle of their own self-centeredness, it would be better to endure injustice or be deprived.

Next, Paulus flips that around. It is the Corinthians themselves who are depriving one another and being unjust toward one another. He reminds them (via a rhetorical question) that unjust people will not inherit God's kingdom. Then he repeats a list of wrongdoers whom the readers agree would face God's condemnation. Once again, the list includes sexual sinners, idolaters,



greedy people, and slanderers and swindlers. This time, the "sexual sinners" are spelled out in more detail, and "thieves" has been added to the list, along with "drunks," a group that Paulus intends to visit later.

*And some of you were these things, but you washed yourselves from them, but you were made holy, but you were made just in the name of the Lord, Anointed Jesus, and in the spirit of our God.*

The teachings of Jesus, and the godly attitude, would not allow for the Korinthians to remain in the categories that Paulus has listed. But some of them are the equivalent of slanderers, swindlers, and thieves. He does not make the accusation himself, but leaves it up to his readers to shame themselves. Instead, he uses the repetition of the list to continue to a new topic.

**12** *All things are lawful for me, but not all things make sense. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be under anything's authority. Foods are for the stomach, and the stomach is for foods, but God will cause both it and them to pass away. Now the body does not exist for sexual sin but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. Now God also raised up the Lord, and he will raise us up through his power.*

This begins another subsection of Paulus' admonition of the Korinthians. "All things are lawful" because the Torah is not to be viewed any longer as a code of actions. But the "Paulus" party appears to have taken this to an extreme, reasoning in their human minds that if everything is lawful then nothing is sinful; nothing is wrong. But Paulus retorts by telling them that although everything is lawful, not all things make sense.

Whenever something controls you, it is your master. This is true whether that something is a belief system, or other people, or one's own appetites. Since God offers freedom, Paulus declares that he will not be under anything's authority (except, of course, for God's). And just as food is good for the body in the right circumstances but is ultimately only temporary, so also sexual activity is pleasing. But the Korinthians needed a reminder that their bodies were supposed to belong to God. Whatever sexual activities they participated in needed to be ones sanctioned by God, and not merely the attempted fulfillment of their insatiable appetites.

*Don't you know that your bodies are members of the Anointed One? Then should I take away the members of the Anointed One and make them members of a prostitute? Don't let it happen!*

The author now pleads for his readers to realize that to unite the body with a prostitute is a horrible act that, in metaphor, unites the Anointed One himself with what is evil. The readers all realized that the Anointed One was blameless and spotless, so this image was a strong one. The offenders' actions went beyond themselves, for they brought shame to the name of Jesus.

*Don't you know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For it says, "The two will become one flesh." Now the one who joins himself to the Lord is one with him in spirit.*

Paulus indicates (here as in his open letter) that the act of sexual union presumes the lifelong commitment alluded to in Genesis 1. It is the act that unites husband and wife for a lifetime. Rather than do that with a prostitute, the readers must realize that they supposedly have already made such a commitment to Jesus by uniting with him spiritually. Therefore, their inappropriate sexual activity is a violation not only of their commitments to their spouses but also of their commitment to God. These relationships are not "broken" by the sexual sins, but their actions were doubly sinful on that account.

*Flee prostitution. All sins that a person may do are outside of the body, but the one who commits prostitution is sinning against his own body. Or don't you know that your bodies are a temple of the holy spirit within you, which you have from God? And you are not your possession, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your bodies.*

Any sexual activity that was prohibited by the Torah is regarded the same as prostitution; therefore, the same word in Greek is used. Here, the author refers to a married person sleeping with a prostitute, but the term itself is broader than that. Sins like lying and deceit do not involve the person's body in the sin, but sexual sins do. Does this make them "worse" in some respect? Yes, for the body should be devoted to God. It should be a holy place, a true temple. Paulus adds another reason: since God was the one who redeemed the Christian from his former way of sin and legalism, the Christian's body belongs to God. Therefore, it is necessary to make pleasing sacrifices in one's temple; that is, to do things that please God rather than one's self.

*7:1 Now, concerning the things you wrote about: it is a nice thing for a man not to touch a woman. But on account of the prostitutions, each man should have his wife, and each woman should have her husband. The husband should forgive the debt; the wife should do likewise for the husband. It is not the wife who has her body's authority. On the contrary, the husband does. Now likewise also, it is not the husband who has his body's authority. On the contrary, the wife does.*

Paulus affirms virginity, but one member of a marital partnership must not abstain from all sex to the point where the other's appetites get the best of them. Instead, a married couple ought to sleep with one another regularly enough that neither partner is tempted to stray. Whenever someone makes a lifelong marital commitment, the other person's needs are supposed to be placed above one's own. Therefore, a married couple must realize that their partner needs affection, and they should give that affection to one another.

*Don't deprive one another, except by agreement for a season, in order for you to be relaxed and pray. And you should get together again, so that the Enemy would not test you because you are out of control.*

If both partners agree, then they might abstain from sex. One good reason would be for meditation and prayer. However, permanently abstaining unilaterally from sex might cause your partner to lose control and be tested.

*Now I am saying this as an opinion, not as a direction. But I want all people to be like myself. But each one has his own gift of generosity from God: one indeed has this; one has that.*

Paulus provides very little to his readers regarding his sex life, but apparently they knew his reputation. He wanted people to be like he was, and in this context he was abstinent. Possibly, he was following the teachings of Jesus about becoming, metaphorically, a "eunuch for the sake of the kingdom" (Mt 19). Even though he believed himself stronger for having made that decision, he acknowledged the weaknesses of others. Particularly, it would be unwise for married couples to make the decision to abstain from sex permanently.

**8** *But I say to those who are not married, and to the widows, it is a nicer thing for them if they remain as I am also. Yet if they cannot control themselves, they should get married. For it is better to be married than to be on fire.*

At that time, with the scheme of creation about to pass away (as the temple and Priestly Judaism were destroyed), it made sense not to make important changes like getting married. Therefore, he urged those who were able to do so to remain unmarried. An exception was made for the ones who experienced so much weakness that they could not control themselves sexually. Those people ought to get married.

**10** *Now I charge those who are married -- it is not I, but the Lord: a wife should not separate herself from her husband. But even if she should depart, she should remain unmarried or be reconciled to the husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife.*

On the other hand, married people needn't go to the opposite extreme of believing that they should leave their spouses in order to become like Paulus. Instead, they needed to recognize the teachings of Jesus on the permanence of marriage and remain together. Since a married couple is married forever, the only recourses for a couple that separates from one another (through what we call divorce) are to either remain alone (unmarried to any other) or to be reconciled to the estranged partner.

**12** *Now I say to those who remain -- it is I, not the Lord: If a certain brother has an untrusting wife and if she considers it good to dwell with him, he should not divorce her. And if a certain woman has an untrusting husband and if this one thinks it good to dwell with her, she is not to divorce the husband. For the untrusting husband is made holy by the wife and the untrusting wife is made holy by the brother: otherwise indeed your children were unclean, but now they are holy.*

The information in the previous verses has dealt exclusively with relationships between two Christians. Yet upon occasion a relationship existed before the husband or wife converted to Christian Judaism. What ought to be done in their case? Genuine marriage only exists between two people who place God as the highest priority in their lives. All other relationships are simply civil marriages. Rather than urge the believer to leave, though, Paulus promotes faithfulness. So long as the other person wishes to remain with the believer, even in that perilous time the believer was not to leave but needed to remain faithful.

*But if the untrusting one departs, let him separate himself. The brother or the sister is not enslaved in such cases, but God has called us in peace. For how do you know, woman, if you will save your husband? Or how do you know, man, if you will save your wife? If it is not as the Lord*

*has given to each, each one should still walk as God has called. And I arrange it this way in all the assemblies.*

However, if the untrusting person were to leave, the Christian needed to realize that the other person was not bound to follow God's code of ethics. Since the relationship was not a marriage as God defines marriage, the jilted Christian needed not worry. In such cases, (s)he was free to find a Christian to marry.

The Corinthians were called to recognize that people who have not made commitments to follow God's teachings might indeed leave. We have no control over their behavior, and they do not follow the same moral code. Regardless of what other people do, it is necessary for the Christian to follow God's teachings. Christians must do the right thing, but they are not controlled by what others do.

**18** *Was someone called while he was circumcised? He should not have skin put on. Was someone called while he had a foreskin? He should not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and a foreskin is nothing; but keeping God's precepts is something. Let each one remain in this-- in the calling in which he was called.*

Paulus extends his principle of "remaining as you were called." Since the war was going to come soon, it made no sense to make any significant change in life. Even matters like becoming circumcised were unimportant. What was important? Those things that are always important are God's principles. Keep God's spiritual principles, and do not make any major changes in life.

*Were you called as a slave? Don't let it bother you. But if you are also able to become free, do this instead. For the one in the Lord who is called as a slave is God's free person. Likewise, the one who is called as a free person is the Anointed One's slave. Were you bought for a price? Do not become people's slaves. In the condition he was called in, brothers, each person should remain in this with God.*

Some people construe this passage as support for slavery, but the author is only continuing his thought about not making major life changes. Yes, if you can get free, he says, go ahead, but don't put a great deal of effort into it. In the long run, following God's principles is what is important, and matters like social standing and personal liberty do not reflect on the spiritual truths. The readers were not to put their efforts into changing their social standing, or getting married, or separating from others, but into serving God, because time was growing short. The Revolt was less than 15 years away.

**25** *Now concerning the virgins, I have no arrangements from the Lord, but I give an opinion as a person who is considered trustworthy (since I received mercy from the Lord). I give the opinion, then, that it is a nicer thing for a person to be this way; it is a nicer thing on account of the situation of distress in which you stand: Have you been bound to a wife? Do not seek to be let go. Are you free from a wife? Don't seek a wife.*

Returning to the question put to him about sexual activity, Paulus urges all who were virgins at the time to remain that way. Although Jesus never taught anything about personal conduct near

the time of the Revolt, Paulus provides his consistent opinion: stay as you are, so long as you are able. Don't get married; don't try to get out of a relationship with an untrusting person.

*But even if you should marry, you are not sinning. And even if the virgin should marry, she is not sinning. Now those who are like this will have physical affliction. But I will spare you the details.*

In order to counter the views of the people who advocated permanent abstinence, Paulus reminds them that he knows that marriage is a good thing, not a sin. If someone at that time really wanted to get married, there was nothing wrong with it. However, his advice was that it didn't make sense (with a war coming) to begin a relationship, start raising children, and the like.

**29** *But I say this, brothers: since the season is short, what remains is this -- that also those who have wives should be as those who don't have one, and those who cry should be as those who aren't crying, and those who rejoice should be as those who aren't rejoicing, and those who buy should be as those who do not possess anything, and those who use creation should be as those who don't abuse it.*

At this point, Paulus repeats what were the reasons for his original instructions. "the season is short." Some people had clearly misunderstood his instructions (and his rationale), but here again he emphasizes that with a war coming that would likely impact them all, it did not make sense to make important changes in one's life. His examples are pure hyperbole. Even someone who wants to cry should realize that he shouldn't waste valuable time in crying. Someone who wants to buy something should realize he doesn't have the time; he should act as though he has no money. Don't waste a single resource! This time, the author wants to be sure that his intent is understood -- that the war would change everything.

*For the scheme of this creation is going by, and I want you to be carefree. The unmarried person cares for the Lord's things -- how he might please the Lord. But the married person cares about the things of creation -- how he might please his wife -- and he is divided. And the unmarried woman; that is, the unmarried virgin, cares for the Lord's things so that she might be holy in body and in spirit. But the married woman cares about the things of creation -- how she might please her husband.*

"The scheme of creation" is the whole natural order of things. Everything that his readers know would be different. There would be long-lasting strife with the Jewish people. There would be persecution from the Roman state. The temple would be gone, along with the whole Jewish way of worship. Families would be overturned. But did Paulus write these things to frighten them? No. He wanted them "to be carefree." How so? Someone who makes new and important relationship changes, such as getting married, will naturally be concerned for his new family. This is as it should be, normally, but in the then-current time of trouble, it would mean that someone's interests would be divided. Paulus advised not to make those kinds of changes and to remain undivided, allowing one's self to be devoted to God alone.

*Now I am saying this to benefit you yourselves, not so that I might throw a snare on top of you but for the order and devotion to the Lord without wandering around. But if someone thinks to*

*act improperly toward his virgin, if she is getting older, and if it is proper to be this way, then he should do what he wants to do. He is not sinning; they should get married.*

Now the author feels compelled to return to his earlier safeguard warning. Lest they interpret his timely advice as some sort of permanent injunction preventing them from getting married, Paulus pointed out clearly that if a couple is engaged, and if the woman is nearing menopause, then they certainly need to consider marriage. Marriage is not sinful. Paulus' advice is only a warning about making important changes with the times so uncertain.

*But the one who has stood in his heart (not having necessity but having authority concerning what he wants) and who resolved in his own heart to keep himself a virgin, this one is doing nicely.*

With times as they were, it made more sense for someone to remain a virgin rather than getting married. Therefore, whoever can control himself would do well to remain unmarried.

*And so, the one who marries his virgin is doing nicely, and the one who does not marry is doing better. A woman is bound for as long a time as her husband is living. But if the husband dies, she is free to marry whomever she wants -- in the Lord only. But she is more blessed if she remains unmarried, according to my opinion. (But I think I also have God's spirit.)*

In conclusion, Paulus deftly pointed out that neither option, marriage or remaining alone, was sinful. Both were good things, but in light of the upcoming revolt, it was better to remain alone.

Regardless of the fact that "divorce" allows separation from another person, it does not break the relationship. Two Christians who marry are together for life. If the other person were to die, yes, the widow(er) would be free to marry. In light of the distressing world situation, however, Paulus urges them not to do that. Again he reminds his readers that this is just his opinion, but his attitude (spirit) certainly coincides with what he knows of God's teachings.

## *EIGHT*

**8:1** *Now concerning the idol sacrifices: We know that we all have knowledge. But knowledge puffs up; but love constructs. If anyone thinks he knows anything, he doesn't yet know what it is necessary to know. But if anyone loves God, this one is known by him.*

Another issue facing the Corinthians has to do with the participation by some of them in the eating of cooked offerings to false gods. This alone was not a bad thing, but since some of the Corinthian Christians had formerly belonged to these idolatrous groups, and since the "stronger" Corinthians were eating the food and urging the weaker ones to eat as well, this made the weaker ones feel like they were worshiping false gods.

Paulus begins by pointing out that "we all have knowledge." He is agreeing with the stronger Christians that idols are nothing, and so the food there is simply food. Yes, Paulus recognized that. However, it made more sense for them to act lovingly toward the ones who were stumbling, rather than to assert their superior knowledge.

*Therefore, about the eating of the idol sacrifices: we know that an idol is nothing in creation, and that there is no god but one. For although they are indeed called gods, whether in the sky or on the land (since there are many gods and many lords), to us there is one God, the Father, out of whom all things came. And we live for him and for Lord Anointed Jesus, through whom all things came; and through him we are.*

Making his own knowledge clear, Paulus affirmed that "an idol is nothing." Whether or not someone refers to something as a god, there is only one God. In making his affirmation, however, Paulus mentioned the Anointed One -- just once -- but he was alluding to the teachings of Jesus about love.

*But the knowledge is not in all people. But certain people who are conscious until now of the idols are eating as though it were sacrificed to an idol, and they are defiled since their consciences are weak. But food does not station us near God. Neither do we lack if we don't eat nor do we abound if we eat.*

Not everyone understood things as clearly as the "stronger" Korinthians do. Some people, he remarked, still thought they were worshiping a false divinity, and when they did that it weakened their consciences. Why? Because they were doing something they themselves now believed to be evil, and yet the strong people were urging them to do it. Was this really about food? No. Food is unimportant. This discussion was about weakening your conscience to the point where it becomes hard to recognize right from wrong.

*But see that your freedom of choice does not somehow become a stumbling block to those who are weak. For if someone should notice the one who has knowledge reclining in a place of idol-worship, won't his conscience which is weak be built up to the point of partaking of the idol-sacrifices? For the weak one, the brother on whose account the Anointed One died, will be destroyed by your knowledge. Now since you are sinning this way against your brothers and are striking their [weak] consciences, you are sinning against the Anointed One. For this reason if food causes my brother to fall, I should not eat meat for the age, so that I would not make my brother fall.*

The stumbling-block principle is simple, although it is often misinterpreted. If someone encourages someone else to do something that they believe is evil, and if that weaker person winds up doing that thing, then the stronger person has placed a stumbling block in the path of the weaker one. Paulus then reasons that this sort of thing was taking place with respect to the idol sacrifices. Since the loving Anointed One died as much for the weaker person as for the strong, and since the stronger person was knowingly disregarding his brother, in failing to love he was sinning. Since love is so much more important than freedom to do as one wishes, concern for other Christians ought to precede desire to eat that particular food. Paulus concludes by saying that he'd never eat meat again if the alternative were to make someone else leave God.

*9:1 Am I not a free person? Am I not an envoy? Haven't I seen Jesus our Lord? Aren't you my work in the Lord? If to others I am not an envoy, on the contrary, to you I am indeed! For you are the seal of my dispensation in the Lord. My defense to those who judge me harshly is this:*

The triple rhetorical question is used again. Each of the questions signifies the same thing. Yes, Paulus had indeed been freed from his previous ways and had been sent out as an envoy because of his personal encounter with the risen Jesus. He was free, and therefore he could make any choice he wanted. The readers knew this. Therefore, the answer to the fourth question is "yes." The readers were a result of Paulus' work for God, on account of the risen Messiah. Even though there were many other Christians to whom Paulus had not taken the message -- and many whom he had not met -- Paulus had certainly been sent to the Korinthians. He was the one who had introduced God's message among them. The fact that they had embraced Jesus' teachings because of him proved that his sending by the risen Jesus had been genuine. Therefore, since he was recognized as having been sent by Jesus, he would say the following:

*Haven't we the authority to eat and drink? Haven't we the authority to bring along a sister, a wife, as do the other envoys, and the Lord's brothers, even Kefa? Or do I and Bar-Nabas alone not have the authority to not work?*

Paulus had displayed the signs of a genuine envoy, and so the Korinthians never doubted that Jesus had sent him out as a herald -- just as he had sent out Peter and the others. With that commission came the so-called "apostles' privilege" (mentioned in Mt 10). As he traveled, Paulus could expect to be sheltered and fed by his fellow Christians. Just like the envoys, he could bring along a traveling companion. In his case, this companion was his friend, Bar-Nabas. The Korinthians recognized that Paulus had this privilege, and so Paulus' question is rhetorical. Paulus firmly established his own authority to make use of the hospitality of others because he was about to use his own practice as an example for everyone.

*What person ever serves as a soldier at his own expense? What person plants a vineyard and doesn't partake of its fruit? Or what person tends sheep and doesn't partake of the sheep's milk?*

Even further, Paulus reasons that the envoys ought to be treated as Jesus indicated. He supported Jesus' granting of the privilege with analogies to other areas.

*Am I saying these things according to humanity? Or doesn't the Torah also say these things? For it was written in the Torah, "Do not muzzle an ox that is threshing grain." Is it the oxen that concern God? Or is it for us altogether that he says it? For it was written on our accounts that, "It is bound for the one who plows to plow in hope and for the one who threshes to use that hope." If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your fleshly things?*

Going still further to illustrate that the envoys ought to have such a privilege, Paulus likened them to oxen and cited the Hebrew Bible. By analogy, he and his fellow envoys were merely servants of God, going where God wanted, doing what God wanted, and teaching what God wanted. In that, they were like oxen. They were also like farmers, planting spiritual seeds on God's farm. Didn't this make sense? After all, the envoys were traveling around as though they had no homes.



*If others of you are using the authority, shouldn't we use it instead? But we did not take advantage of this authority. Instead, we are enduring all things so that we would not provide any hindrance to the good message of the Anointed One. Don't you know that the ones who work with the sacred things partake of food from the temple? The ones who attend at the altar are those who partake of the altar? In this way also, the Lord arranged for those who announce the good message to live off of the good message.*

Therefore, since the Torah supported the authority to stay with their fellow Christians as they traveled, and since that admonition had come from the Messiah, and since there was a clear rationale for such things, and since the Korinthians themselves did not dispute Paulus' identity as an envoy, he ought to do the same thing, right? Should he have exercised his freedom to eat and drink wherever *he* wanted to? And there's the analogy! Paulus was free to eat and drink wherever he wanted, and they knew it, but he never did so. In fact, he refused to mooch off of others because of his love for them. He never would have burdened them in such a way -- by making them support him -- even though he traveled from place to place.

Yes, God arranged that Paulus could have eaten with his fellow Christians, but Paulus didn't.

*But I have not made use of any of these things. Yet I didn't write these things so that it would be that way for me. For it would be a nice thing for me rather to die than to have anyone empty me of this boast. For if I should speak the good message, it is not a thing for me to boast about, for a necessity lies with me: for it is my woe if I should not speak the good message. For if I do this willingly, I have a reward. But if I do it unwillingly, I have been entrusted with a stewardship; what reward is it to me then?*

Extending this further, Paulus added that he would never let anyone support him, and he placed out his example for everyone else to follow. He believed so strongly in not burdening others as he traveled that he considered it a necessity to do things as he did them. Yes, he needed to tell others about Jesus' teachings, but it was also a necessity to support himself financially. He would rather have died than to have done otherwise! And he realized that it only benefitted him to do his work willingly. If instead he traveled around begrudgingly, or supported himself begrudgingly, it would have meant nothing to him.

*So that as I announce the good message, I will place the good message without cost, so that I would not wear out my authority in in the good message. For since I am free from all people, I enslaved myself to all people in order that I might gain more. And I became like a Jew to the Jews, so that I would gain Jews; to those under a code as though under a code (though I am not under law myself). To those without a code as though I were under a code (though I am not without God's code, but I am inside of the Anointed One's code), so that I would gain those who are without a code. I became weak to those who are weak, so that I would gain those who are weak. To all people I became all things, so that I might in all things save some. Now I am doing all things on account of the good message, so that I might share together with it.*

Therefore, concluding his example, Paulus would never claim the freedom to eat and drink with others. Instead, he always supported himself, telling the good message to others "without cost."

Above all, he made that choice freely; he had the freedom, and he made his choice wisely. The Corinthians needed to do likewise.

Paulus always kept his perspective. If he was helping Jews, he spoke to them from a Jewish perspective; when he helped gentiles, he spoke from their perspective. In whatever he did, he didn't think of his own freedom or authority first; rather, he thought of their needs first. He loved them. And in that, he became "all things" -- he did whatever he needed to do to help others, and this was his example for everyone else to follow.

**24** *Don't you know that those who run in a race indeed all run, but one takes the prize? In this way, run so that you might claim it. Now each one who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. Indeed then they do it so that they might obtain a perishable wreath, but we are obtaining an imperishable one.*

Still on the same topic -- regarding the idol sacrifices -- Paulus turned to another tactic. Some may have argued that watching out for their brother or sister was something passive. Maybe it was really the other person's primary responsibility. The author headed off that point with this counterpoint. Having demonstrated that we must watch out for one another's needs, he continued by providing proof that it is necessary to do all things well. One cannot be lackluster about it. His first analogies relate to competition in athletic games, something with which the Corinthians might have been familiar. Anyone who competes has to be serious about it, and being serious means doing whatever it takes to do it well. So it is also with Christian living.

*Now then, I am running that way -- not as though I had no goal. I box that way -- not as though I were beating the air. But I subdue and enslave my body, so that I myself should not become disqualified after heralding to others.*

Paulus drew again from his own life. His attitude toward helping others rather than burdening them was part of a greater concept. He lived his life with a purpose. Drawing a boxing analogy, he pointed out that he did whatever he needed to do in order to do his job well. He didn't try to "cheat"; in the analogy that would have disqualified him. Instead, he did everything to the best of his abilities. Therefore, the Corinthians needed to watch out for one another as best they were able.

## TEN

**10:1** *For, brothers, I don't want you to be ignorant that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and they all passed through the sea, and they all baptized themselves into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. And they all ate the spiritual food and drank the spiritual drink. For they drank from a spiritual rock which followed them. (Now the rock was the Anointed One.)*

Once again returning to the Hebrew Bible, Paulus cited a section of the Torah. Rather than quote a particular passage, the author alludes to the entire exodus from Egypt. Now, Paulus began to talk about another group of God's people. Like the Corinthians, they had all belonged to God.

Ex 13:21-22 indicates that a cloud led the Israelites from Egypt toward Sinai. The expression "baptized into" indicates a covenant; here, by following through the cloud and making the journey across the Red Sea (Ex 14), the people covenanted with Moses. This has nothing to do with water baptism or "spirit baptism" except in the use of "baptize into." As they traveled, God provided manna for them to eat (Ex 16), and through Moses gave them water from a rock to drink (Ex 17).

They had covenanted with Moses, and God provided sustenance for them. Similarly, God had provided Paulus and the Corinthians with the teachings of the Messiah -- sustenance for the Corinthians if they kept to their covenant with God. Paulus uses "spiritual" in its common sense as "metaphorical." God was sustaining the Corinthians just as he had sustained the Israelites.

*But God was not well pleased with the majority of them, for they were sitting down in the desert. Now these things happened as types for us, so that we would not be strongly desiring bad things, like they strongly desired bad things. Neither should you become idolaters as some of them were, just as it was written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and they stood up to revel."*

Even those people who had fled Egypt, seeing such great miracles, did not all remain faithful to God. Some of them -- the majority -- wanted to return to Egypt. Before long, God was saying things like, "How long will this wicked assembly grumble against me?" (Num 19:27) There, he swore that none of those complainers would enter the promised land, and he caused them to wander. God condemned them for being so quick to bow down to idols -- the quote is from Ex 32:6. Moses' own brother, Aaron (the ancestor of the priesthood) had led the rebellion against God, and so the majority of them never reached the promised land.

Paulus points out the detail that they had been eating and drinking food sacrificed to idols, and that because of their idolatry they had been turned away. The author wanted to warn the Corinthians that they might cause the weak (or even the strong) among themselves to fall into idolatry if they continued eating the sacrificial food.

*Neither should we sin sexually, as some of them sinned sexually -- and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. Neither should we test out the Anointed One, as some of them tested him out and were destroyed by the serpents. Neither should you grumble, even as some of them grumbled and were destroyed by the Slayer.*

Returning briefly to his earlier comments on sexual sins, Paulus reminds the Corinthians how God treated those Israelites who had intermingled sexually with the residents of Moab (Num 25:1-8) -- with people who worshipped Ba'al. A plague then killed thousands of them.

Those Israelites who had tested God by claiming they were better off without him (Num 21:5-6) were destroyed by fiery serpents. Therefore, the Corinthians ought not to insist that they were better off without the Anointed One. Similarly, those who complained that God was not treating them well (Num 16:14) were destroyed with a plague that killed thousands (Num 16:47-49). Paulus was making strong indications that it would not be wise to question God's methods in the exact way that some Corinthians were beginning to question.

**11** *Now these things happened to these people as types; now it was written for our admonition, to whom the completion of the ages has come upon. And so, the one who thinks he is standing should look that he may not fall. No trial has gripped you except for what suits human beings. But God is trustworthy; he will not allow you to be tested beyond what power you have. Instead, with the trial he will make also the way out for you to be able to undergo it.*

The author pointed out that those things were warnings for future people, including his readers. Because they were courting disaster, every one of them needed to examine himself carefully, making sure that he would not stumble. After all, they hadn't been faced with anything extraordinary. Staying away from idol worship was well within their power, and Paulus began this first conclusion by pointing out that God would provide them a means of escaping idolatry if they chose to resist.

*For this reason, my beloved ones, flee from the idolatries. I am speaking as to thoughtful people: you judge what I am saying. The cup of praise, which we praise God for, isn't it a sharing in the Anointed One's blood? The bread that we break, isn't it a sharing in the Anointed One's body? Because there is one bread, we the many are one body, for we all partake of one bread.*

But isn't food just food, or does it sometimes mean something more? Paulus reminds them of the significance of the Christian meals together. When they ate together, it signified the strength of their relationships. In that, it represented everything about Jesus' teachings. In short, it was a sharing of Jesus' "one body" with one another and with him. Therefore, couldn't they see that participating in the same activity with idolators might be seen as participating in their idolatry as well?

**18** *Look at Israel according to the flesh. Aren't the ones who eat the sacrifices ones who share in the altar? Then what am I saying? That an idol sacrifice is something? On the contrary, I am saying that the things that the gentiles are sacrificing, they are sacrificing to spirit beings and not to God. Now I don't want you to become ones who share with spirit beings: you are unable to drink the Lord's cup and a cup of spirit beings; you are unable to partake of the Lord's table and of a table belonging to spirit beings. Or are we making the Lord jealous? Are we stronger than he is?*

A similar analogy comes from the Jewish sacrifices outlined in the Torah. The ones who partake in the sacrifices are the same people who accept what the sacrifices mean. Therefore, even though the idols are not real gods -- maybe they are spirit beings if anything -- the eating and drinking of food sacrificed to those idols indicates to others that they accept what those idol sacrifices mean. Therefore, it was necessary for them not to participate in both the Christian meals and the idolatrous meals. This reminds us of Jesus' statement that no one can serve two masters. Paulus asked his readers to choose. Did they really want to make God jealous? Did they want to face a fate similar to that of the wandering Israelites, especially when they knew that a time of judgment on Israel was about to arrive? He assumed on their behalf that they didn't want such a thing.

**23** *All things are lawful, but not all things make sense. All things are lawful, but not all things are constructive. No one should seek his own interests, but the other person's. Eat up everything*

*that is sold in a meat market, examining nothing on account of conscience. For "the earth and its fullness is the Lord's." If someone of those who do not trust calls you, and you want to go, eat up everything that is set in front of you, examining nothing on account of conscience. But if someone says to you, "This was a sacrifice," don't eat it up, on account of that one who is pointing it out, and on account of conscience.*

Paulus' final conclusion, then, is that anyone could eat anything he pleased. However, because of the possible dire consequence of causing their brothers and sisters (in Jesus) to worship idols, the readers needed to realize that not everything made sense.

Should they have gone out of their way, then, to make sure they weren't eating idol food? On the contrary, food is food. The only danger came from causing someone to knowingly participate in idol sacrifices. Since all food is a gift from God (citing the first verse of Psalm 24), they should eat thankfully. On the other hand, if they knew in advance that the food was sacrificed to a false god, they should simply decline, thereby sparing the consciousness of their weaker brother.

*Now I say "conscience" not about his own but about the other person's. For why is my freedom being judged by another person's conscience? If I partake gratefully, why am I spoken evil about because of what I am giving thanks for? Therefore, whether you eat or whether you drink -- or whether you do anything -- [do] all things to God's glory. Become no cause of stumbling both to Jews and to Greeks, and to God's assembly, just as I also I please all people in all things, not seeking my advantage but that of the many, so that might be saved. Become my imitators, just as I am also the Anointed One's imitator.*

And indeed, this was not a matter of their own consciousnesses of what was right and wrong; instead, this was a matter of harming others that they ought to love. Everything ought to be done to God's glory, not because "we can do it." Don't knowingly cause a fellow Christian to stumble, regardless of his background. Paulus himself practiced as much, and so he urged his readers to imitate his example in this matter, just as he was imitating the Messiah -- who always strove to put God first.

## ELEVEN

**11:2** *Now I praise you, because you remember me in all things, and you are holding to the things that were passed down, just as I passed them down to you. Now I want you to know that each man's head is the Anointed One. Now man is woman's head; now God is the Anointed One's head.*

Unlike the English word, "head," the Greek word **κεφαλη** did not indicate authority of any kind. The most common metaphorical (non-literal) use of the word "head" in Greek was to indicate the source of something. In this case, the author began by pointing out that he had passed things onto them, and so, he was a source of spiritual information. Eventually, then, all of their spiritual life came from Jesus. Similarly, as the account in Exodus 2 points out, woman came from man, and so, man is woman's head. Finally, Jesus was sent by God, who was his source. Paulus is about to talk about causing disgrace to one's source, to whom one ought to be thankful.

*Each man who prays or prophesies with something down on his head is disgracing his head. But each woman who prays or prophesies with her head totally uncovered is disgracing her head, for it is one and the same with the one who has been shaved.*

Since ancient times, the Jewish people have had the custom of wearing the yarmulke (or skull cap). Also, during the time of Jesus, men wore their hair considerably longer than it is worn today. Paulus is not talking about either of these matters but a local custom in Korinth, and later on he uses the word "custom." There was some sort of shawl that women in Korinth used to bind up their hair, and the majority view is that women with flowing hair were regarded as prostitutes, while women with bound up hair were seen as pious by the local men. If a man wore such a shawl (or scarf), he would have been dressing like a woman. Therefore, the Christian man who did so would have been dishonoring Jesus. God had already indicated in the Torah that men ought not to wear women's clothing: "...nor will a man put on a woman's garment, for whoever does these things is detestable to Yahweh your God. (Dt 22:5)"

The Korinthian readers would have realized that this was the case. The men there were not trying to dress like pious women, but Paulus wants to broaden the issue. Should the men dress like women? No. Then he continued to talk about how the women dress.

A Korinthian woman who failed to wear the shawl was making the Christian men look like they supported prostitution. Therefore, she disgraced herself socially but also brought shame on the Christian men, and ultimately on Jesus -- since the other people in Korinth would think that Jesus wanted women to behave like prostitutes. Now prostitutes who were caught were often shaved, and some commentators allege that they remained that way. Therefore, Paulus noted, any Christian woman who dressed like a prostitute was just like a prostitute in everyone else's eyes. It was as though they had been caught in sexual sin.

*For if a woman is uncovered, she should also be shaved. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shaved, she should be covered. For indeed, a man is not bound to cover his head, since he is God's image and glory. But woman is man's glory. For man is not from woman, but woman from man. For also, man was not created through the woman, but woman through the man.*

The author didn't really want women to shave their heads. On the contrary, he was being rhetorical: "if you're going to dress like a prostitute, go the whole way. Shave your heads." This was something he knew that they wouldn't want to do. Therefore he continued by saying that if they realized that having their heads shaved was disgraceful, the Korinthian women ought to wear the shawl.

Just as the men should not wear the covering because it would make them look like women, so also the women ought to dress piously in order to honor the Christian community. A lot has been said about man being "God's image and glory." In fact, Genesis clearly indicates that humanity, both male and female, were created in God's image. But just as man provides glory to God (who created Adam from dust), so also woman provides glory to man, for Eva's source was Adam. One brings either glory or disgrace to one's source. The men don't need to wear such a covering. They would not dishonor women by not wearing it, because man's source is God.

**10** *On account of this, the woman is bound to have authority over her head: on account of the messengers. Regardless, neither is woman without man nor man without woman in the Lord. For just as woman came from the man, so also man comes on account of a woman. But all things come from God.*

Here as earlier in the letter, Paulus provides a counterargument to his original argument. Wanting the women to know that the choice is ultimately theirs, he noted strongly that since the woman's head belongs to her, it is under her authority. She gets to choose. The phrase **ἐξουσία ἐπὶ** universally means "authority over" or "power over" and always indicates that the authority belongs to the person who is said to have it. The woman **must** have the right to choose. And in fact, even though woman was created through man, man and woman are inseparably equals. In fact, since men are born from women, one might say that an individual man does have a woman as a source. Ultimately, then, as the Korinthian woman chose whether or not to wear the scarf, she needed to think about what God would want her to do in that case. True, she didn't need to wear it, but what would God want?

Literally hundreds of explanations have been given for "on account of the messengers." Apparently, this was part of a counterargument given in the Korinthian letter to Paulus. Were these human messengers from other Christian assemblies who might have seen the unusual shawl covering in Korinth? Were these divine messengers ("angels") who supposedly watched over congregations? We do not know.

*You judge among yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God uncovered?*

Ultimately, it came down to this: the women needed to decide for themselves.

*Now nature itself does not teach you that if indeed a man has long hair it is a dishonor to him. But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her, because the long hair has been given instead of a covering. But if someone thinks to be argumentative, we have no such custom; neither do God's assemblies.*

The natural order says nothing about long hair or short hair for men. On the other hand, a woman in Korinth could bind up her hair and use it "instead of" the shawl if she wanted to. Having their hair loosened was apparently the problem, and the woman who simply didn't want to participate in such a strange custom could avoid it by binding up her hair. Either way, though, she ought not to look like a prostitute. Did this matter in the long run? Was it a matter of salvation? No. After all, that custom existed only in Korinth and was unheard of elsewhere.

**17** *Now with these charges I do not praise you, because you are coming together not for the better but for the worse. For first indeed, when you are coming together in an assembly, I hear that there are divisions among you, and I believe some part of it. (For it is even necessary that there be differing schools of thought among you, so that the approved ones may also become apparent.) When you come together in the same place, it is not the Lord's dinner that you are eating. For each one is grabbing his own dinner to eat: and one indeed is famished; now one is drunk.*

Earlier in the letter, Paulus prepared his readers for this segment by referring to drunkenness. At this point, he picks up the topic in earnest. As far back as the time of Jesus, and certainly in Acts (chapter 2, chapter 4, etc.), the Christian community was devoted to eating meals together. Most likely, they did not always all eat together but met in smaller groups in their homes. The common meal consisted of a group of people who loved one another and who had Jesus' teachings in common sharing their labor with one another. At Korinth, though, some people were coming into the meal so ravenous that they piggishly devoured a lot of the food. Others were drinking so much wine that they were getting drunk. This was certainly not the common sharing that Jesus had in mind, and so Paulus pointed out that it was not Jesus' dinner that they were eating. Jesus would never have approved of such self-centered gluttony.

Many commentators, reading this passage through the filtered sunglasses of ritual religion, view this meal as some sort of ritual. However, on numerous occasions during the context, the author mentions aspects of a normal dinner between Christians. There is no ritual in sight, for no such thing existed until the second century.

*For don't you have houses in which to have dinner and drink? Or do you hold a bad attitude about God's assembled, and do you disgrace the ones who have not? What should I say to you? Do I praise? In this I do not praise. For what I also handed down to you I got from the Lord: that Jesus the Lord took bread on the night that he was betrayed, and he gave thanks, broke it, and said, "This is my body on your behalf. Do this for my remembrance." In the same way also, he took the cup after dinner, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Just as frequently as you drink, do this for my remembrance." For just as frequently as you eat up this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord's death until he should come, so that whoever eats up the bread or drinks the Lord's cup unworthily will be guilty of the Lord's body and blood.*

The opening question is rhetorical. If they were really so famished that they needed to eat so much, they ought to have had a bite to eat at home, earlier in the day, instead of disgracing the whole group with their gluttony and drunkenness.

Paulus backed himself up with the teachings of Jesus at his own last meal, from whom Paulus had received his instruction. During the last supper, Jesus broke a loaf of bread with his hands and said, "This is my body." He also drank wine, identifying it in metaphor with his blood. The Christian meal, then, represents everything about Jesus' person and teachings. The behavior of Christians at that common meal incorporates all of Jesus' teachings.

In each instance, Jesus had said, "Do this for my remembrance." The first words, "do this" mean simply, "eat together," for that is what they were doing: eating food and drinking wine. The common meal between Korinthian Christians was a keeping of Jesus' admonition to share meals together. So, they were doing that part, but they were not eating the Lord's dinner; that is, they were not doing it "for his remembrance." How should they have done it? **Lovingly**. Jesus' oft misunderstood saying, "Do this for my remembrance," means simply, "When you eat together, show love to one another." During that whole last meal, Jesus talked about the love and friendship he shared with everyone else. And that is precisely what Paulus wanted the



Korinthians to share together: love. Love is the center point of the teachings of Jesus, and eating together lovingly is a demonstration and practice of Jesus' teachings.

Therefore, Paulus concluded that whenever they ate and drank together, their meal ought to truly be dedicated to God. Simply, they needed to practice love toward one another. Anyone who was getting drunk or being gluttonous instead of loving was behaving in a manner that was unworthy of the meal itself. If they rejected love, they'd have been (in metaphor) as guilty of killing Jesus as those who had actually done so.

*Now a person should think about himself carefully -- and he should eat up the bread and drink the cup in this way. For the one who eats and drinks without judging the body carefully, eats and drinks judgment upon himself. For this reason many among you are weak and are feeble, and a considerable number are sleeping. But if we judged ourselves carefully, we wouldn't be judged. But we are judged by the Lord and are trained, so that we would not be condemned along with creation. So then, my brothers, those who come together to eat should wait for one another. If someone is famished, he should eat at home, so that you would not come together into judgment. Now whenever I come, I will arrange the rest.*

When you eat with your fellow Christians, are you being loving or not? Love for one another is not a matter to be taken lightly, and Paulus pointed out its seriousness. "The body" of Jesus here is the whole Christian community. Anyone who went to the Korinthian meals selfishly, without due consideration for everyone else, was begging for judgment. The writer even concluded that their failure to love one another was the reason that so many of them were sick and dying. If they really followed Jesus' teachings (i.e., love), their "training from the Lord" would prevent their judgment.

His conclusion, then, was a simple one: they should eat a little ahead of time if they were really famished. That way, they wouldn't be drunk or gluttonous at the meal, letting others go hungry and thirsty while they gorged themselves. This simple matter of training would allow them to be the loving people Paulus believed they were at heart.

## TWELVE

**12:1** *Now brothers, I don't want you to be ignorant of the spiritual things. You know that when you were gentiles, you were being carried away (however you were led) by voiceless idols. So, I am making it known to you that no one speaking with God's breath says, "A curse on Jesus." And no one is able to say, "The Lord is Jesus," except in holy breath. Now there are different kinds of gifts, but the same breath. And there are different kinds of service, and the same Lord. And there are different kinds of workings, and the same god is working all things in all people.*

At last we enter a different section of the letter. Turning away from problems arising from cultural considerations and the factions among the group, Paulus shifted the focus (chs. 12-14) to the fact that many of them were using their spiritual giftedness to classify or segregate themselves.

"The spiritual things" refers to something specific. Known as "the holy breath," these were the signs from God that confirmed the covenant (by comparison to Priestly Judaism). It revealed to the honest truth-seeker that Yahweh's approval rested with the followers of Jesus, who really had been the Messiah. These spiritual gifts had been given by God in accordance with and within the framework of a prophecy given by Joel (cited in Acts 2), which indicated that they would continue to be given until the destruction of the temple -- that "great and majestic day." While Priestly Judaism still existed, the holy breath was an important marker, a witness to the identity of God's people.

The Corinthians were focusing so much on these gifts from God, and in particular on the least important of all the gifts, that they were in abject danger of putting aside the important matters in favor of pursuing what would be meaningless in the long run.

Some of the gentiles at Corinth had been accustomed to worshipping "voiceless idols" by allowing themselves to be taken into an almost hypnotic state called "prophetic ecstasy." At that time, they often babbled incoherently and attributed their activities to the idols acting through them. First, Paulus pointed out that the true and great gifts come from God. Second, he mentioned that God did not provide one gift but many kinds of gifts, even though the same God was working in all of them. He often gave different gifts to different people, so that not everyone should expect to receive similar gifts.

*Now each one is given the appearance of the breath for benefit. For to one indeed is given through the breath a saying of wisdom. But another receives a saying of knowledge according to the same breath. To another is given trust, in the same breath. Now to another is given free gifts of healings in the breath. Now to another is given workings of power, to another prophecy, to another careful judgment of spirits. To another is given kinds of tongues, but to another the interpretation of tongues. But in all these things, the one and the same spirit is working, distributing as it wishes to everyone.*

At this point, the author introduces a theme of unity in diversity. The same God gives out the same holy breath, but the breath appears differently in people. Some, for example, have the ability to heal diseases, while others prophesy. One of the gifts mentioned in Paulus' paragraph was "kinds of tongues," which we might call "ecstatic utterances." This was the gift that certain of the Corinthians had been strongly and wrongly emphasizing. Paulus introduced it near the end of a long list, in order to place it into its proper perspective as merely one of many modes of God's activity among his people. Therefore, the gifts were distributed as God (the spirit) wishes. Here, Paulus almost makes it sound inconsequential which gift a person might have received. He is about to add to that.

**12** *For just as the body is one and has many members -- but all members of the body, although they are many, are one body -- so also is the Anointed One. For also we were all baptized in one spirit into one body (whether Jews, whether Greeks, whether slaves, whether free people), and all were made to drink one spirit. For also the body is not one part but many.*

He wanted them to think of all Christians together as a single unit. There is only one body with many members. These members have different functions. That is, the different activities of the

holy breath appear in different people for different reasons, but together -- collectively -- there is one body performing all of its functions. Thus, all kinds of God's people were made to "drink one spirit" (or breath) even though that spirit displayed itself differently.

*If the foot should say that, "I am not a hand. I do not belong to the body," does it for this reason not belong to the body? And if the ear should say that, "I am not an eye. I do not belong to the body," does it for this reason not belong to the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were an ear, where would the smelling be? But now God put each one of the members in the body just as he wanted. But if the entirety were one member, where would the body be?*

His "body" analogy extended itself naturally to the Corinthian situation. Emphasizing one gift (tongues) to the exclusion of the others was like saying that only hands should be part of a body. Would it make sense, he asked rhetorically, if the body were just one big eye or ear? No. That wouldn't be a body any longer. In order to have a body, different members are necessary. Similarly, different gifts were necessary, and tongues was not a more important gift.

*Now the eye is unable to say to the hand, "I have no need of you." Or again, the head is unable to say to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, those members of the body which are thought to be weaker are rather much more necessary. And those which we think are less honorable in the body, more abundant honor is lavished on these. And those of us that are unattractive have more abundant attractiveness. Now the more attractive of us have no need of this, but God has meshed the body together, giving more abundant honor to the ones who lacked it, so that there would not be a division in the body. On the contrary, the members should care the same for one another. And if one member suffers, all members suffer together. When a member is glorified, all the members rejoice together.*

Again stressing the unity of the group, Paulus' analogy notes that the whole body works together. If some parts seem more presentable than others, that doesn't matter. God has put everyone together with the different gifts, giving honor where he saw fit, so that the body would be a single unit. Therefore, there ought not be any division in the body, because in reality no part is more important. If one suffers, all suffer; if one is glorified, all are glorified. The body is a unit.

*Now you are the Anointed One's body, and compose it partially as members. And God indeed set some in the assembly first to be envoys, second prophets, third teachers, then powers, then free gifts of healings, of assistance, of guidance, of kinds of tongues. Not all are envoys; not all are prophets; not all are teachers; not all work powers; not all have the free gift of healings; not all speak in tongues; not all interpret. But be jealous for the greater gifts.*

All of God's people collectively comprised a unit, and he gave different spiritual gifts to his people as useful signs. These gifts took on all kinds of forms, and Paulus listed them. Once again, he listed the giftedness so that tongues would be diminished in apparent rank; that gift is last here. Using the word "first" at the beginning of the list, he implied that this was a more appropriate ranking of the gifts than the Corinthians had been using. If we must rank, then tongues belonged at the end. Not everyone should be expected to have the same gift that the

Korinthians in question had, and even so, they ought to have been hoping for one of the greater gifts instead of emphasising the least important one.

### THIRTEEN

**31** *And yet I am showing you a way according to excellence: If I speak with the tongues of people and of messengers but do not have love, I have become a clanging gong or crashing cymbal. And if I have prophecy and know all secrets and all knowledge, and even if I have all trust (so as to remove mountains), but if I don't have love, I am nothing. And if I hand out all that is mine, and even if I offer up my body so that I may boast, but if I don't have love, it profits me nothing.*

Yet instead of focusing on **any** of the spiritual gifts, which were all gifts from God, what was more important than them all? The whole core teaching from God was about love. Love was so important that even had Paulus possessed all of the gifts to the greatest degree possible, they would have been worthless without love. He remarked of the consequences for being without love three different ways: "I have become a clanging gong"; "I am nothing"; "it profits me nothing." The first is a statement of function -- he wouldn't be useful without love. The second is a statement of identity -- he'd BE nothing. The third indicates benefit -- he'd gain nothing from his life or actions without love. However the readers thought about their situation, Paulus put love ahead of all the giftedness in the world.

**13:4** *Love suffers long; it is kind. Love is not jealous. Love does not promote itself. It is not puffed up. It is not showy. It is not self-seeking. It is not easily provoked. It does not record bad things. It does not rejoice over injustice, but it rejoices together with the truth. It covers all, trusts all, hopes all, endures all.*

These characteristics of love prove it to be the most important thing in life. They also point to the sort of behavior that those gifts-obsessed people in Korinth ought to have been exhibiting. In fact, Paulus was subtly demonstrating that the Korinthians were neglecting love, for the characteristics of love described here contradict those that the tongues-promoters were demonstrating.

*Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will pass away. Where there are tongues, they will cease. Where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know partially and we prophesy partially, but the partial things will pass away when the complete thing comes. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I had the attitude of a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put away the things of a child.*

Comparing love to the spiritual gifts, the signs from God, Paulus noted that while love never fails, prophecy and divine revelation are not always complete. "We know partially," he wrote because God did not reveal all things through the signs. "We prophesy partially," because even with these gifts from God, not everything about their future was clearly and fully understood.

On the other hand, love is a "complete" revelation of God's nature and their purpose in life. If they fully received God's teachings about love, they would have no need for the spiritual gifts, even as Paulus considered them to be not so important.

Paulus did not consider himself to have reached the point of complete love yet, for he was about to add that he looked forward to true, deep understanding of God's ways. Even so, when love does come, it is a time for great change. Growing in love is the Christian maturation process, which Paulus likens to growing up. As a child, ones ways are childlike. Such is the state of reliance on the spiritual gifts. But with love, it will be like adulthood. Just as when Paulus grew up, he stopped being childish, so also when he matures completely in the teachings of Jesus, he will have no need for the spiritual gifts.

*For we see now a riddle in a mirror, but then we will see face to face. I still know partially, but then I will know fully, just as I am known fully. But now, these three remain: trust, hope, love. Now the greatest of these is love. Pursue love, but be jealous for the spiritual things. But rather so that you may prophesy, for the one who speaks in a tongue says nothing to human beings but to God. For no one hears him, but he tells secrets spiritually. But the one who prophesies is speaking constructive things, and advice, and consolation to people. The one who speaks in a tongue builds himself up, but the one who prophesies builds up the assembly.*

"We see now" refers to the present life, including the presence of the spiritual gifts. Even with those gifts, seeing through to God's true nature is like looking into a mirror and seeing something strange, unclear. But after growing in love to the point of completion, everything will make sense. "We will see face to face" -- as looking into a clear mirror. "I still know partially" means that the spiritual gifts do not provide Paulus himself with complete understanding of love, but he looks forward to the day when love will enable him to understand God just as God understands him. Paulus expressed here a longing for that time.

"These three remain." Paulus listed the three central pursuits of Christian teaching: trust, hope, and love. As Jesus himself had taught, the greatest of these is love. Love -- a commitment to place others' needs ahead of your own -- is the single principle that summarizes the whole aspiration of humanity. The capacity to love is what it means to be made in God's image. Love is the greatest pursuit that Paulus' readers could have!

Paulus immediately juxtaposes the greatest possible pursuit with the spiritual gifts so valued in Korinth. Were they entirely worthless? No, Paulus said; they were worth pursuing. However, proper emphasis needed to be kept. For instance, prophecy was clearly more important than the gift of tongues. Why? Paulus explained that prophetic speech was always constructive for the whole group, but the gift of tongues was sometimes beneficial only for one person, for typically no one was able to interpret the ecstatic speech. Therefore, a prophetic message from God for the group was clearly much more important.

**14:5** *Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but I want rather for you to prophesy. Now the one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues -- unless someone is interpreting, so that the assembly might receive construction.*

Once again not wanting them to think that tongues was a worthless gift, Paulus said that he hoped they could all do it, *but* he hoped even more that they would receive a prophecy. True, if someone were inspired (through the gift of interpretation) to interpret a tongues utterance for the crowd, that would assist the whole assembly. But since prophecy did not require an interpreter, it was the greater gift in every instance. Still, Paulus wanted them to know that there was certainly nothing wrong with the least of all gifts, tongues.

*But now, brothers, if I should come to you speaking in tongues, what would I profit you unless I am speaking to you in revelation, or in knowledge, or in prophecy, or a teaching? And the same with soulless things which give off sounds, whether a pipe or a harp: if they give no difference in notes, how can it be known what is being played on the pipe or harp? For also if a trumpet should give an unsure sound, who would prepare himself for combat? Similarly also, if you don't give a clear message through the tongue, how will it be known what was spoken? For you will be talking to the air.*

The next prong of Paulus' argument comes from simple logic. Would it have benefited them at all if he himself were speaking in tongues? No. On the other hand, if God had revealed a teaching for them, or a prophecy, Paulus would have revealed it to them. Therefore, he would only have benefitted them with intelligent communication. Therefore, he compared tongues to an unrecognizable musical sound. You know something is playing, but you can't appreciate whatever it is. Why, if they couldn't recognize the instrument, how would someone know whether a trumpet was being blown to signify an upcoming battle, or for some other purpose? Speaking in tongues was like "talking to the air," for no one understood.

*Since one may obtain so many kinds of sounds in creation, and none is soundless, if then I don't know the power of the voice, I will be a barbarian to the one who is speaking, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me.*

Being "a barbarian" to someone means believing that the other person is simply babbling, spouting unintelligible gibberish. Paulus asserted that unless he could communicate intelligibly, he and the other person would be like foreigners to one another, incapable of meaningful conversation.

*So also it is with you, since you are jealous for things of the spirit, seek in order that you may be abundant for the construction of the assembly. So, the one who speaks in a tongue should pray, so that one might interpret. If I pray in a tongue, my spirit is praying but my mind is fruitless. What is it then? I will pray for the spirit, but I will pray also for the mind. I will play music for the spirit, but I will play music also for the mind. Otherwise if you should praise for the spirit, how will the one who fills the ungifted person's place say "A-men" with your words of thanksgiving? For indeed you are giving thanks well, but the other person is not being constructed.*

Paulus then related his anecdotal information directly to the Corinthians, making sure that they got the point that the signs were to be constructive for the group. If anyone were to speak with tongues, he first ought to pray that someone be able to interpret it; otherwise, the result would be entirely fruitless. Prayer and other speech needs to be fruitful for both the spirit and the mind.

Typically, here as in Acts 2, the exercise of tongues produced words of praise for God. Therefore, Paulus noted that these "words of thanksgiving" would go unheard by everyone who was unable to interpret, so that if no one could interpret, then the others present would not have been uplifted. He implied that (as a consequence) there was then no point to the practice of tongues if no one else benefitted.

*I give thanks to God that I speak more with tongues than all of you, but in an assembly I want to say five words with my mind, so that I may also instruct others rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.*

Paulus' description of the gift called "tongues" illustrates that it was incomprehensible to anyone who was unable to miraculously interpret it. Therefore, Paulus would rather have said very little, being clearly understood, than to babble on for ten thousand words. In other words, intelligible speech communicated more information more clearly than volumes of tongues speech. This provided another reason for Paulus to prefer the other gifts to tongues, even though (as he pointed out) he had spoken more in tongues than any of them had.

**20** *Brothers, don't become children in your attitudes, but be childlike toward bad things and become complete in your attitudes. It was written in the Torah that, "'In other tongues and with others' lips I will speak to this people;" they "will not listen to me" this way, says Yahweh".*

Like children, the tongues-speaking Corinthians had been insisting on doing whatever they felt like doing, even though it benefitted no one. Paulus' use of "children" in metaphor may have come from the fact that tongues sounded to others like "baby talk." "Don't be children," he said, but they needed to "be childlike" in their quickness to reject bad things. Their attitudes needed to be more complete, more adult.

Paulus' reference to the Torah is actually a dual reference, first to Isaiah 28:11 (outside the Torah) and then to one of several passages similar to Leviticus 26:14 (from the Torah), which warns of the consequences of not listening to God. Paulus considers the context similar to that of both Isaiah and the Torah. Then, God had sent Isaiah, but the people refused to listen to him through Isaiah. Therefore, God sent people to them who spoke other languages, namely, the Assyrians. Jeremiah pointed out that the coming of the Assyrians (Jer 5:15), whose language they could not understand, would be a sign that judgment was coming upon them (vv. 17f.) for not having listened to God (vv. 18-19). But even then, historically, the people did not listen to God, although the presence of the unknown tongues should have served as a warning. And so, the people who rejected God's signs were judged (according to Leviticus and Deuteronomy) for not having listened to God.

*And so, tongues are for a sign not to those who trust but to those who are untrusting. But prophecy is not for the untrusting but for the trusting. Therefore, if the whole assembly should come to the same place, and if all should speak with tongues, and if untrusting or ungifted people should enter, wouldn't they say that you have gone insane? But if all should prophesy, and if an untrusting or ungifted person should enter, he would be convinced by everything. He would be examined by everyone when the secrets of his heart become apparent. And so, he will worship God, falling on his face and announcing that, "God is really among you!"*

Similarly, the presence of the gift of tongues was meant primarily to serve as a warning to everyone else that God was about to judge Israel. It was a similar sign to the untrusting that they had very little time to get their act together. Any such person who was not honestly seeking to follow God, in Paulus' story, would indeed reject the Christians, thinking simply that they were mad -- exactly as had happened when the Assyrians showed up to conquer.

By contrast, prophecy attracted the person who was honestly seeking God. In Paulus' story, when the truth-seeker noticed genuine prophecy, he would fall down to his face and realize that God's favor rested with the Christians.

**26** *What then, brothers? When you come together, each person has music, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. All things should be for construction. And if someone speaks in a tongue, it should be according to two or at most three sentences, and in turn, and someone should interpret. But if there is no interpreter, he should be silent in the assembly; now he should speak to himself and to God.*

When the Korinthians met as friends, everyone had something useful to contribute, and this was good. Whatever they shared with one another should be done for the well-being of everyone there. More specifically, Paulus urged the would-be tongues-speakers to restrain themselves from speaking at length. Furthermore, they needed to refrain from speaking at all if no one was gifted with the interpretation. Such strong advice clearly contradicted the people who had been babbling all at once and at length.

*Now two or three prophets should speak, and others should carefully judge. But if there should be a revelation to another person sitting by, the first should be silent. For you are all able to prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and be advised. And the spirits of the prophets submit to the prophets. For he is not a god of disorder but of peace, as in all the assemblies of the holy ones.*

Providing more suggestions of order for the exercise of the spiritual gifts, the writer reminded even the prophets to take turns and not speak at length. In so writing, Paulus illustrated to his readers that he was not putting down tongues so much as he was urging them to be orderly. Such disorder as found in Korinth was ungodly and wasn't found anywhere else of which Paulus was aware.

**34** *The wives should be silent in the assemblies. For it is not allowed for them to speak; on the contrary, they should be submissive, just as the law says also. Now if they want to learn something, they should ask their own husbands at home. For the wives' speaking in the assembly is a social disgrace.*

Within the context of the exercise and explanation of the spiritual gifts among the Christians in Korinth, certain of the Korinthian wives were in the habit of asking questions. When they did this, they interrupted what the prophets and others were saying; they interrupted revelation from God. Since their husbands were present at the time, they also brought down social disgrace on these men, because their interrupting to ask questions was an implication to everyone else who was present that their husbands really didn't know anything. Therefore, these wives needed to be



silent instead of disgracefully interrupting God's prophets; they could ask their husbands later about anything that they had been unable to hear.

**36** *Did God's message leave you? Or did it go to you alone? If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or a spiritual person, he should recognize what I am writing to you, because it is a precept of the Lord. But if anyone is mindless, let him be mindless. And so, brothers, be jealous to prophesy and do not forbid speaking in tongues. But all things should happen in an attractive and orderly way.*

This is Paulus' conclusion about the "spiritual things," a section which has lasted from the beginning of chapter twelve until now. Some of them apparently thought they were quite wise and spiritual because they had done so much babbling. Paulus chastised them by first reminding them that the message of freedom came from Jesus, not from them, and that it was sent through his envoys to many people -- not just them. In the overall scheme, their position was small, despite their giftedness. By this time, he did not need to remind them that many people worldwide were gifted, too. The central "precept of the Lord" that they needed to be following was love for one another, and if any of them were truly "gifted," they would recognize this. Only a truly thoughtless person would have failed to recognize what Paulus was writing.

The climax of the matter was the simple admonition to look toward what was greater, but they needed not to think that tongues was entirely worthless; it served its purpose. And overall, when they were exercising the gifts, they needed to do so in an orderly fashion: without incessant gibberish; without interrupting one another; without them all talking at once.

## *FIFTEEN*

**15:1** *Now I am making known to you, brothers, the good message that I announced to you, which you also received, in which you have been standing, and through which you are being saved if you hold to a certain message that I announced to you -- unless you trusted inconsiderably. For I delivered to you among the first things what I also received, that the Anointed One died on behalf of your sins according to the writings, and that he was buried, and that he was raised up on the third day according to the writings, and that he was seen by Kefa, then by the Twelve. After that, he was seen on high by five hundred brothers at once, of whom the majority remain to the present day, but some have gone to sleep. After that, he was seen by Jacob. After that, by all of the envoys. But last of all, he was seen by me as well, as though I were born late.*

Paulus was not summarizing the whole message here but was indicating that the discussion to follow would concern the afterlife. The Korinthians had written at length to Paulus about what would happen to the people who were going to die in the upcoming First Revolt. Would they simply cease to exist? What would life be like for those who survived on earth? Some were beginning to doubt that there was an afterlife for every believer. Primary to the discussion of the things that were yet to happen was the fact that Jesus himself was still alive, as so many people had testified, although he had once been killed. The Korinthians didn't doubt this, and so Paulus picked up his conversation with something that was certain to them.

Jesus' resurrection was widely known among his followers and widely disputed by those who refused to accept his teachings, and Paulus himself had heard the testimony of various eyewitnesses to Jesus' resurrection even before seeing Jesus in person. Paulus' purpose for mentioning them now is that the Korinthians knew that the resurrected Jesus had been seen by many people, including several people whom they respected. They had the testimony of many witnesses, including Paulus himself, even though Paulus had only seen Jesus much later (Acts 9).

Was Paulus saying that he received his information about the resurrection secondhand? No, for he heard it not only from other Christians but from Jesus himself -- and that's hardly secondhand. But in his wording, he placed himself in a situation similar to the Korinthians. Instead of insisting throughout that they needed an eyewitness (Paulus or Peter, for example) to constantly affirm the resurrection, Paulus wrote these things:

- that Jesus' crucifixion had happened according to the Messianic writings. Even if the readers refused Paulus' "say so," Jesus' death had completely fulfilled the prophecies about him. Therefore, people who were not present to see those things happen ought to accept the dual testimony of the Hebrew Bible and of the hundreds of eyewitnesses, for
- hundreds of people had seen Jesus during his resurrection appearances. Although Paulus was one of them, he pointed to himself as having the same other information that he had. They might have said that they needed to see Jesus themselves, and so Paulus discounted his own experience and emphasized that hundreds of people had testified to the fact that Jesus had been raised.

And the Korinthians themselves didn't doubt Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Some people take this section of chapter fifteen to be some sort of primitive formula; instead, we merely have Paulus carefully making out his case that his readers did not have to see the afterlife personally in order to know it existed.

*9 For I am the least of the envoys; I am not fit to be called an envoy because I persecuted God's assembled. But by God's generosity, I am what I am, and his generosity toward me did not become worthless. On the contrary, I worked more abundantly than all of them. (Now it was not I, but God's generosity that is with me.) Therefore, whether it is I or they, we are heralding this way, and you trusted this way. But since it is being heralded that the Anointed One was raised from among the dead, how come some of you are saying that there is no resurrection from among the dead?*

From what he wrote elsewhere, this appears to have been Paulus' actual opinion of himself (and not merely an extreme) -- that because he had persecuted the Christians at first, he did not feel worthy to have been chosen to be an envoy. He had heard the testimony and had refused to accept it, but when eventually he could no longer resist, Jesus called Paulus to be an envoy. And so, nevertheless he was one, and because he realized of how many sins he had been forgiven, he worked harder "than all of them," constantly traveling without a home to places like Korinth, in order to spread the message of generosity that had saved him.

Paulus was a herald -- an official representative of the king. He had been given various signs as a seal of his heraldship, which proved his identity to others. But even if some of the Korinthians had heard the message from someone else, they heard the same message: that the Messiah had been raised from the dead. And so, the Korinthians were certain that this independent testimony was true. Even knowing that, some of them wondered whether or not there was an afterlife, and a few were denying it.

*Now if there is no resurrection from among the dead, not even the Anointed One has been raised. Now if the Anointed One has not been raised, then our heralding is meaningless, and your trust is meaningless. But we would also be found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified according to God that the Anointed One was raised; God did not raise him up if indeed the dead are not raised. For if dead people are not raised, neither was the Anointed One raised; but if the Anointed One was not raised, your trust is deceptive: you are still in your sins. Then also those who have gone to sleep in the Anointed One have been destroyed. If only in this life we have hope in the Anointed One, then we are the most pitiful of all people.*

The term, "resurrection," means both "the afterlife" and the process of reaching that afterlife. It was commonly referred to as being raised from among the dead, but the terminology was metaphorical, as Paulus would soon explain.

Now that he had established that his own envoyhood, the testimony of hundreds of witnesses, and the Hebrew Bible all attest to what the Korinthians knew: that Jesus had been raised from the dead, Paulus set out to prove by inference that there must be an afterlife. I.e., Jesus was raised, so he's not simply dead.

By logic, if there is no afterlife, then Jesus could not have been raised from the dead. The contrapositive to this statement, then, must be true along with it: that if Jesus had been raised, then there must be an afterlife. Having already demonstrated the condition that Jesus was risen, Paulus has proven his point, logically, but he goes further:

Taking this logical absurdity to the greatest extreme possible, Paulus follows the line of reasoning to its conclusion. If Jesus could not have been raised from the dead, then Paulus himself and those hundreds of others had all been lying. Everything they had done was meaningless. Not only were they have been false witnesses -- which God condemns -- but also the Korinthians themselves were without hope. They knew personally of the coming judgment on Israel -- knowledge that they had probably received through the holy breath. If Jesus were not the Messiah, then they were all doomed, and everyone who had ever died had simply ceased to exist.

Paulus concluded this point by noting that if this were all there was, what a worthless existence it would be! And who would have been the most pitiful of people? The ones who had become so deluded that they believed God would somehow rescue them for following the Messianic teachings throughout the Revolt. In other words, Paulus and the Korinthians themselves were to be pitied.

However, the logic has already dictated that Paulus had been telling them the truth: that there would be life for them after this life.

**20** *But now, the Anointed One has been raised from among the dead as a first fruit of those who have gone to sleep. For since there is death through a human being, there is also a resurrection of the dead through a human being. For just as in Adam all people die, in the same way also all people will be made alive in the Anointed One. But each one will do so by his own arrangement. The Anointed One was a first fruit. After that, those who were the Anointed One's in his presence. Then the end will come, when he will have delivered up the kingdom to Father God, when he will have deactivated all rule and all authority and power. For it is necessary for him to be king until indeed "he has placed all of his enemies under his feet." Death, the last enemy, has been stripped of power, for "he has arranged all things under his feet." But when it is said, "all things are arranged under him," it is a given that the one who arranged all things under him is an exception. But when he has arranged all things under him, then also the son himself will arrange himself under the one who arranged everything under him, so that God may be everything in everything.*

Since, logically, there must be an afterlife, Jesus was merely the first "Messianic" person to go there. Paulus now wished to establish that Jesus wasn't the **only** person who would experience an afterlife. Was this afterlife for all of his followers? Did it include the readers as well?

His logic here points first back to Adam, who would be mentioned again later. Adam was a single person, yet he had brought death. How? Because he had been the first to die, spiritually, and yet millions of others had already followed suit by choosing death over life. Couldn't people choose life over death? Yes. Everyone then living (in advance of the First Revolt) had the same kind of threefold choice: a) to reject God's teachings at all, and die; b) to accept Priestly Judaism, lose all access to God (when it was destroyed), and die; or c) to accept Jesus' Messianic teachings, and live. Jesus had brought this access to life, just as Adam had brought access to death.

So, Paulus predicted that many of the people who had been with Jesus would also die soon. Apart from various rumors spread throughout the centuries that followed, we have no evidence that they didn't all die prior to the end of the Revolt. "Then the end will come" referred to the conclusion of the Revolt, with its final battle at Masada. The temple was destroyed, and Priestly Judaism ceased to exist. For the believer, no sacrificial system would ever again be required. No reminder of death would ever remain, and people could live their lives knowing in full confidence that they belonged to God. For such a believer, then, death is rendered powerless.

Paulus backed up his case (that death would be powerless) by citing a Messianic prophecy -- a saying that again the Corinthians knew applied to Jesus. The Messiah had been crowned with glory, and everything was to be placed under his feet (Psa 8:5-6). The Corinthians understood that this was not to be taken to signify physical kingdoms, that this was a metaphysical metaphor. All of the Messiah's enemies, physical and spiritual, were subjected to him. Death was that last enemy that Jesus conquered, and at the time of the judgment on Priestly Judaism, he was about to demonstrate his authority over everyone and everything, including again death. This power would extend to all of those who followed him, as part of his kingdom. Only God remained in

authority, and in the framework Jesus would subject everything to himself, and himself to God, meaning that (of course) everything was subject to God.

The events of the First Revolt demonstrated God's ultimate authority. Getting rid of Priestly Judaism and a notion of religion that Yahweh had set up as a teaching tool, God left only Jesus' teachings as a means of access to him and to the afterlife. There is no access to God among the idolators, and since that time no sacrificial system remains. Jesus' teachings are therefore dominant, just as Paulus and the psalmist had predicted.

**29** *Otherwise, what will those people do who are being baptized on behalf of the dead, if dead people go wholly unraised? And why are they being baptized on their behalf? And why are we in danger every hour? "I die each day." I say this by the boasting about you that I have in Anointed Jesus our Lord. If I were to fight a wild animal in Ephesus, according to my humanity, what would it profit me? If dead people are not raised up, "we should eat and drink, for we die tomorrow."*

Baptism is a metaphor for suffering. See, for example, Jesus' own usage of the metaphor, in Mt 20:22-23. People were praying, and fasting, and being persecuted because of the dead. They were anguishing. As Paulus said, "I die each day." In simplest terms, Paulus pointed out to his readers that even they already believed that the dead were raised; otherwise, their own actions would make no sense. Paulus' own sufferings were not for nothing! Why expose one's self to dangers such as being forced to die violently (like being ripped apart by wild animals) if indeed there were no afterlife. Paulus implies that he wouldn't even bother! If this was all there was, he too would take the easy path.

The quote comes from Isa 22:13. There, judgment on Jerusalem was coming (just as in the Korinthians' case), and there was no hope. If/when the Assyrian armies came, the end could not be stopped, and so, you might as well be happy. Death is certain, and there would be no point in trying to avoid it. That quote continues with, "Surely this wrong will not be forgiven of you until you die." With God coming in judgment again, if there were no afterlife, there would be no point in doing anything. Just accept God's judgment on Israel and die with many of the others. But of course, Paulus' point was that life was not that hopeless.

**33** *Do not be led astray: "Bad relationships corrupt beneficial ethics." Be awake justly, and do not sin, for some people have an ignorance of God. I am saying this to nourish you.*

The quote comes from Menander's "Thais". Menander was a Greek dramatist who lived from 342 BCE to 291 BCE. He is thought to have written at least one hundred comedies. Menander inspired playwrights after him, and some of his characters were later used by others -- including the Roman playwright, Terence (190 - 158 BCE), who used the character of Thais and one of Menander's plays as the basis for his "the Eunuch". Menander's works often commented on life in an attempt to portray its struggles accurately, like those of Euripides whom he emulated. These were peppered with easy to remember sayings like the one that Paulus quoted. In the play, Thais was a prostitute. Some sayings from Menander, including the one quoted by Paulus, were passed down together as collections of proverbs.

Paulus affirms Menander's saying, implying that the readers should not listen to the foolish people who were denying that there was an afterlife. They should watch such matters carefully, realizing that those people were just ignorant.

**35** *But someone will say, "How are the dead people raised? Now what kind of bodies do they come in?" People without wisdom! What you are sowing is not made alive unless it dies, and what you are sowing -- you are not sowing the body that will be made, but a naked grain, which might happen to be wheat or one of the others. But God gives it a body just like he wanted to, and he gives each of the seeds its own body. Not all flesh is the same flesh, but one kind is indeed human, another is fish-like, another is birdlike. And there are heavenly bodies as well as earthly bodies, but the brightness of the heavenly ones is different than the brightness of the earthly ones. There is one brightness of the sun, and another brightness of the moon, and another brightness of stars. For a star differs from the other stars in brightness.*

Apparently the saying quoted by Paulus was the kind of thing that those people said who did not believe in the afterlife. How does this happen? What sort of body will you have, since you leave your body in the grave? They implied that since the answers were not immediately obvious, there must be no answer.

Paulus compared the physical body to a seed, which ceases to exist when the mature plant grows from it. The body planted in the soil is sown like a seed, and the mature spiritual self rises from it.

There are all kinds of bodies, Paulus reasoned, just as there are all kinds of heavenly bodies in the sky. These are all different from one another, and (he is about to say), it is similar in the spiritual realm. We should not expect something that is not physical to be the same as something physical, and we should expect to leave our physical bodies behind when we die.

**42** *It is also the same way with the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised up in incorruptibility. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised up in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised up in power. It is sown as a physical body; it is raised up as a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual one, just as it was also written, "The" first "person," Adam, "was made into a living soul." The last Adam was made into a life-giving spirit. But the spiritual one was not the first one; that was the physical one. The spiritual one came afterwards.*

When someone dies, the wasted shell of a physical body -- this "seed" -- is replaced with a glorious and powerful spiritual self. Paulus uses the term "body" by analogy (since his Korinthian opponents had used it), but he made it clear that he was referring to something that was not physical. This body is physical; that "body" will be spiritual.

He related this again to the relationship between Adam and Jesus. Adam had been made a living being (literally, "a living soul"), with the quote coming from Gen 2:7. By contrast, Jesus' resurrection made him into "a life-giving spirit." Even so, those good people who die are spiritual beings, just as they had been physical beings. Even Jesus traded his physical body in for a spiritual self. The spiritual one came afterwards, just as Jesus had come after Adam.

*The first person was from the earth, dusty. The second person was from heaven. Whatever kind the dusty one was, this kind also the dusty ones are. And whatever kind the heavenly one was, this kind also the heavenly ones are. And just as we carried the image of the dusty one, we should also carry the image of the heavenly one. Now I sound like this, brothers, because flesh and blood are not able to inherit God's kingdom, nor will the corrupt thing inherit incorruptibility.*

In life, we bear the physical image of Adam, who was "dusty"; in the afterlife, good people live on to resemble "the heavenly one," Jesus, who is now no longer physical. What summarizes this is one of Paulus' beautiful sayings, "Flesh and blood are not able to inherit God's kingdom." The body must be left behind because the afterlife is not physical. When talking about God's people, Paulus expresses this as a reason for dying: to leave the body behind and move on to the afterlife.

**51** *Look, I am telling you a secret: indeed, not all will go to sleep, but we will all be changed in the smallest amount of time, in the blinking of an eye, during the last trumpet. For it will blast, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed. For it is necessary for this corruptible thing to be clothed with incorruptibility, and for this mortal thing to be clothed with immortality. Now when this mortal thing is clothed with immortality, then the message that was written will occur:*

They were expecting to die in the First Revolt. Some of them may have been expecting the end of all things, when what was coming was merely the end of Jewish life as they knew it. So Paulus informed them that they would not all die, but everything would be different after the judgment on Israel. In his allegorical description, as soon as the judgment began, everything they knew would change. Those Christians who died innocently during the conflict would be part of the afterlife right away. While in their bodies, they were mortal, but they would be (metaphorically) "clothed with immortality" in order to be with God.

*"Death was swallowed in victory. Where, death, is your victory; where, death, is your sting?" Death's sting is sin, but the power of sin is the Torah. But thanks be to God, who has given us the victory through our Lord, Anointed Jesus. And so, my beloved brothers, become steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the Lord's work, knowing that your toil in the Lord is not worthless.*

The saying this time comes from Hosea 13:14. That saying began with the notion of afterlife: "Shall I ransom them from the power of She'ol? Shall I redeem them from death?" There, the nation of Israel was about to be ruined by God at the hands of others, just as in the Korinthians' case in Paulus' time, but even then those who died are within God's grasp. God will render death and She'ol (the abode of the dead) powerless for those who love him.

To an extent, this is true for the Christian while he lives. Death is powerless, merely being a transformation (from seedling to mature plant, in Paulus' analogy). But in Paulus' reading the saying is fully realized when someone actually dies. Death is not the end. What is it here that makes people fear death? Sin. The unfaithful fear death because of its finality, but for the Christian it is not final. "The power of sin is the Torah" because the Jewish people used the Torah to bind people to the rituals as a means of reminding them of death in the hope that they

might escape it. Paulus continues by saying that Jesus is not only the hope, he is victory. Through Jesus, and for each of them, through his teachings, God grants victory over death to those who love him. In conclusion, the readers needed to remain steadfast in what they knew, practicing Jesus' teachings no matter what, in full realization that this life was only the beginning.

## SIXTEEN

**16:1** Now concerning that collection for the holy ones: just as I arranged it for the assemblies in Galatia, I am doing also for you. On the first day of the week, each of you should put by itself what he has treasured up -- whatever he might be prospered -- so that collections will not be made when I come.

The collection mentioned here was a one time collection to relieve a famine in the region of Israel. The collection of foodstuffs for the Christians in Jerusalem would not only help them in a time of need but would also assist the Jewish Christians in the difficult task of accepting the fact that God had allowed gentiles into the new covenant.

Here, Paulus suggested that the Korinthians set aside something individually on a regular basis -- whatever they had planned to put aside -- so that when he visited Korinth everything would be ready for him to pick up.

*Now when I happen by, I will send those persons of whom you approve with letters to bear your gift to Jerusalem. But if it is worthy for even me to go, they will go with me. But I will come to you when I have gone through Makedonia (for I am going through Makedonia). It may happen that I will remain with you or even spend the winter, so that you may send me on wherever I may go. For I don't want to see you now as I make my way by, for I hope to stay on with you for some time, if the Lord should allow it. But I will stay on in Ephesus until Pentecost, for a great and working door has been opened for me, and there are many who are set against me.*

Sending so great a gift was a matter of trust, and Paulus assured them that he would make certain to send the food with people that the Korinthians trusted. He even offered to take the gift himself, if that was what the Korinthians preferred, and so he let them know his planned itinerary.

**10** *Now if Timotheos should come, you see to it that he may be there without fearing you, for he is working the Lord's work as am I. Therefore, no one should despise him, but send him onward in peace so that he may come to me, for I am expecting him with the brothers.*

This chapter contains the author's closing admonitions, reminders, and bits of information. In this case, he indicated that his friend and coworker, Timotheos, might visit Korinth. We know from Paulus' letters to Timotheos (written close to the time of this letter) that Timotheos was somewhat nervous. Paulus hoped that they would treat him well in Korinth, and that when he returned to visit Paulus Timotheos would tell him good news about his visit.



*Now concerning brother Apollos, I advised him a lot, so that he would come to you with the brothers. And that he should come now was not what he wanted at all, but he will come when he finds the opportunity.*

Apollos, too, would be with the group who visited Korinth. Apparently, this was at Paulus' suggestion -- possibly because of the problems that some of them were having about following men. Paulus indicated, though, that Apollos would have to find time to go see them.

*Watch out. Stand firm in trust. Be manly, be strong. Let everything of yours be done in love.*

The strength here is in resisting temptations to do wrong. The advice to watch out is with respect to keeping watch for anything that might trip them up, spiritually. The admonitions to trust and love are expected, for they are the core of Jesus' teachings. This short section probably ought to be taken contextually as a reminder of what he wrote earlier, given that he just mentioned a visit by Apollos.

*You know the household of Stefanas -- that it is a first fruit of Asia and that they have arranged themselves for service to the holy ones. I am advising you, brothers, that you also be submissive to such people and to everyone who is working and toiling with them. Now I rejoice at the presence of Stefanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because these ones fulfilled your need. For they have refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore, recognize such people.*

Other visitors that they might expect included the household of Stefanas, who had helped the Korinthians as well as Paulus. He urged them to recognize those great servants of God and to consider their needs.

**19** *[The assemblies of Asia greet you.] Akila and Prisca, with the assembly at their house, greet you many times in the Lord. All the brothers greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. Paulus' greeting, in my own handwriting.*

After discussing the potential visitors, the letter closes with greetings from others -- a typical practice in Greek letters of the period. Akila and Prisca (Priscilla) were already becoming well known, and so they sent their greetings to Korinth. After indicating that everyone with him greeted them, Paulus turned it to them: they should greet one another. How? "With a holy kiss." From what little we know, this was an affectionate kiss on the mouth that was done not for pleasure but as a greeting.

Finally, Paulus has been dictating the contents of the letter to Sosthenes. At this point, near the very end, Paulus provided his own personal greeting to the Korinthians -- a personal touch in his own handwriting. It was common to write with the assistance of a scribe, but the personal touch would have made the Korinthians feel closer to Paulus.

*If someone does not affectionately love the Lord, he should be accursed. Marana tha. May the generosity of the Lord Jesus be with you. May my love be with you in Anointed Jesus.*

This may have been written by Paulus' hand, too; since the original manuscript is not extant, we do not know. Blessings and curses like this one were common among people with Paulus' background, and the words "Marana tha" are in Aramaic. Of course, it is just as possible that Sosthenes has returned to writing. As the early Greek manuscripts were copied, there were no spaces between words. Therefore, "μαραναθα" appears all together. If the word is divided as **marana tha**, it means "Come, O Lord." It would then be Paulus' hope that God bring about the end of the First Revolt quickly. The words can be divided as **maran atha**; this would mean "Our Lord has come" and would be a final declaration that Jesus was the Messiah. Either way, this letter about love ends with Paulus' offering of his own love to this group about whom he cared so deeply.

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