INTRODUCTION AND 1 CORINTHIANS

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Introduction

I. General Remarks

A. Like all of Paul's letters, 1 Corinthians is an "occasional" document, meaning it was written to a specific group of Christians in a specific situation or circumstance. If one is to hear correctly what the Holy Spirit is saying to the church today in 1 Corinthians one must first hear correctly what he said in that letter to the church in Corinth. A significant part of that effort is gaining some understanding of the circumstances surrounding the letter.

B. It is easy to idealize churches in the apostolic era, to think they were free of struggle, conflict, and problems and that ministry in those days, especially for the apostles, was a walk in the park because all were of one heart and mind. That was and is the ideal, and there were mountaintop experiences among Christians then as today, but the church of every generation is made up of flawed, sinful human beings, who, though redeemed, continue to struggle with life in the overlap of ages, life on this side of the consummation. Paul had great hardships in his ministry, and it is a testimony to the power of God's Spirit that he endured them.

II. City of Corinth

A. Corinth was located at one end of the narrow isthmus that connects the Peloponnese with the rest of Greece. It was well positioned for trade and commerce, being at the convergence of the two major roads and close to two ports: Cenchreae to the east on the Saronic gulf (about 6 miles) and Lechaeum (or Lechaion) to the north on the Corinthian gulf (about 2 miles).[1] The claim that vessels and cargo were regularly transported across the isthmus over the four-mile stone roadway known as the *diolkos* has been shown to be unlikely.[2]

B. The history of the city is in two parts. The wealthy and ancient city of Corinth was destroyed by the Romans in 146 BC. It survived in a much-diminished form, with people essentially living among the ruins, until it was re-founded by Julius Caesar as a

[1] Chad Brand, ed., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Holman Reference, 2015), 341.
[2] David K. Pettegrew "The *Diolkos* of Corinth," *American Journal of Archaeology* 115 (2011), 549–574; see also, David K. Pettegrew, *The Isthmus of Corinth* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2016).

Roman colony in 44 BC.[3] It was Old Corinth that had the many temple prostitutes mentioned by the Greek geographer and historian Strabo (64 BC – AD 24) and that had developed the reputation for sexual vice (so much so that the Greek verb *korinthiazo* – to act like a Corinthian – meant to engage in sexual immorality). Sexual sin was undoubtedly abundant in New Corinth, but it was probably no different than other similar cities.

C. The new city quickly became prosperous and attracted many people. The Romans officially dominated the city with their laws, culture, and religion, but not surprisingly, in the first century AD there was a heavy influence of Greek culture.[4] There was also a substantial Jewish presence in the city.[5] The city was religiously diverse. It not only had Roman and Greek religions and Judaism but also had various mystery cults from Egypt and Asia.

D. Corinth's population in Paul's day is estimated to be about 80,000, with another 20,000 in the rural areas outside the city.[6] The city attracted large crowds of tourists every two years during the Isthmian Games. This was "a popular religious and athletic festival involving, for instance, musical and literary competitions, contests in public speaking, contests involving horses (e.g., chariot races, skills in chariot driving, men leaping on and off both horses and chariots), various kinds of footraces, the pentathlon, and boxing."[7]

E. In his commentary on 2 Corinthians, Scott Hafemann gives the following summary, based on a 1996 study by Timothy Savage, of what Greco-Roman culture stressed in terms of social status:

> In regard to sizing up one's peers, Savage observes that in Paul's day Greco-Roman society stressed (1) a rugged individualism that valued self-sufficiency; (2) wealth as the key to status within society; (3) a self-display of one's accomplishments and possessions in order to win praise from others; (4) a competition for honor that viewed boasting as its natural corollary; and (5) a pride in one's neighborhood as a reflection of one's social location. These values combined to create a populace for which self-appreciation became the goal and self-gratification the reward.[8]

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[3] Laura Salah Nasrallah, *Archaeology and the Letters of Paul* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 144-146.

[4] Johannes Wessels, *Paul's Approach to the Cultural Conflict in Corinth: A socio-historical study* (Zurich: LIT Verlag, 2017), 43; Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 3:2692-2695; Timothy A. Brookins, *Corinthian Wisdom, Stoic Philosophy, and the Ancient Economy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 131; Robert S. Dutch, *The Educated Elite in 1 Corinthians* (New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 56.

[5] See, e.g., Keener (2014), 3:2694-2695.

[6] George H. Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 13.

[7] Guthrie, 13.

[8] Scott J. Hafemann, *2 Corinthians*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 25.

F. Religion was viewed in Greco-Roman culture as a means to health, wealth, and social standing and its value was measured by the power of its deity to deliver those things to its adherents. Hafemann states, drawing again on Savage's work:

> The various religions attracted followers by providing visible displays of their gods at work, as seen in the "success" of their members. "The more powerful one's god the more strength one expected to receive and manifest." In the same way, on the popular level orators gained a following not primarily by virtue of their content, but by their ability to captivate their audiences with powerful and entertaining deliveries. In Savage's words, "They honored the one who preached with flair, force and pride."[9]

G. These cultural trends were magnified in Corinth, which in Ben Witherington's words, became a magnet "for the socially ambitious . . . [for] status-hungry people."[10] Gordon Fee describes Corinth as "the New York, Los Angeles, and Las Vegas of the ancient world."[11] To quote Hafemann again:

> The "self-made" Roman "freedmen," who had applied the hard labor of their former slave status to the business of making it in this new Roman colony, were known for being crassly materialistic, self-confident, and proud. The atmosphere of sports that filled the air with its pride, competition, and exaltation of heroes, not to mention that Corinth was the entertainment center of Greece, exacerbated all of this.[12]

H. Greek and Roman cultures valued rhetoric and oratorical skill, which easily deteriorated into a celebrity status and following, something like we see with Hollywood celebrities today. Carson and Moo state "that at Corinth this inherent tendency in the rhetorical tradition mingled with the structure of social climbing and the love of status to turn favorite rhetors into heroes, and audiences into fans."[13]

III. Occasion of the Letter[14]

A. Paul first preached the gospel in Corinth during his second missionary journey (Acts 18). He went there from Athens and was later joined there by Silas and Timothy (Acts 18:5; 2 Cor. 1:9).

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[9] Hafemann, 26.
[10] Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 20, 24.
[11] Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 3.
[12] Hafemann (2000), 27.
[13] D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 427.
[14] Drawn in significant part from Carson and Moo (2005), 366-370, 420-425.

B. Paul's condition when he arrived in Corinth is reflected in 1 Cor. 2:3 where he says, "I came to you in weakness and fear and with much trembling." He stayed with Priscilla and Aquila, a Jewish couple that had recently moved to Corinth after being expelled from Rome under the edict of Emperor Claudius, and supported himself as a tentmaker or leatherworker.

C. The Jews in Corinth dragged Paul before the proconsul Gallio and charged Paul with persuading people to worship God contrary to the law, but Gallio refused to entertain what he saw as a religious dispute. When the Jews present realized "that their legal case [had] been disallowed and that Paul and his group [had] been given, by implication, official legal sanction,"[15] they turned on Sosthenes, the current synagogue ruler who was no doubt instrumental in bringing the case against Paul. They beat him in front of the tribunal, but Gallio did not care.

D. Paul remained in Corinth a good while after that, his total stay exceeding $1^1/_2$ years (Acts 18:11, 18), during which time he wrote 1 & 2 Thessalonians. He then sailed from Cenchreae to Caesarea, stopping off briefly at Ephesus where he left Priscilla and Aquila who had accompanied him. He then went up and greeted the church in Jerusalem and returned to Antioch. This is now probably A.D. 51/52. He spent a short time with his home congregation in Antioch before heading out again on his third missionary journey (Acts 18:18-22), probably in A.D. 52.

E. Paul probably arrived back in Ephesus in the summer or fall of that year. He had a very fruitful ministry and was there over 2 ½ years, until the summer or fall of 55 (Acts 19:8, 10, 20:31). Sometime after Paul left Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus (probably in the fall of 51) and before he arrived back in that city (probably in the summer or fall of 52), Apollos came to Ephesus, knowing only the baptism of John. Priscilla and Aquila explained to him the way of God more accurately, and Apollos then went to Corinth with a letter of recommendation from the brothers in Ephesus (Acts 18:24-19:1). During Paul's absence from Corinth, Apollos and others, probably including Peter, built on the foundation he had laid there.

F. While at Ephesus, Paul learned of certain problems in the Corinthian church and wrote them a letter in which he forbid them to associate with immoral people. This letter has not been preserved, but we know about it from the reference to it in 1 Cor. 5:9. Paul must have been speaking in the context of church discipline, but some of the Corinthians apparently interpreted his words in a very general sense (1 Cor. 5:9-10).

G. Afterward Paul received reports from "some of Chloe" (1:11) about the ugly factionalism in Corinth. The three church delegates – Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (16:17) – brought a letter from the church and their own verbal reports of the state of affairs which revealed the church was marred by abuses of the Lord's table, immorality, lawsuits, uncertainties about the place of marriage, uncertainties about the propriety of eating food sacrificed to idols, a warped view of charismatic gifts, and a spiritualized view of the resurrection. In addition, segments of the church were

[15] Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 765.

disenchanted with Paul and resistant to his leadership. All this information established Paul's agenda as he wrote 1 Corinthians, probably in A.D. 54.

H. It is doubtful that Paul sent 1 Corinthians via Timothy. Given that Timothy is not mentioned in 1:1, 4:17 should probably be translated as an event that had already taken place (not as an epistolary aorist). Whether Timothy had yet arrived in Corinth after that sending is debatable. The suppositional nature of 1 Cor. 16:10 makes it unlikely that Timothy is the bearer of the letter.

IV. The Church

A. It was predominantly Gentile but quite diverse. It included Jews, Greeks, Romans, slaves, and freedmen.

B. In the words of Gordon Fee:

> Thus, the picture that emerges is one of a predominantly Gentile community, the majority of whom were at the lower end of the socioeconomic ladder, although there were two or three wealthy families. As former pagans, they brought to the Christian faith a Hellenistic worldview and attitude toward ethical behavior. Although they were the Christian church in Corinth, an inordinate amount of Corinth was yet in them, emerging in a number of attitudes and behaviors that required radical surgery without killing the patient. This is what 1 Corinthians attempts to do.[16]

Text

I. Introduction - 1:1-9

A. Salutation (1:1-3)

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Sosthenes, the brother, [2]to the church of God that is in Corinth, to those having been sanctified in Christ Jesus, those called to be saints, with all who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, their [Lord] and ours: [3]Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Paul identifies himself as having been called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. He is one who was chosen by God to be a special messenger or

[16] Fee (2014), 4.

representative of Christ. His words are not the mere opinions of a human being, but a message delivered to the Corinthians (and ultimately beyond) on God's behalf.

2. The identification of Sosthenes is not certain, but he is possibly the Sosthenes mentioned in Acts 18:17, the ruler of the synagogue who was beaten in front of Gallio. If so, he has become a believer (like his colleague or predecessor Crispus) and is now with Paul in Ephesus. Thomas Schreiner notes, "Sosthenes is distinguished from Paul in that he is designated a brother (i.e. a fellow-believer) and not an apostle. The inclusion of Sosthenes probably does not communicate that he co-wrote the letter with Paul but that as a respected member of the church agreed with its contents."[17]

2. Notice how, despite all the problems this church had, Paul addresses the letter to "the church of God that is in Corinth, to those having been sanctified in Christ Jesus, those called to be saints." They needed to repent and reform, but they had not gone beyond the pale so as to no longer be part of the family.

3. Those called to be saints include not only the Corinthian believers but "all who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place." As Everett Ferguson has noted, "The phrase 'in every place' (in Christian usage based on Mal. 1:11) seems to have had a special reference 'to every place of meeting,' and not the general adverbial sense of 'everywhere' (cf. 1 Thess. 1:8; 1 Tim. 2:8; less obviously 2 Cor. 2:14)."[18] Jesus is acclaimed as Lord in Christian gatherings for worship (though certainly not exclusively there).

B. Thanksgiving (1:4-9)

4I always give thanks to my God concerning you for the grace of God that was given to you in Christ Jesus, 5because in every way you were enriched in him, in every kind of speech and knowledge, 6as the testimony of Christ was confirmed among you, 7so that you are not lacking in any gift while eagerly awaiting the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, 8who also will confirm you to the end, [leaving you] blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus [Christ]. 9God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

1. Despite the problems in the church, their wavering about Paul and their factions and various sins, Paul regularly thanks God for the grace he had given them in Christ. Paul can look past the failures and thank God for his work in their lives.

2. More specifically, Paul gives thanks to God for his grace in liberally pouring out gifts on the Corinthians. They were not lacking any gift while eagerly awaiting the Lord's return.

a. Paul highlights the fact they were enriched in every kind of speech and knowledge, almost certainly referring to gifts of spiritual utterance (e.g., prophesying,

[17] Thomas R. Schreiner, *1 Corinthians*, TNTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 52.
[18] Everett Ferguson, *The Church of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 234.

tongues, word of knowledge, word of wisdom) and to gifts of special knowledge (probably related to prophetic revelation).

b. These gifts had a high profile in the community, but they had become a problem that Paul is going to tackle in the letter. He makes clear that he is thankful for God's grace in giving the gifts – that is not the problem. The problem is what they have done with them.

3. The reference to awaiting the Lord's return may be a reminder to them that they still await the final glory. We will see that some in Corinth apparently thought that all or most of the blessings of the age to come were already being experienced in their fullness. In other words, they wrongly minimized the difference between what we are now and what we will be on that day.

4. God bestowed his grace and gifts as the testimony of Christ was *confirmed* among them, meaning his grace and gifts were given as the Corinthians confirmed the truth of the gospel by their acceptance of it. Those blessings accompanied the Corinthians' embrace of the gospel.

5. Paul says in vv. 8-9 that in addition to having bestowed his grace and gifts, God also will *confirm* them, the Corinthians, to the end. As "confirm" in v. 6 means to confirm the truth by its acceptance, I think "confirm" in v. 8 means to confirm the truth of their faith by accepting them as his. God will confirm as his all who confirm the gospel, all who accept as true the testimony of Christ. He will never prove unfaithful to his people. And, of course, those he confirms by accepting as his will be blameless on the Day of Judgment at the Lord's return.

II. Division Over Leaders (1:10 – 4:21)

A. Appeal to end leader-centered factions (1:10-17)

**10 Now I urge you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that
you all speak the same thing, that is, that there not be divisions among
you but that you be restored to the same mind and the same opinion.
11 For it was made clear to me about you, my brothers, by those of Chloe,
that there are conflicts among you. 12 What I mean is that each of you
says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I
am of Christ." 13 Has Christ been parceled out? Was Paul crucified for
you, or were you baptized into the name of Paul? 14 I give thanks [to
God] that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 so that no
one may say that you were baptized into my name. 16 (I also baptized the
household of Stephanus; beyond that, I do not know if I baptized
anyone else.) 17 For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the
gospel, not in wisdom of word, lest the cross of Christ be made empty.**

1. Paul appeals to them by the name of the Lord Jesus to end the divisions that have cropped up among them, divisions he learned about from people who were in some way associated with Chloe. He is not calling for a forced conformity, an elimination of all differences in perception and thought, but as we might say, he is urging them to get on the same page. The nature of the division is suggested in v. 12.

a. Christian leaders, probably involuntarily, had become the focal points of dissension. The congregation was lining up behind different teachers and in danger of developing full-blown factions. Some were identifying with each other based on their appreciation of Paul; others were doing the same based on their appreciation of Apollos and Cephas/Peter.

b. Perhaps those saying "I am of Christ" are not being criticized but are mentioned simply to acknowledge that not all had succumbed to the improper identification with specific human leaders. If they are included in the criticism for divisiveness, then they are saying "I am of Christ" in a sectarian spirit. Perhaps in reaction to those boasting in mere men, these people had fallen into the same trap of spiritual elitism. They saw themselves as spiritually superior to their Christian brothers and sisters despite not linking their improperly narrow understanding of being "of Christ" with a specific individual.

2. Paul exposes the absurdity of this thinking by a series of rhetorical questions, the answer to each of which is a resounding "NO!"

a. Has Christ been distributed in separate pieces? Absurd! There is only one, undivided Christ, and if you are part of him, you are part of that oneness. It is trivial whether you attach yourself to Paul or Apollos or Peter. Conversely, if you do not have him, no devotion to human teachers will help.

b. Was Paul crucified for you, or were you baptized into the name of Paul? If not, then why in the world do you want to lay claim to Paul (or any other human teacher)? The one who counts is the one who was crucified for you and into whose name you were baptized.

(1) Paul thanks God for the fact he physically baptized only a few people in Corinth. He names Crispus, who was probably the leader of the synagogue in Corinth who converted to Christ (Acts 18:8), and Gaius, who probably is the person mentioned on Rom. 16:23. He adds that he also baptized the household of Stephanus, and then says he does not know if he baptized anyone else there. God does not have Paul remember everyone he baptized because doing so is not relevant to the point, which is that Paul is grateful for having physically baptized only a few. We know from Acts 18:8 that *many* were baptized during Paul's ministry in Corinth; that is part of converting to Christ. It is just that Paul was not the one who physically immersed them in the water.

(2) The reason he is thankful that he only immersed a few is that it reduces the potential for people claiming some special allegiance to him because he

happened to be the one who baptized them, from thinking that they were somehow "baptized into his name." Paul shudders at the thought. They are Christ's disciples, not his.

(3) Paul then explains the fact that he baptized so few on the basis that Christ did not send him to baptize but to preach the gospel. Baptism certainly is important, but it could be done by plenty of other people. Paul's charge and focus was on preaching that brings people to the point of baptism.

(a) With regard to his preaching of the gospel, he says that it was "not in wisdom of word," meaning not with "cleverness in speaking"[19] or "manipulative rhetoric."[20] David Garland says, "Although 'in wisdom of word' can apply to 'cultured speech with cleverness,' . . . it connotes more than 'technical skill at language.' It is connected to 'winning arguments and impressing an audience by rhetorical display rather than content.'"[21] A significant part of this display was one's bearing and presence and one's voice. The Roman educator and rhetorician Quintilian wrote in the late first century:

> [W]ithout constancy, confidence and courage, art, study and proficiency will be of no avail. You might as well put weapons in the hands of the unwarlike and the coward. . . . Trachalus appeared to stand out above all his contemporaries, when he was speaking. Such was the effect produced by his lofty stature, the fire of the eye, the dignity of his brow, the excellence of his gesture, coupled with a voice which . . . surpassed the voice of all tragedians that I have ever heard.[22]

(b) Paul's preaching was not a rhetorical display that impressed and drew people apart from the content of the message. It was not a performance that sought to win people to the presentation, to the packaging. Indeed, in 2 Cor. 10:10 Paul notes that some Corinthians said about him, "His letters are weighty and forceful, but his physical presence is weak and *his speech is of no account*." Pau's preaching was the delivery of *a message*, a message that brought people face to face with the crucified Christ.

(c) For Paul to play the "oration game" would be to invite evaluation on the basis of worldly criteria, on the style of his presentation. In doing so, the cross would be emptied of its power because people then would be responding to Paul rather than to Christ crucified. In a world that judges the message of a crucified God to be foolishness (1:18), the price of making that message acceptable (wise) by changing the subject from the message's content to the power of one's oration (by presenting it in "wisdom of word") is to empty the message of its efficacy. The cross, in all its "foolishness," must be front and center; it cannot slip in unnoticed on an orator's coattails.

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[19] Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 934.
[20] Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 143.
[21] David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 56.
[22] Quoted in Garland (2003), 86.

B. God, not human wisdom, is the source of salvation life (1:18-31)

1. Worldly wisdom impotent in knowing God (1:18-25)

[18]For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. [19]For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the intelligence of the intelligent I will set aside." [20]Where is the wise man? Where is the expert in the law? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? [21]For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God was pleased, through the foolishness of what was preached, to save those who believe; [22]since Jews ask for signs and Greeks seek wisdom, [23]but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, [24]but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. [25]For the foolish thing of God is wiser than men and the weak thing of God is stronger than men.

a. Paul probably raised the issue of his not preaching in a way that made himself the focal point (in wisdom of word) because the Corinthians were polarizing around individual teachers. By identifying with particular teachers rather than with their common message of Christ crucified, the Corinthians were beginning to evaluate the gospel according to worldly wisdom, according to worldly assessments of the relative merits of the various leaders. In their party loyalty rooted in these worldly assessments, they were boasting over against one another. It may be that assessments of speaking prowess, which prowess was connected to social status, were part of this.

b. In 1:17 Paul said that to present the gospel as a rhetorical performance would be to empty the cross of its power. In 1:18 he explains why -- because the message of a crucified savior is foolishness in the eyes of the world (to those on the way to destruction).

(1) The idea that the divine savior of mankind had died the death of the lowest of criminals seemed absurd; it contradicted the prevailing assumptions about deity and how he (or they) worked. As Martin Hengel says in his book *Crucifixion*:

> The heart of the Christian message, which Paul described as the "word of the cross," ran counter not only to Roman political thinking, but to the whole ethos of religion in ancient times and in particular to the ideas of God held by educated people. . . .
>
> [T]o believe that the one pre-existent Son of the one true God, the mediator at creation and the redeemer of the world, had appeared in very recent times in out-of-the-way Galilee as a member of the obscure people of

> the Jews, and even worse, had died the death of a common criminal on a cross, could only be regarded as a sign of madness. . . .
>
> A crucified messiah, son of God or God, must have seemed a contradiction in terms to anyone, Jew, Greek, Roman, or barbarian asked to believe such a claim, and it will certainly have been thought offensive and foolish.[23]

(2) Given that the cross *is* foolishness to *the world*, one can only present it to the world as something wise by not presenting it as it is, by camouflaging it with something that the world esteems. But if you camouflage it, if you distract the world from what it finds foolish (the content) to what it finds wise, palatable (the performance), you will deprive the world of the only thing that can save it. The cross cannot be adapted to the world's outlook; it must confront it. The medicine must be given straight if it is to do any good.

c. For those willing to receive the message in spite of its seeming foolishness, for those being saved, it is the power of God. The power of God for salvation is effected through the message of a crucified Savior. As Paul says in Rom. 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes."

d. Paul goes on to say in 1:19 that this foolishness of God's salvation plan is in fact his way of doing what he said he would do: set aside and destroy human wisdom (referring to Isa. 29:14). The cross is the ultimate fulfillment of that promise.

e. Where are those who epitomize worldly wisdom -- the wise men, experts in the law, and philosophers -- when it comes to this work of God? They are nowhere. In fact, human wisdom has been made foolish in that it failed to bring the world to a knowledge of God.

(1) God, in his wisdom, arranged things such that humans cannot come to know him through and on the basis of their own wisdom, through their own power and devices. We cannot know God in our way, on our terms; we cannot "figure God out." True knowledge of who God is and what he is doing in the world can come only by accepting what he reveals.

(2) God despises the boasting, pride, and self-righteousness that stem from humanity's sense of self-determination and self-achievement (e.g., Ps. 5:5, 10:4, 12:3, 59:12, 75:4; Prov. 8:13, 15:25, 16:18, 21:4; Isa. 16:6; Jer. 9:23). All of these would have been fueled had mankind through its wisdom come to know God. God wants those who will trust in him rather than in their own powers (worldly wisdom).

(3) Having willed that the world not know him through wisdom, God chose to save those who would believe the foolish gospel, the gospel that seems so contrary to worldly wisdom.

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[23] Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion*, trans. by John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 5, 6-7, 10.

f. Jews have it figured that God must mark his work with a certain demonstration of heavenly power (the indisputable heavenly sign - see, e.g., Mat. 12:38-39) and Greeks insist on what is philosophically acceptable, but Paul and his companions preach Christ crucified. Instead of power and wisdom, they preach weakness and folly.

(1) This message was a scandal for everybody, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.

(2) But to those who are called, those Jews and Greeks (Gentiles) who believe this foolish message, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. He is the power of God in conquering evil and redeeming mankind and the wisdom of God in solving what had defeated secular wisdom.

(3) To emphasize God's superiority, Paul declares, "For the foolish thing of God is wiser than men and the weak thing of God is stronger than men."

2. The gospel's contradiction of worldly wisdom confirmed by fact the church consists mainly of "nobodies" (1:26-31)

> **[26]For consider your calling, brothers, that not many were wise according to the flesh, not many were powerful, not many were high born. [27]But God chose the foolish things of the world so that he might shame the wise, and God chose the weak things of the world so that he might shame the strong things, [28]and God chose the lowly things of the world and the things that are despised, the things that are not, so that he might nullify the things that are, [29]in order that no flesh may boast before God. [30]But from him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, that is, [our] righteousness and holiness and redemption, [31]so that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."**

a. To further his argument that the gospel he preached stands in direct contradiction to human wisdom, human expectations about God, Paul turns to the existence of the Corinthians themselves as believers. The very fact that His church is made up mostly of "nobodies," people from the lower classes, shows the foolishness of God that confounds the wise.

(1) Celsus, a Roman opponent of Christianity in the late 2d century, ridiculed Christianity in these words:

> Their injunctions are like this. "Let no one educated, no one wise, no one sensible draw near. For these abilities are thought by us to be evils. But as for anyone ignorant, anyone stupid, anyone uneducated, anyone who is a child, let him come boldly." By the fact that they themselves admit that these people are worthy of their God, they show that they want and are able to

convince only the foolish, dishonorable and stupid, and only slaves, women, and little children.[24]

(2) When God called out a people to be his, he called them without regard for their social status, without regard for their standing in the eyes of the world. And many who had status were offended that it was ignored. As Garland comments, "When Paul proclaimed the word of the cross, it did not attract the wise and powerful. They are not excluded but tend to exclude themselves by rejecting the wisdom of the cross, which does not honor their achievements but pours contempt on their pride."[25]

(3) The church is filled with "riff-raff" in the world's eyes to make clear that salvation has nothing to do with human status or standing. It is not an entitlement of the privileged or a matter of human accomplishment but a completely undeserved gift. So no person may boast that he stands clean before God because of his intellect, education, or pedigree.

b. For those who received the gospel, Christ became wisdom from God, meaning he became their holiness, righteousness, and redemption. So then, as it is written, "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord" (referring to Jer. 9:23-24).

C. Example of Paul's preaching (2:1 – 3:4)

1. He kept the focus on the message of Christ crucified (2:1-5)

And I, when coming to you, brothers, came not with excellence of word or of wisdom while proclaiming to you the mystery of God. [2]For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. [3]And I was with you, in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, [4]and my word and my preaching were not with the persuasion of wisdom but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, [5]that your faith not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

a. Paul points to himself, the founder of the church in Corinth, as a counter example to their infatuation with human wisdom, with worldly standards of evaluation. When he preached the gospel there, he did not do so with the kind of rhetorical display that the culture applauds. The reason was that he had already resolved to have the gospel, with its crucified Messiah, as his singular focus and passion while he was among them. He did not preach so as to point to himself but to point to God and Christ.

b. In his time in Corinth, Paul manifested qualities the world deems weak and foolish. Rather than invincibility and bravado, Paul exhibited weakness, fear, and

[24] Quoted in Fee (2014), 85.
[25] Garland (2003), 74.

much trembling. Acts 18:9-10 reports that the Lord appeared to Paul one night in a vision when he was in Corinth and said to him: "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, [10] for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people." That suggests that the fear Paul experienced was at least in part over the danger posed to him by human enemies. Others, like Schreiner, believe Paul "was fearful that he would rely on himself, on his own rhetorical abilities, such that his proclamation would be ill-suited to the message of the cross."[26]

c. And though lacking the "persuasion of wisdom," the manipulative rhetorical prowess that is esteemed by the world, Paul says his word and preaching were with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power. He is not referring to miraculous signs and wonders worked by the Spirit but to how the Spirit used his preaching to convert them.

(1) Despite Paul's failure to measure up to the worldly standards by which they were now judging, his preaching had a persuasive power of its own – the faith-producing power of God's Spirit. They could not deny that God had used his "substandard preaching" to produce the desired results. It is another case of the weakness of God being stronger than human strength, of his working contrary to human expectations.

(2) Garland writes:

> What is clear is that Paul attributes the Corinthians' conversion to the powerful intervention of the Spirit. He understands God's power, then, to supplant the preacher's weakness. The proof of this power is not the audience's round of applause for the preacher's rhetorical art but their changed lives and the formation of a new community. Paul is not talking about "deeds of power" (12:28) or "signs and wonders" attending his preaching (Rom. 15:19; 2 Cor. 12:12), but their conversion (1 Thess. 1:5-6; Fee 1994: 920). Were he referring to miracles, he would have used the plural (Parry 1926: 50).[27]

(3) Roy Ciampa and Brian Rosner likewise state:

> In what, then, did *the Spirit's power* consist? Does the collocation of "Spirt" and "power" imply Spirit-empowered miracles? Is Paul talking here about "deeds of power" (1 Cor. 12:28), translated "miracles" in the TNIV? In other words, did "signs and wonders" (Rom. 15:19; 2 Cor. 12:12) accompany Paul's preaching in Corinth? Fee rightly notes that the "demonstration of the Spirit and power" here cannot be taken as a reference to miracles since in the context of 1 Corinthians this is the very triumphalist assertion Paul is arguing against. In contrast to Jewish requests for signs and Greek desire for wisdom, Paul preaches Christ crucified (cf. 1:22-23). It would thus be a little odd, as Fee notes, if Paul were to appeal to powerful signs and wonders that persuaded hearers! In the context of his own personal

[26] Schreiner (2018), 77.
[27] Garland (2003), 87.

weakness, the demonstration of the Spirit's power is seen in the Corinthians' conversion, as the Spirit applies the word of the gospel, Christ and him crucified, to their hearts: "the evidence lies with the Corinthians themselves and their own experience of the Spirit as they responded to the message of the gospel." The plural of *power* would have been a more unambiguous reference to miracles. *Power* here is about moral conviction, not miraculous display.

1 Thessalonians 1:5 confirms this understanding. In Thessalonica, Paul reports, "our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit." The following context makes clear that the evidence of this power was the "deep conviction" and changed lives of the Thessalonians: "you welcomed the message" (1:6). Paul tells the Corinthians the same thing. Paul insists that it is not sophisticated speech, nor even signs and wonders, but your Spirit-wrought conversion which represents the best proof of the truth of my message (cf. 1 Thess. 2:13).[28]

(4) This ought to encourage us in our evangelism. However "weakly" we present the gospel, God can produce faith in the human heart.

d. Paul's preaching was not a rhetorical performance that would put the focus on him but was an unencumbered message of Christ crucified which made clear that the resulting conversions were by the power of the Spirit rather than by Paul's oratorical skill. He preached that way so that their faith not be misdirected to the preacher, that it not be in the wisdom of men, but that it be in the power of God, the power that is expressed through the foolish gospel (see 1:17-18, 24).

2. The gospel does not comport with worldly wisdom, but it is true wisdom for those mature enough to grasp its implications for living (2:6-16)

6Yet we do speak wisdom among the mature, but a wisdom not of this age nor of the rulers of this age who are being brought to an end. 7Rather, we speak God's secret wisdom that has been hidden, which God predestined for our glory before the ages, 8which none of the rulers of this age knew, for if they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9But, as it is written, "What things the eye has not seen and the ear has not heard and [what] has not arisen in the human heart, [these] things God prepared for those who love him." 10For* to us God revealed [them] by the Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. 11For who among men knows the things of a man except the man's spirit within him? So also no one has ever known the things of God except the Spirit of God. 12Now we did not receive the

[28] Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 118.

spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God so that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God, [13]which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom but in [words] taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual things in spiritual [words]. [14]Now a natural man does not accept the things of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to him, and he is unable to know [them], because they are spiritually judged. [15]But the spiritual man judges all things, but he himself is judged by no one. [16]"For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

a. Paul says those who preach the cross do indeed speak "wisdom among the mature," but it is not a worldly wisdom, a wisdom "of this age" or of "the rulers of this age." Indeed, the rulers of this age are being brought to an end in that the present age, the current world order, is destined to be decisively and fully supplanted when Jesus returns to consummate the kingdom that he inaugurated at his first coming. For now, the old age coexists with the new age that Jesus ushered in, but it is on "borrowed time," already on the way out.

b. The wisdom that Paul and fellow preachers speak among the mature is God's secret wisdom of salvation through the cross of Christ, which God determined from eternity for the glory of believers but kept hidden until the recent coming of Jesus. None of the rulers of this age apprehended this plan of God, because if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory, either because of reverence for the Lord or a demonic desire to thwart God's plan.

c. But, as it is written, the things God prepared for those who love him, those who give him their devotion and allegiance, are beyond the ways of knowing that are esteemed by the world. It cannot be unraveled by mere mortals. God revealed them to Paul and the other apostles (and ultimately to all Christians) by his Spirit.

(1) The eye, ear, and heart are organs of cognition in Semitic imagery. According to Walter Kaiser, this means that knowledge of what God prepared for those who love him did not come from empirical sources (eye has not seen), traditional knowledge passed on in communication (ear has not heard), or intuitive insight (heart has not conceived).[29] It has come by revelation from God.

(2) Paul seems to have combined Isa. 64:4 and 65:16 from LXX and possibly another text. Perhaps this was an established combination of texts that circulated in Jewish circles, which allowed Paul to present it without explanation.[30]

d. The message of Christ crucified is a wisdom not of this age or of the rulers of this age in that it is contrary to all cultural assumptions and expectations about gods and how they act. Paul and the other apostles are able to speak that divine wisdom because God revealed to them by the Spirit the blessings that he was freely giving to the

[29] Kaiser's view is noted in Garland (2003), 97-98.
[30] Fee (2014), 116.

faithful. They communicate those truths to others by inspiration of the Spirit, "not in words taught by human wisdom but in [words] taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual things in spiritual [words]," who in turn are equipped to teach others those revealed truths.

e. Paul explains that the Holy Spirit is ideally suited to reveal the things of God because he searches out even the depths of God. He is one who truly knows God. No mere man has ever known the things of God. The Spirit is here analogized to the human spirit or consciousness. Just as a man's spirit or consciousness is the only thing that knows his secret things, so the Holy Spirit is the one who knows (and reveals) the mind of God.

f. Paul says they speak wisdom "among the mature." "Mature" may have been a term used by the Corinthians to support power bids against one another. They would claim the mantle of spiritual maturity, for themselves or some leader, on the basis of worldly standards like education, wealth, social status (of which rhetorical prowess was an indicator), or even manifestation of more spectacular spiritual gifts,[31] and then use that designation to their advantage. If so, Paul is reclaiming the word "mature" to its proper sense.

g. I think Paul means that, though the message of Christ crucified is preached to all who are Christian, only those who are spiritually mature grasp the behavioral implications of that message, the cross's implications for life. In spiritual adults, the cross produces humility, patience, selflessness, forbearance, a willingness to forgive, a willingness to forego power and status, and a love for *all* people, regardless of their station. The result is unity and harmony. This stands in stark contrast to worldly wisdom, which focuses on status, power, and distinction. The fruit of those things is polarization, stratification, and division, the very thing happening in Corinth. That Paul is still focused on the division is certain from 3:1-4.

h. In framing it that way, Paul is implying that those generating division in the church are spiritual infants. They have not matured to the point of having their communal life shaped by the cross. Garland explains:

> Paul's use of the terms "mature" and "infants" shows that gradations do exist among Christians (Oster 1995: 81). But the distinction is between juvenile Christians who fail to incarnate the cross by nursing jealousies and stoking rivalries, and the "mature" who accept God's foolishness as wisdom and the world's wisdom as foolishness. Being spiritually adult means recognizing and embracing God's wisdom in the cross and knowing that it invalidates the wisdom of the age. Paul rejects any esoteric wisdom that would sever some believers from other believers who lack this wisdom. The wisdom of this age creates a stratified society of elites and inferiors. By contrast, the wisdom of the cross emphasizes human solidarity. Under the cross, all must stand together.[32]

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[31] Thiselton (2000), 225.
[32] Garland (2003), 93.

i. Paul then ups the ante from immature to natural. He says that a natural man, a man unaltered by the Spirit, regards as foolishness the things revealed by the Spirit. Such a person does not *accept* those revelations (despite understanding them) because apart from the enabling (prevenient grace) or regenerating (new birth) work of the Spirit one cannot "know them" in the sense of embrace them. They are spiritually judged or evaluated. He is suggesting that in not accepting the things of the Spirit, the message of Christ crucified with its behavioral implications, as evidenced by their division, they are *acting like* natural men rather than the spiritually reborn people they are.

j. The spiritual man, on the other hand – referring to a spiritual adult not to an infant in Christ (3:1-4) – evaluates all things by the Spirit and therefore accepts the things revealed by the Spirit. He is judged by no one in the sense that no natural man is in a position to evaluate or understand him because that requires the Spirit's perspective, which they lack. Paul bolsters this point with a Scripture (Isa. 40:13) indicating that no mere human knows the mind of the Lord, whereas spiritual adults have the mind of Christ, the perspective given by the Spirit.

3. Corinthians were (and still are) too worldly (as shown by their division) to appreciate Paul's message as meaty (3:1-4)

> **And I, brothers, was not able to speak to you as to spiritual men but as to fleshly ones, as to infants in Christ. [2]I gave you milk not solid food, for you were not yet able. But neither are you able even now, [3]for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and rivalry among you, are you not fleshly, that is, walking as a [mere] man? [4]For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not [mere] men?**

a. Though, as Christians, the Corinthians should have been spiritual adults who were able to comprehend the cross's meaning for life, they were "fleshly," meaning they were operating from a worldly perspective. They are in Christ, but they are spiritual babies who are not appreciating the wisdom of the cross, its implications for living.

b. When Paul says he gave them "milk not solid food," I think he is responding to how some in Corinth were characterizing his preaching. In terms of rhetoric and oratory, they judged it as elementary, as something basic and bland. In other words, they assessed his preaching as milk not solid food because they were not spiritually mature enough to see beyond its package to the depth of its content.

c. I do not think Paul is saying that the message he presented to them was in fact elementary and that he held back the deeper teaching because they were not able to comprehend it. He would hardly label the message of Christ crucified as something elementary or lightweight when he just described that message as the power and wisdom of God (1:18, 24, 30), as wisdom among the mature (2:6), and as God's secret wisdom (2:7).

d. Rather, he is saying that his proclamation of the mystery of God, his preaching of Christ crucified, was *misperceived* by them as elementary because they were too immature to view it correctly. They saw what he gave them as elementary because they evaluated it from an infantile, worldly perspective that misjudged its profundity. They were not able to see it for what it is – true wisdom. Paraphrased, Paul means in v. 2, "*From your perspective*, I gave you milk not solid food, for you were not yet able *to recognize it for what it was*."

e. Indeed, they still are not able to recognize the word of the cross as the profound teaching that it is because they still are fleshly. The proof that they are still fleshly is their jealousy and rivalry that is fueling their division. When Christians begin forming factions, they have missed the wisdom of the cross.

f. I know this meaning is not obvious, but in context I think it is the right one. Lest you think I am alone on this, Garland states:

> The contrast between [milk and meat] is probably attributable to some Corinthian distinction, which [Paul] echoes. Hooker (1966: 21) comments, "Yet while he uses their language, the fundamental contrast in Paul's mind is not between two quite different diets which he has to offer, but between the true food of the Gospel with which he has fed them (whether milk or meat) and the synthetic substitutes which the Corinthians preferred." They hankered after the more exquisite charms of clever oratory to tickle their ears, which made the simplicity of the word of the cross seem bland and elementary. If Paul's message looks like milk to them, it discloses that they are not as mature or spiritual as they think. In fact, their discord, caused by selfish ambitions that trample the wisdom of the cross, has proved their immaturity. The divisions are incompatible with following Christ because they emulate the world's wisdom. It betokens their party spirit, not the Holy Spirit. Therefore, "they do not need a change of diet but a change of perspective" (Fee, 1987: 292). Just as only "the mature" recognize the foolishness of the gospel to be the highest wisdom, so only the mature recognize this "milk" to be solid food.[33]

g. Similarly, Fee writes:

> [B]y considering Paul's teaching "milk for babies" they show that they themselves are "mere infants"; they have abandoned the gospel for something that may look like "solid food" but is altogether without nutritional value. Paul allows that they are indeed "in Christ" because they are believers after all; his concern, however, is not that they "progress" into deeper teaching from the rudimentary, but that they abandon their present "childish" behavior altogether so that they may appreciate the "milk" for what it is, "solid food."[34]

[33] Garland (2003), 108-109.
[34] Fee (2014), 134.

Fee in a footnote quotes Morna Hooker's assessment: "The Corinthians' failure to understand the wisdom spoken in a mystery is not due to the fact that Paul is withholding it from them, but is the result of their own inability to digest what he is offering them."[35]

D. Leaders (like Paul and Apollos) are fellow workers in building God's church not competitors (3:5-9)

> **5What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. 6I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing growth. 7So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but God who causes growth. 8Now the one who plants and the one who waters are one, and each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. 9For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.**

1. In response to those claiming allegiance to Apollos or to him, which seem to be the two primary camps in the division, Paul points out that they merely are servants of the one Lord, not lords themselves. As such, it is totally inappropriate for people to claim to belong to them.

2. Paul and Apollos simply were servants *through whom*, not *in whom*, the Corinthians came to believe, and they each worked according to the task given to him by Christ. In other words, though they were different, Christ had appointed both of them for the Corinthians' common good.

3. Paul planted the church in Corinth and Apollos thereafter had a teaching ministry among them, but the really important figure in the entire process was God who was causing the growth. They need to redirect their focus away from the servants to the one God they serve. He alone saves and sanctifies.

4. Since those over whom the Corinthians are bickering are servants under the one God, they (planter and waterer) are "one" in the sense that their mutual concern is for the growth of the crop to a rich harvest. They are on the same team and should not be pitted against one another.

5. And, as coworkers who belong to *God* and labor in *his* field (the Corinthian church), each will receive *from God* a reward commensurate with his own labor (praise from God - see, 4:5). Just as it is up to the owner rather than the field to reward one farmhand over another, so it is up to God rather than the Corinthians to reward one minister over another. (Paul is speaking, of course, of coworkers belonging to God not heretics.)

E. Caution and warning to those building on foundation laid by Paul (3:10-17)

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[35] Fee (2014), 135 (fn. 333).

1. Caution to build according to God's will (3:10-15)

[10]According to the grace of God that was given to me, I laid a foundation as a wise master-builder, and another is building on [it]. But let each one watch out how he builds on [it]. [11]For no one is able to lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. [12]Now if anyone is building on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, [13]the work of each will become obvious, for the Day will make it clear, because it is [to be] revealed in fire; and the fire will test the nature of each man's work. [14]If the work that anyone built on [it] shall remain, he will receive a reward; [15]if the work of anyone shall be burned up, he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

a. Paul elaborates on the metaphor for the church (God's building) which he abruptly introduced at the end of 3:9. He says that he laid a foundation as a wise master-builder, meaning that he had preached Jesus Christ crucified, and now someone else is building on that foundation. This does not refer to Apollos because he is no longer there (see, 16:12).

b. Paul warns those in Corinth to watch out how they build on the foundation he laid. (Verse 11 makes clear that they do not have the option of laying another foundation.) As Garland says, "They can only add what the foundation will bear and 'must not exceed the limits, or introduce confusions which would change the character of the building, so as to threaten its eventual collapse' (Derrett 1997: 133). They must use fit materials and follow the plans of the architect (who is God, not Paul) and the building code."[36]

c. The truth about how they built or shaped the church by their teaching or influence will be revealed on the day of Christ's return.

(1) If they built the church in conformity with its foundation by developing beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that are consistent with and arise from the truth of the gospel, then the result of their labor, the people's growth in Christlikeness, will continue into the consummated kingdom. It will not be among the things that are stripped out in the purging of this age as being antithetical to life in the eternal state. Rather, the qualities they helped to develop in the saints will be brought to perfection. In that case, they will receive their reward in the form of praise from God for that faithful labor (see 4:5).

(2) But if they built the church contrary to its foundation by developing beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that are inconsistent with the truth of the gospel, such as cultivating a worldly perspective that produces division, the result of that labor will not continue into the consummated kingdom. Rather than being taken up and brought to perfection, those things will be stripped out in the purging of this age as something

[36] Garland (2003), 115.

antithetical to life in the eternal state. In other words, that work was of no lasting value. They still will be saved (he is not speaking here of heretics or apostates), but only empty-handed, only as one who has escaped from a fire that consumed all his things.

2. Warning to any who would destroy the congregation (3:16-17)

16Do you not know that you are the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy this person; for the temple of God is holy, which [temple] you are.

a. Paul now issues a stern warning to any who would *destroy* the congregation in Corinth as opposed merely to distorting it. There is a point at which erroneous teaching and practices threaten the very life of a congregation, threaten to terminate the group's union with Christ (see, Rev. 2:5, 3:16). The group simply ceases to exist as a church.

b. Anyone who destroys a church, warps it to such an extent that it ceases to be a church, will himself be destroyed by God. The church is God's holy temple, the place in which his Spirit dwells, and he will not ignore an assault on it. Paul is content at this point simply to raise the potential of divine judgment without expressly placing the Corinthians' present conduct in that category.

F. Warning about worldly wisdom and command not to boast in men (3:18-23)

18Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks he is wise in this age, let him become foolish, so that he may become wise. 19For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," 20and again, "The Lord knows the plans of the wise, that they are futile." 21So then, let no one boast in men, for all things are yours, 22whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come - all things are yours, 23and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.

1. In light of the dangers of warping the church (lost rewards and divine condemnation), Paul insists in 3:18-23 that none of them deceive themselves into thinking they are truly wise when they merely are wise by the standards of the world. That deception will lead to improper building on the foundation and possibly even to destruction of the congregation. Worldly wisdom is foolishness in God's sight, a fact testified to by Scripture (Job 5:13 and Ps. 94:11). So they must become foolish in the world's eyes by accepting the wisdom of God.

2. Given that what passes for wisdom in the world is in reality (in God's sight) foolishness, there is no justification for using that wisdom, worldly evaluations, as a

basis for boasting in one man over against another. Such boasting in men, saying "I am of Paul" or "I am of Apollos," is further inappropriate because it contradicts the reality of being in Christ. In Christ, all things are *of you*, all things are *yours*. You do not belong to ministers; they belong to you -- they are your servants (3:5)!

a. As C. K. Barrett comments:

> [The apostolic messengers] are not lords over God's people, but helpers of their joy (2 Cor. 1:24); they preach not themselves but Christ as the Lord; they are servants of Christ, and thus of the church (4:5). To attach oneself devotedly to one minister is thus not a proper expression of Christian humility, but a denial of the sovereignty of Christ. Naturally, when Christian teachers differ . . . the Christian must choose between them, but he will do so in accordance with the truth, and not on the personal grounds that he has decided to attach himself to one rather than the other.[37]

b. Not only Christian ministers but *all* things belong to those in Christ. The world, life and death, and the present and future belong to us because, by God's power, we are destined for eternal resurrection life on a recreated earth. Through Christ we have secured control over the tyrannies of mankind.

G. God's stewards are answerable to God, so until the Lord's return boasting in any of them is at best premature (4:1-5)

> **Let a man regard us this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. [2]In this connection, then, it is required in stewards that one be found faithful. [3]But it is of the least [consequence] to me that I am judged by you or by a human court. Indeed, I do not even judge myself, [4]for I am aware of nothing against myself, but I am not thereby pronounced righteous. It is the Lord who judges me. [5]So then, do not judge anything before the time, when the Lord comes, who will also bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will display the motives of hearts. And then the praise will come to each from God.**

1. Paul says that he and the other ministers ought to be regarded as servants of Christ and as stewards of the mysteries (secret things) of God. They do indeed "belong" to the Corinthians, but as he already suggested in 3:9, they first belong to God. They had been entrusted with God's plan of salvation, his plan of redemption and restoration, a plan long hidden to human minds but now revealed in Christ.

2. What is sought in stewards is that they be faithful, worthy of the trust that has been placed in their care. God does not require eloquence, rhetorical prowess, or success but faithfulness to the trust. Whether Paul faithfully carried out his charge was something that God alone could judge.

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[37] C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1968), 95.

3. Some in Corinth had been examining or investigating Paul, but Paul says that is of no consequence to him. In fact, all human judgments of his stewardship, even his own (although his conscience is clear), are irrelevant; the only judgment that counts is that of his Master, the one who gave him the trust.

4. The conclusion, therefore, is that the Corinthians must not conclude anything [about the greatness of any of their ministers], i.e., they must not idolize them, because when the Lord comes and brings all things to light, that praise may be shown to be misplaced. At that time each will receive his praise from God, the praise that counts -- there is thus no need for the Corinthians to boast in one of them now.

H. Purpose of applying changing images or metaphors to himself and Apollos and additional reasons not to factionalize over leaders (4:6-13)

> **6Now these things, brothers, I applied to myself and to Apollos on account of you, that by us you may learn not [to go] beyond what has been written, so that you not be puffed up, one on behalf of the one against the other. 7For who distinguishes you? What do you have that you did not receive? But if indeed you received [it], why do you boast as though not having received [it]? 8Already you are satiated! Already you have become rich! Without us you have reigned! And how I wish that you really had reigned, so that even we might reign with you! 9For I think that God placed us, the apostles, last, as those condemned to die, because we became a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. 10We are foolish on account of Christ, but you are wise in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are honored, but we are dishonored. 11To the present hour we both hunger and thirst and are poorly clothed and are beaten and are homeless, 12and we labor, working with our own hands. When being reviled, we bless; when being persecuted, we endure; 13when being slandered, we speak kindly. We have become like the filth of the world, the scum of all things, to the present time.**

1. Verse 6 is difficult to translate, so there is some variation in the standard English versions. The translation of the verse above is in keeping with the ESV, RSV, NAS, and others.

a. Paul explains that he has intended these changing images or metaphors (gardener, builder, steward) to apply to himself and Apollos, and he has done so "on account of you" (for their benefit). He wanted them to learn something from that application and as a result to stop being puffed up in favor of one and against the other.

b. What he wanted them to learn was not [to go] beyond what has been written. I think Paul wanted them to learn not to go beyond what Scripture has to say about not relying on worldly wisdom, not judging by worldly criteria. In the first three chapters, Paul cited half a dozen texts (Isa. 29:14 in 1:19; Jer. 9:23-24 in 1:31; Isa. 64:4,

65:16 [LXX] in 2:9; Job 5:13 in 3:19; and Ps. 94:11 in 3:20) to the effect that human wisdom is contrary to true wisdom, the way of God, and that no one should boast in human beings. Garland states:

> Hays's (1997:69) conclusion about "the cumulative force" of these [OT] quotations [that Paul uses in the first three chapters] makes the best sense of Paul's intention: "The witness of Scripture places a strict limit on human pride and calls for trust in God alone." The key passage is the quotation from Jer. 9:22-23 [LXX] in 1:31 (see J. Schreiner 1974). The texts cited in 1:19; 3:19, 20 "underscore the foolishness of human wisdom before God." The text in 2:9 "highlights the mystery of God's wisdom before humans." The text in 1:31 provides a clue for how the Corinthians go beyond what is written by boasting in humans. "The citations teach that while it is the wisdom of the world to indulge in human boasting there is a simpler, more perfect kind of wisdom, that of boasting only in the Lord" (Savage 1996:61). Instead of boasting in the Lord, the giver of the gifts, they boast in humans, the recipients of the gifts, and create factions and dissensions.[38]

2. The qualities in which they boast (or find attractive in leaders) ultimately were a gift from God not a personal achievement (4:7). By boasting over against one another, they are acting like the qualities in which they boast (or find attractive in leaders) were some achievement of their own rather than something given to them by God. Rather than being humbled by the grace of God and filled with gratitude for his gifts, they are arrogant and look down on those they perceive to be lacking them. Thiselton comments, "a parent who gives a gift to a child hopes that the gift will bring joy, but not a reason to gloat over brothers or sisters, or to draw comparisons."[39]

3. In 4:8-13, Paul attacks their inflated sense of their own wisdom, which as he has made clear, is the false wisdom of the world. He does so by using what was standard sarcasm in the Greco-Roman world against those who thought too highly of their own wisdom. For example, Richard Oster states, "The [second-century] Greek satirist Lucian gives the stereotypically unsympathetic view of one of these 'wise men' trained in the philosophy of the period. This arrogant man is portrayed as proclaiming (in a metaphorical sense as Paul does) 'there will be nothing to stop me being the only rich man and the only king.'"[40] It is a way of criticizing them as deceived braggarts regarding their wisdom.

4. This pride and arrogance about their wisdom was made even worse because, in terms of the stock sarcasm, they see themselves as *already* having arrived, as *already* being completely set and reigning as kings. This is inconsistent with the fact the ultimate exaltation of Christians is still future. We will not receive the fullness of what God has in store for us until the consummation of the kingdom at Jesus's return.

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[38] Garland (2003), 135-136.
[39] Thiselton (2000), 357.
[40] Richard E. Oster, Jr., *1 Corinthians*, CPNIVC (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1995), 117.

5. Paul notes that their misplaced pride in their wisdom, their having begun to reign in terms of the sarcasm, was a reign in which the apostles did not share. On the contrary, they recognize the Corinthians' wisdom for what it is, mere worldly wisdom. He says he wishes that they really *had* begun to reign because that would mean that the kingdom of God had been consummated and they as apostles would be reigning with them in glory.

6. Paul then contrasts the reality of apostolic life with what the Corinthians in their worldly wisdom had come to value, which factored into their exalting certain teachers or leaders over others. What irony that the Corinthians are seeking and claiming status in the present world as wise, strong, and honored men, whereas the apostles are like those who bring up the rear of the procession into the gladiatorial ring, those doomed to die as the grand finale of a public spectacle. Garland comments, "The apostles live according to the wisdom of the cross; the Corinthians imbibe the wisdom of this age and pass themselves off as kings."[41]

7. The Corinthians value status, prestige, and power, but the apostles are willing to live as lowlifes in this world, as foolish, weak, and dishonored men. They lack food, drink, proper clothing, and homes. They do unsophisticated menial labor. And they endure persecution, slander, and name-calling without making an issue of their honor, without fighting to defend their pride or insisting that they be vindicated in the eyes of the world (except when doing so had wider implications for the gospel). When reviled, they bless; when persecuted, they endure; when slandered, they speak kindly. The Corinthians are men of prestige, but the apostles are the filth of the world, the scum of all things!

8. One egregious contemporary manifestation of this worldly perspective is what is known as the "health-and-wealth" gospel. It is the notion that if one is a properly faithful Christian, God will guarantee health and prosperity. After opining that the American church well may face a period of purification through suffering, Craig Blomberg writes:

> At the moment, however, we create uniquely Western heresies such as the so-called "health-and-wealth gospel," replete with its "name-it-and-claim-it" policies for prayer. Those who have immersed themselves in poverty-and-sickness-laden Third World cultures and their Christian communities find it almost incomprehensible how anyone could believe such wholesale distortion of the Scriptures.[42]

I. Admonishment and appeal to the congregation and a comment specifically to those opposing him (4:14-21)

[14]I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children. [15]For if you should have ten thousand trainers in Christ, still not many fathers [do you have]. For I fathered you in Christ Jesus through the gospel. [16]Therefore I urge you, become imitators of

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[41] Garland (2003), 137.
[42] Craig L. Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 99.

me. [17]For this reason, I sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord. He will remind you of my ways in Christ [Jesus], as I teach everywhere in every church. [18]But some, as if I am not coming to you, have become puffed up, [19]but I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will know not the word of those who have been puffed up but the power. [20]For the kingdom of God [is] not in word but in power. [21]What do you prefer? Shall I come to you with a rod or with love in a spirit of gentleness?

1. Paul says that his goal is not to put them down but to admonish them as his beloved children. He wants them to follow his way in Christ rather than the way of worldly wisdom that was resulting not only in division but also in opposition to him.

2. In that regard, he appeals to the fact that he initially brought them the gospel. That distinguishes him from all who have come after him. The Corinthians may have had 10,000 trainers or guides or nannies in Christ, but he was the only one who fathered them.

3. As part of the effort to get them to become imitators of him (like father, like children), he dispatched Timothy, his "beloved and faithful child in the Lord," to them to remind them of his ways in Christ, to communicate to them what he taught in all the churches about the Christian life.

a. That life involves not only embracing the truths he has expressed, but also honoring God in the ways discussed in the subsequent sections.

b. Timothy probably was sent some time before 1 Corinthians, which explains why he is not mentioned in 1:1 and the suppositional nature of 16:10. Since sending Timothy, Paul has received the Corinthians' letter and information from those associated with Chloe that filled out the picture as to the real situation in Corinth. That is what prompts this letter.

4. In 4:18 Paul directs his comments to the group within the church that is opposed to him and is influencing the congregation in varying degrees.

a. They had gotten "an attitude" toward Paul, part of which was a claim that he had abandoned them. And in his absence, they were diminishing his influence.

b. In my view, Paul is not in 4:18-19 challenging them to a "spiritual gifts contest." I say that because the issue is not that Paul is somehow inferior regarding spiritual gifts. Rather, the issue is that he lacks the oratorical artistry, the rhetorical prowess, by which they have now come to evaluate Christian teachers, and thus he is now being viewed by some as inferior. The issue is teaching in "wisdom of word" versus Paul's seemingly substandard packaging, his unimpressiveness as a speaker. That appears to have factored into the picking of favorites and lining up behind them.

c. Paul affirms that he will in fact come to them soon, if the Lord wills it, and at that time he will find out not the speaking skill of his opponents, not how well they fit the standards of worldly wisdom, but the spiritual power *of their message*, the power to convert and transform the lives of the poor lost sinner! They have pretty talk with no spiritual impact, whereas Paul has "substandard speech" through which the Spirit works powerfully in human lives.

d. Fee remarks, "What their present stance lacks is the true power of the Spirit, which gives people birth to new life in Christ (v. 15), which can change people's lives – can 'take the poor lost sinner, lift him from the miry clay and set him free,' as the gospel song has it."[43]

e. Ciampa and Rosner likewise comment:

> A key word in Paul's critique of the Corinthians, "power" refers to solid, enduring effects as opposed to that which lacks substance and is shallow and passing. Paul has already spoken of the "power" of God (1:18; 2:5), of Christ (1:24), and of the gospel (2:5). Here, as in 2:4-5, the contrast is between mere words or rhetorical artistry, and the power of God to change lives and destinies.[44]

f. The kingdom of God, God's revolution on earth, is not about words that are ineffective but delivered in a style the world applauds. Rather, it is about the power of God to transform lives. Paul's gospel saved and sanctified (see, 1 Cor. 6:9-11). As long as we live in this overlap of ages, in this time before the Second Coming, the new man in Christ continues to be subject to the influences of the powers of the old age. We still are pulled, tempted to live in Adam, and we must continually resist that temptation. Thus, Peter in 1 Pet. 2:11 warns the saints to abstain from base desires that war against their souls.

g. But we do so as people who have been freed from enslavement to sin; we fight as those who have been healed of our "addiction to sin." And we do so in the power of the Spirit, as Paul emphasizes in Romans 8. We are not the same person in a new situation; we are a new person in a new situation. That's power!

5. As a lead-in to chapters 5 and 6, Paul asks whether they will heed the appeal to follow his course in Christ, whether they will correct the things that need correcting. It is up to them. Do they prefer that he come needing to correct them ("rod" plays on the father/child imagery) or that he come in love and gentleness, with no need to chastise?

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[43] Fee (2014), 208.
[44] Ciampa and Rosner (2010), 195.

III. Reported Problems in the Church (5:1 – 6:20)

A. Tolerating the man with his father's wife (5:1-13)

1. The situation identified and the command to deal with it (5:1-5)

Sexual immorality is actually reported among you, and such sexual immorality as does not [exist] even among the Gentiles: a man has his father's wife. [2]And you are puffed up! Should you not have mourned instead, so that the one who did this deed might be removed from your midst? [3]For certainly I, being absent in body but present in spirit, have already, as being present, judged the man who has so [basely] done this, [4]in the name of the Lord Jesus. So when you and my spirit are gathered together, with the power of our Lord Jesus, [5][you are] to hand such a man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that the spirit might be saved in the Day of the Lord.

a. Paul turns to a clear contradiction of his way in Christ: a case of incest, that even pagans disallowed, is being tolerated or condoned within the church. A member of the church was having an ongoing sexual relationship with a woman who either was or had been married to his father. According to Gordon Fee, the cohabiting of father and son with the same woman was forbidden by all ancients, Jew and pagan.[45]

b. Instead of being proud, they should have been grieved by this sin so that they removed from their midst the man who was doing this. In other words, they should have been appalled by the sin and excluded the rebel from their fellowship instead of seeing their tolerance as something spiritual.

c. In contrast to their reaction, Paul, who though physically absent is with them in spirit, has already passed judgment on the man in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (i.e., by his authority).

d. He therefore commands that when they "and his spirit" are assembled together, along with the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, they are to hand the man over to Satan.

(1) Their assembling "with his spirit" suggests a meeting in which Paul's mind on the matter is expressed or represented, perhaps by the reading of his letter.

[45] Fee (2014), 220.

(2) Their assembly is accompanied by the power of the Lord Jesus Christ to effectuate their sentence on the offender. When the community rightly expels a rebel, that sentence is bound in heaven by the power of Christ.

(3) "Handing one over to Satan" appears to be a Pauline reference to expelling one from the Christian community, certainly from the gatherings of the group for worship. To do so was to return the sinner to Satan's sphere, to the world outside the church. In 1 Tim. 1:20 Paul speaks of having handed Hymenaeus and Alexander over to Satan so that they may be taught not to blaspheme.

(a) Paul anticipates that the result of the man's being put back into Satan's domain will be "the destruction of the flesh." This is almost certainly a reference to the elimination of the man's fleshly or rebellious orientation, his being bent on sin and waging war against God. It is "flesh" as an orientation that is contrary to the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:17-19), "flesh" that those who belong to Christ have crucified (Gal. 5:24). "Destruction of the flesh" is what he referred to in the case of Hymenaeus and Alexander as their being taught not to blaspheme. It is destroyed in a person's change of orientation from rebellion to submission.

(b) The express purpose of the action is the man's redemption, "so that the spirit might be saved in the Day of the Lord." The separation of disfellowship is redemptive; it is to lead to repentance that the wayward might be saved, which also serves to maintain the holiness of God's temple, the church. The flesh/spirit dichotomy does not refer to physical and nonphysical; it refers to attitudes or orientations: rebellious versus submissive. As such, "the spirit" to be saved is the man in his reoriented, non-fleshly attitude that is committed to serving God. It is the man who has come to repentance (as Hymenaeus and Alexander were to be taught not to blaspheme).

2. Impropriety of boasting of their spirituality and exhortation to act (5:6-8)

> **[6]Your boasting is not a good thing. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole batch [of dough]? [7]Clean out the old leaven, so that you may be a new batch, even as you are unleavened. For indeed, our Passover lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed. [8]So then, let us observe the feast not with old leaven nor with leaven of malice and wickedness but with unleavened [loaves] of sincerity and truth.**

a. Their boasting about their spirituality, in light of their sick condition, is totally out of place. Paul argues by analogy that they must remove the sinful man for their own sake, so that they may truly be the new people of God in Corinth.

b. He wants to know how they can be conceited when they are in imminent danger of being "spoiled" by the fermenting effect of the sin in their midst (a little leaven leavens the whole batch). We might say, "One bad apple spoils the whole barrel."

c. Shifting now to Passover imagery (removal of leaven - Ex. 12:15), Paul commands that they clean out the old leaven, the incestuous man, so that they might be a new batch of dough free from the leaven of such sin in their midst. But he quickly adds, "even as you are unleavened," meaning that by God's grace they were the pure and holy people of Corinth. In other words, his command is that they become in practice what they are by grace, i.e., God's new loaf in Corinth.

d. Keeping with the Passover imagery, Paul proceeds to explain how they became God's new loaf in Corinth: "For indeed, our Passover lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed." Through the death of our Lamb we have received forgiveness from the past and freedom for new life in Christ.

e. Maintaining the imagery of the Passover Feast, Paul in v. 8 broadens the application of the death of Christ to Christian life as a whole. Just as the Jews were forbidden to eat anything leavened during the seven-day festival, so God's people are to keep an ongoing feast of the celebration of God's forgiveness by holy living. They are to celebrate their new life in Christ without the "old leaven" of sin but with unleavened loaves of sincerity and truth, a life without sham or deceit that can stand the full test of the light of day.

3. Clarification of prior letter (5:9-13)

[9]I wrote to you in the letter not to associate with sexually immoral people, [10]not [meaning] absolutely with the sexually immoral of this world or with the greedy and swindlers or with idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. [11]But now I write to you not to associate if anyone who is named a brother is sexually immoral or a greedy person or an idolater or a reviler or a drunkard or a swindler; with such a person [you are] not even to eat. [12]For what is it to me to judge those outside? Is it not those inside you should judge? [13]And those outside God will judge. "Drive out the wicked man from among you."

a. A previous letter from Paul had covered the matter of excluding such a person from their fellowship, but they managed to ignore that instruction by convincing themselves (or being convinced by "some who are arrogant") that it was unclear or even nonsensical.

b. Paul clarifies by saying that he of course did not mean they had to break association with *all* people practicing these sins; in that case, they would have to totally withdraw from the world, an act that would contradict the Christian call to be a positive influence on the world. As Jesus suggests in Jn. 17:15-16, Christians are to be in the world but not of the world.

c. So there will be no possibility of further misunderstanding, Paul outlines his position in explicit terms: they are not to associate with any Christian, any member of the church, who acts in the ways spoken of in his former letter. As Fee notes:

> Paul is not advocating that only the sinless can be members of the Christian community; rather, he is concerned about those who persist in the very activities from which they have been freed through the sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb (v. 7). Followers of the crucified Messiah (1:18) belong to the new era; their lives have been invaded by the Holy Spirit. . . . [T]hose who belong to Christ must put off their former way of life (Col. 3:5-11). Those who persist in that former way of life, not meaning those who simply struggle with former sins, essentially do not belong to this new community. By their own actions they have opted out; the community must distance itself from such people for its own sake.[46]

d. In v. 10 Paul refers to the sexually immoral, the greedy and swindlers, and idolaters. In v. 11 he adds reviler (slanderer - NIV) and drunkard and separates greedy and swindlers.

(1) According to Fee, "greed" "means not just to desire what is not one's own but often carries the sense of carrying through on the desire to the point of defrauding or taking advantage of someone else. Thus one way in which avarice expresses itself is through robbery and swindling."[47] This is supported by the fact "greedy and swindlers" in v. 10 are joined by an "and" and by the presence of fraud in the Corinthian church (6:7).

(2) Idolatry probably has in mind the insistence by some believers of their right to continue to attend meals at pagan temples, a matter addressed in chapters 8-10.

(3) Reviler or slanderer covers all forms of verbal abuse.

e. Paul concludes by saying the church must take the world as it finds it. In other words, we are not to judge the world in the sense of banishing it as we are to do in the case of impenitent sinners within the church. But, as he will note shortly, we will be involved in some way in judging them on the last day through participation in God's judgment.

(1) God will sentence those outside the church. This does not mean, of course, that the church is not to speak prophetically to the world, to condemn the world for its injustices and unrighteousness. After all, that is why God will eventually judge it.

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[46] Fee (2014), 245-246.
[47] Fee (2014), 245.

(2) As for the rebellious member of the church, Paul quotes Deut. 17:7, "Drive the wicked man from among you."

B. Lawsuits among believers (6:1-11)

Does any one of you who has a dispute against another dare to litigate it before the unrighteous and not before the saints? [2]Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are you unworthy of the smallest cases? [3]Do you not know that we will judge angels, not to mention matters of everyday life? [4]Therefore, if you have disputes about matters of everyday life, do you appoint as judges those who have no standing in the church? [5]I say this to shame you. Is it so that there is not one wise man among you who can render a decision between the brothers, [6]but brother litigates against brother, and this before unbelievers?

[7]In fact, it is already wholly a defeat for you that you have lawsuits among yourselves. Why not rather accept wrong? Why not rather be defrauded? [8]But you do wrong and cheat, and this [to] brothers! [9]Or do you not know that unrighteous men will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor passive male participants in homosexual intercourse nor active male participants in homosexual intercourse [10]nor thieves nor greedy persons nor drunkards nor revilers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. [11]And some of you were these things; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were pronounced righteous in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

1. Speaking of judging those inside the church, Paul addresses another type of judgment that must take place within the Christian community, namely in matters of everyday life where one member has a grievance against another.

2. Paul had apparently heard that at least one brother in the Corinthian church had been defrauded by another, and the aggrieved party took the offender before the civil magistrates at the "judgment seat," which was publicly located in the heart of the marketplace. This entire scene just fills Paul with indignation.

a. He wants to know how any Christian can dare to litigate a dispute before "the unrighteous" (unbelievers) instead of before the saints.

b. Do they (the church) not know that Christians are in some way going to be involved in God's final judgment on the world, when the entire anti-God system of things comes under his condemnation? Given that end-time reality, why are they acting as though they are unworthy to judge the smallest cases (meaning comparatively trivial disputes over possessions)?!!

c. Do they (the church) not know that Christians, through their involvement in God's end-time judgment, will even judge fallen angels? It should therefore go without saying that we should also be able to handle mere matters of business (matters of everyday life). Mark Taylor comments, "In 6:2-4, Paul takes the notion of judgment a step further than he does in 5:1-13 in the assertion that believers will take part in the end-time judgment of the world and of angels."[48]

d. In v. 4 he asks, "If therefore you have such everyday disputes, how can you entrust jurisdiction to outsiders with no standing in the church?" (REB). They have no standing in the church because they are not sharers in the redeemed communities' view of reality. They are part of the world the church has rejected.

e. Paul tells them they ought to be ashamed for allowing this to go on. He then plays off their perception of themselves as being so "wise," and asks "Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute among believers? But instead, one brother goes to law against another - and this in front of unbelievers!" (NIV). Taylor states, "If believers will participate in something as weighty as the end-time judgment, then how is it that they cannot judge everyday matters pertaining to this life? Is there not one wise person among them to carry out the task (6:5)?"[49]

3. In vv. 7-11 Paul turns from primarily shaming the community to primarily shaming the litigants themselves (though he speaks indirectly to them, employing the plural "you").

a. He says that the mere presence of lawsuits among them is already a complete defeat; no result of the litigation can redeem it. The defeat is in bringing the suit in the first place. That represents a gross failure of one's Christian perspective. It would be better simply to accept the wrong done to you than to go to the world for resolution. That is a denial of who we are as the people of God.

b. Not only does the plaintiff sue his brother in a pagan court rather than to accept the wrong done to him, which is bad enough, but the defendant precipitates the lawsuit by cheating his brother! Paul sternly warns this unrighteous man, and all like him, not to be deceived but to realize that his rejection of the ethics of faith will keep him from participating in the consummated kingdom of God.

(1) Paul again references the six sins mentioned in 5:10-11. He adds adulterers, the active and passive participants in male homosexual intercourse, and thieves. The ESV note states, "The two Greek terms [*malakos* and *arsenokoitēs*] translated by this phrase [men who practice homosexuality] refer to the passive and active partners in consensual homosexual acts." The attempt to generate confusion over the matter has failed. For the details you can read *The Bible and Homosexual Conduct* at my website (www.theoutlet.us).

[48] Mark Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, NAC (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 143.
[49] Taylor (2014), 143.

(2) As incentive to live right, Paul reminds them that this is what some of them *were*, but they have since been redeemed – cleansed, made holy, and pronounced righteous. They now need to live consistently with that reality.

C. Sexual immorality (6:12-20)

1. Rejecting the rationalization (6:12-17)

12"All things are lawful for me," but not all things are beneficial; "all things are lawful for me," but I will not be mastered by anything. 13"Food is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food, and God will do away with both the one and the other." But the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body, 14and God both raised the Lord and will raise us, through his power. 15Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I, then, take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Absolutely not! 16[Or] do you not know that the man who unites himself with the prostitute is one body [with her]? For it says, "The two will become one flesh." 17But the man who unites himself with the Lord is one spirit [with him].

a. Some of the men in the Corinthian church were having sex with prostitutes, and they justified this behavior on the basis that the body was created for sex and that the physical was merely temporary so it could not be of consequence to God. To support this idea, they used a theological slogan: "All things are lawful for me." This probably was something Paul said regarding freedom from certain dietary restrictions, which was a morally neutral matter, but they were applying it to sexual restrictions. And the statement needed qualifying even in the context of things like dietary restrictions.

(1) Paul does not dispute the statement (because he said it), but he adds the necessary qualifications that not all things are beneficial and that he will not be mastered by anything. Just because something is lawful does not mean that it is always right to do it. When the exercise of one's freedom will damage another person, one needs to abstain from the conduct one otherwise is free to do. This will be developed in chapters 8-10.

(2) Regarding the freedom to eat certain food, Paul may have said something like "Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food." That is a way of saying they were made for each other, the implication being it was not improper to ingest that food. The Corinthians may have picked up that statement and added, in line with their spiritualized view of the resurrection, "and God will do away with both the one and the other," which addition served to magnify or reinforce the moral insignificance of the eating. (If Paul included the clause that God will do away with the stomach and food, he meant the immortal and glorious resurrection body would have *no need* for the stomach and food, unlike in our mortal state, which leaves open the possibility of eating for other reasons.)

(3) Whatever the source, the Corinthians were applying this slogan to the body's sexual appetite, and Paul flatly rejects that application. The Corinthian argument apparently went something like this:

(a) All things are permitted for satisfying one's appetite for food. After all, the stomach and food are intended for one another. And the stomach and food have no eternal significance because God is going to do away with them both in the end.

(b) By analogy, all things are permitted for satisfying one's appetite for sex. After all, the bodies of men and women are intended for one another sexually. And those bodies have no eternal significance because God is going to do away with them both in the end when the physical will be destroyed.

b. Paul insists that the body is *not* intended for sexual engagement that is immoral but rather it is *for the Lord* in the sense his work of redemption includes the whole person, body and spirit. The body is not irrelevant for future existence; it is *not* destined for destruction but for resurrection, the proof of which is the Lord's resurrection. The Corinthians, as suggested in chapter 15, looked for a "spiritual" salvation in which the spirit would finally be divested of the body. Lying behind this is a Greek world view that placed little or no value on the material order.

c. Because the Lord redeemed the whole person, who will spend eternity in a resurrected body, the body is for the Lord in the present. It is to be consecrated to his purpose and use, which rules out using it for sexual immorality.

d. He adds that the Lord is *for the body* to maintain a parallel with their argument – food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food. The Lord is for the body in the sense he gave himself for the body as part of his redemptive work. Again, he rescues people, not just spirits, not just certain elements of people.

e. In vv. 15-17 Paul fortifies his assertion that "the body is *not* for sexual immorality but for the Lord" with regard to their going to prostitutes. He argues that in uniting themselves to the Lord they entered into a union that made their bodies parts of Christ's body, extensions of him in this world. Therefore, it is absolutely unthinkable that one should take a part of the body of Christ and make it part of the body of a prostitute, which is what happens during intercourse.

2. Prohibition stated directly (6:18-20)

[18]Flee sexual immorality. Every sin, whatever a man may commit, is outside the body, but the man who is sexually immoral sins against his own body. [19]Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and [that] you are not

your own? [20]For you were bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body.

a. In vv. 18-20 Paul now flatly states the prohibition implicit in his argument: Flee from sexual immorality.

b. He then offers one further theological reason for doing so, namely that sexual immorality in particular is a sin against one's own body, which body is "for the Lord" because it is also a "temple of the Spirit."

(1) Sexual immorality is distinct as a sin against the Christian's body, understood as part of the Lord's body, because it is the only sin in which an inconsistent bodily union is achieved. It uniquely desecrates the temple of the Spirit, the body, by making that temple part of the body of a pagan.

(2) The bottom line is that our bodies belong to the Lord; they are not some temporal irrelevancy, so we must glorify God in our bodies. In this context, that means no sexual immorality.

IV. Matters the Church Wrote About (7:1-11:1)

A. Marriage Issues (7:1-40)

1. Error of denying sex within marriage (7:1-7)

Now about which things you wrote, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman." [2]But, because of the cases of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. [3]Let the husband render to the wife what is due, and likewise also the wife to the husband. [4]The woman does not have authority over her own body, but the husband [does]; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife [does]. [5]Do not cheat one another - except perhaps by agreement for a time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer and [then] be together again - so that Satan not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. [6]But this I say as a concession, not as a command. [7]Now I wish that all men were as I myself am, but each has his own gift from God, the one this and the other that.

a. With the words, "Now about which things you wrote," Paul moves to his response to the Corinthian letter. The phrase, "It is good for a man not to touch (i.e., have sexual relations with – see ESV, NET, NIV, CSB) a woman" is probably a slogan some in Corinth were using to urge cessation of sexual relations within marriage. Paul is quoting from their letter, at least the sentiment if not the actual language. NET note states:

> *Grk* "It is good for a man not to touch a woman," a euphemism for sexual relations. This idiom occurs ten times in Greek literature, and all of the references except one appear to refer to sexual relations (cf., e.g., Josephus, *Ant*. 1.8.1 [1.163]; Gen 20:6 [LXX]; Prov 6:29 [LXX]). For discussion see G. D. Fee, *First Corinthians* (NICNT), 275. Many recent interpreters believe that here again (as in 6:12–13) Paul cites a slogan the Corinthians apparently used to justify their actions. If this is so, Paul agrees with the slogan in part, but corrects it in the following verses to show how the Corinthians misused the idea to justify abstinence within marriage (cf. 8:1, 4; 10:23).

b. This is just another expression of their misguided "spirituality," with its negative attitude toward the material world and the body. According to Fee, their position would have been something like:

> Since you yourself are unmarried and are not actively seeking marriage, and since you have denounced *porneia* [sexual immorality] in your letter to us, is it not so that one is better off not to have sexual intercourse at all? After all, in the new age which we already have entered by the Spirit, there is neither marrying nor giving in marriage. Why should we not 'be as the angels' now?[50]

c. Paul does not deny their slogan outright because in certain situations it *is* good for a man not to have relations with a woman. But as a justification for denying sex within marriage or for divorce or for not getting married, Paul will have none of it.

d. In vv. 2-4 Paul qualifies their slogan by making clear that it cannot be used to restrict full sexuality within marriage. Because of the instances of sexual immorality that were occurring in the church, the use of prostitutes about which he had just spoken, they must stop urging abstinence between married couples.

(1) They must permit each man to have his own wife (sexually) and must permit each woman to have her own husband (sexually). "To have a wife" is different from "to take a wife." The verb "to have" was used as a euphemism for having sexual intercourse (see LXX of Exod. 2:1-2; Deut. 28:30; Isa. 13:16; see also Mat. 14:4; Mk. 6:18; Jn. 4:18). As Garland explains:

> The immediate context, with the reminders about what is owed in marriage, the assertion that husbands and wives have authority over one another's bodies, and the command not to deprive one another, makes clear that the phrase "let each one have his own wife or her own husband" refers to sexual relations within marriage, not getting married.[51]

[50] Fee (2014), 307.
[51] Garland (2003), 256.

(2) And that means a *full* conjugal life with one's spouse. The husband is to give his wife her due and likewise the wife to the husband. Each is sexually obligated to the other. In marriage, one does not have authority over one's own body, to do with it as one pleases; rather, one's spouse has authority over one's body so one cannot deprive the spouse of sexual relations.

e. The point of v. 5 is that they must stop cheating one another in this regard so that Satan might not tempt them because of their lack of self-control (as evident in the cases of immorality). The only possible exception is if they want to agree for a time to abstain from sexual relations in order to devote themselves to prayer, but this is a concession to couples that choose to do so, not a command.

f. Paul wishes that all people had his gift of freedom from the need of sexual fulfillment that made it possible for him to live unmarried. He realizes, however, that his celibacy is a gift, not a requirement. Celibacy is for those gifted to be celibate. They cannot use Paul's circumstance to urge celibacy on the married.

2. Widowers and widows (7:8-9)

[8]Now I say to the widowers [lit. unmarried] and to the widows, it is good for them if they remain as I also [do], [9]but if they are not exercising self-control, let them marry, for it is better to marry than to burn.

a. Having just spoken of his gift of celibacy, Paul speaks to those who are in his situation of no longer being married but who lack his gift. I believe that in these verses he is addressing widowers and widows.

(1) The word *agamos*, which literally means "unmarried," was used during this period to refer to widowers. So we know it can have that meaning. NIV gives "widowers" in a footnote as an alternative translation.

(2) This translation explains the mention of widows. If *agamos* here refers to *all* unmarried people, men and women, then widows are already covered. You also have the problem of why Paul separately addresses certain unmarried women in v. 25 ("virgins"). If it refers to all unmarried *men*, then widows is not a balanced contrast. The way Paul deals with husbands and wives in mutuality throughout this section, it seems reasonable to expect the same here.

(3) This translation also makes better sense out of Paul's flow of thought. All the cases in vv. 1-16 deal with those presently or formerly married, while vv. 25-38 deal with the never-before married. Paul's use of the word in v. 11 and v. 34 suggests that for him it normally means not the "unmarried" in general but the "de-married," those formerly but not now married.

(4) In fact, given that men in Jewish society normally married, especially those who were respected religious figures, Paul may well have been married at some point. His being a widower fits the most natural reading of v. 8: "Now I say to the widowers and widows, it is good for them if they remain as I also [do]." But we cannot be sure about the matter.

(5) Various scholars – Gordon Fee: "On balance, therefore, 'widower' seems to be the best understanding of the word here."[52] Craig Blomberg: "[W]e should probably understand the unmarried here to refer to men whose wives had died."[53] Raymond Collins: "Parallelled with 'widows' the term [*tois agamois*] the term connotes a specific group of unmarried men, namely widowers."[54] Richard Hays: "The word 'unmarried' (*agamoi*) is used here to refer specifically to widowers, not in a generic fashion to include all those who are not married."[55] Others sharing that view include William Orr and James Walther,[56] Jeremy Moiser,[57] William Heth and Gordon Wenham,[58] Stephen Barton,[59] Eugene Boring and Fred Craddock,[60] N. T. Wright,[61] and William Loader.[62]

b. To those who have lost a spouse by death, Paul says it is good for them to stay unmarried, as he does.

(1) That represents a good choice, but it is not something commanded. As he says in vv. 39-40, a widow is free to remarry "in the Lord," meaning a Christian, but he believes she will be happier if she remains a widow.

(2) This advice does not apply, however, to those who are not exercising self-control. Paul probably has in mind some who are doing the same as some of the married people in vv. 1-7, i.e., practicing sexual immorality by going to prostitutes. The antidote for such sin is to get married instead. (Note that the power of sexual desire seems to be behind Paul's later instruction in 1 Tim. 5:14 that the *younger* widows should marry.)

c. The clause "for it is better to marry than to burn" could be a reference to burning in judgment, but it probably means that those who are committing sexual sins should marry rather than be consumed by the desire that was leading them to sin.

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[52] Fee (2014), 319.
[53] Blomberg (1994), 134.
[54] Raymond F. Collins, *First Corinthians*, SP (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 268 (n. 8).
[55] Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians*, Interpretation (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1997), 118.
[56] William F. Orr and James Arthur Walther, *1 Corinthians*, AB (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1976), 210.
[57] Jeremy Moiser, "A Reassessment of Paul's View of Marriage with Reference to 1 Cor. 7," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 18 (1983), 108.
[58] William A. Heth and Gordon J. Wenham, *Jesus and Divorce* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985), 144.
[59] Stephen C. Barton, "1 Corinthians" in James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson, eds., *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 1329.
[60] M. Eugene Boring and Fred M. Craddock, *The People's New Testament Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 523.
[61] N. T. Wright, *1 Corinthians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 31.
[62] William Loader, *The New Testament on Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 198.

In other words, Paul is offering marriage as the proper alternative to those who are being consumed by their sexual passion. Garland notes, "What is distinctive about [Paul's] use of the metaphor is his conviction that romantic passion necessitated marriage. Others in the ancient world did not think that burning required marriage. Overpowering sexual desire only necessitated having sex, not marriage."[63]

3. Divorce between Christian spouses (7:10-11)

> **[10]Now to the married, I command (not I, but the Lord) the wife not to separate from her husband -- [11]but if she does indeed separate, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to the husband -- and the husband not to divorce his wife.**

a. As a variation on the idea that participation in the new age of the Spirit ("being like the angels") justified abstaining from sex within marriage, some in Corinth apparently were contending that it also justified dissolving their marriages altogether.

b. Paul here addresses the situation in which both partners were Christians. As Fee states, "In speaking to 'the married,' Paul is presupposing in this first instance that both partners are believers. This is made certain by what follows next (vv. 12-16), where, in a way that balances with the present set (vv. 9-10), he addresses 'the rest,' whom that context defines as believers married to unbelievers."[64]

c. He commands, on the basis of what Jesus said during his earthly ministry, that a Christian wife must not divorce her Christian husband and a Christian husband must not divorce his Christian wife. The word "separate" [χωρίζω] is used in Greek literature and legal documents as a technical term for divorce. That it has that meaning here is clear from the fact it renders the parties "unmarried." The word also refers to dissolution of a marriage in 1 Cor. 7:15. Garland states, "In the context of Greco-Roman practice, the verb [χωρίζω] means to divorce and is synonymous with the verb ἀφιέναι (*aphienai*) in 7:11b, which Paul uses to command the husband not to send away his wife."[65]

(1) You can find Jesus' teaching on this in Mat. 5:31-32, 19:3-9; Mk. 10:2-12; and Lk. 16:18. The only exception given by Christ is recorded in the Matthew passages. There we see that *porneia,* unlawful sexual relations on the part of one's spouse *permits* but does not *require* a divorce.

(2) I suspect Paul did not mention the exception because he was addressing the propriety of divorce on ascetic grounds, on the grounds that abstinence

[63] Garland (2003), 274.
[64] Fee (2014), 323.
[65] Garland (2003), 281.

from sexual relations was spiritual. The right to divorce for sexual immorality is not relevant to that issue.

d. In v. 11 Paul adds that, if despite the command against it, a Christian wife does in fact divorce her Christian husband, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. She cannot marry someone else.

(1) He bases this on Jesus' teaching as recorded in the Gospels. Jesus taught that divorce is permitted for Christians *only* where one's spouse has been sexually immoral. If you divorce your spouse for a reason other than your spouse's cheating on you, you are not free to remarry. (I know this does not exhaust the permutations and questions surrounding divorce and remarriage, but it is the issue Paul is addressing.)

(2) Since the Christian wife under discussion here has divorced wrongfully, meaning divorced for some reason other than her husband's sexual immorality (for some ascetic notion), she is, according to the Lord's teaching, not free to remarry. That is why Paul says her choices are to remain unmarried or reconcile with the husband she impermissibly divorced.

(3) Now, if she *does* remarry, she clearly has sinned in doing so, but what is the status of that second marriage? Paul does not address that directly, but it seems to me the second marriage is effective or valid *despite being wrongful* (just like her divorce was effective – made her unmarried – despite being wrongful). As such, they are bound to each other for life and are not to divorce. (For a fuller discussion of divorce and remarriage, see my paper at www.theoutlet.us titled "Another Look at Divorce and Remarriage." As I explain there, I believe the "adultery" of which Jesus speaks is not literal adultery but the metaphorical adultery of the wrongful remarriage.)

4. Divorce between Christian and non-Christian spouses (7:12-16)

[12]Now to the rest, I say (not the Lord) if any brother has an unbelieving wife, and she consents to live with him, let him not divorce her; [13]and if any woman has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, let her not divorce the husband. [14]For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified in the wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified in the brother. Otherwise, your children are unclean, but now they are holy. [15]But if the unbeliever separates, let him or her separate. The brother or the sister has not been made a slave in such circumstances. But God has called you in peace; [16]for how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

a. In this section Paul addresses the matter of divorce when one partner is a pagan and the other is a Christian. Just like today, when one spouse became a

Christian, the other did not always follow. It seems that in the case of such mixed marriages some Corinthians argued for divorce not only on the basis that suspension of sexual relations was spiritual but on the additional basis that the pagan partner was unclean and defiling. You can see how this argument would flow from the same kind of analysis Paul used in forbidding sex with prostitutes – it amounts to making part of Christ's body part of the body of a pagan.

b. Paul flatly forbids the Christian partner in such a marriage from divorcing his or her non-Christian spouse. If the non-Christian spouse is willing to live with the Christian, the Christian must not initiate a divorce.

(1) When Paul says that *he* says this, "not the Lord," he does not mean that his words are not inspired or authoritative. He speaks as one to be trusted (v. 25) because he has the Spirit of God (v. 40). He simply means that Christ did not have occasion during his earthly ministry, in his teaching preserved in the church, to address mixed marriages between people of God and others.

(a) Schreiner states:

> When Paul says it is he who speaks rather than the Lord, he is not suggesting that his words have lesser authority, as if the readers are free to accept or reject what Paul teaches. Paul thinks his words are authoritative as an apostle of Jesus Christ (cf. 14:37; 1 Thess. 2:13). He merely distinguishes between his words and the words of the historical Jesus. The Jesus of history, as we saw in verse 10-11, gave directives about divorce and remarriage, but he did not address the issue of believers married to unbelievers. Paul, as an apostle, addresses that matter here.[66]

(b) Blomberg notes:

> Too often readers have inappropriately questioned the authority of Paul's instructions in verses 12-16 on the grounds that these are merely Paul's fallible, spur-of-the-moment opinions. Paul's ironic conclusion to this chapter in verse 40 is actually a strong avowal of inspiration by the Holy Spirit for his entire letter.[67]

(2) He rejects the argument that the non-Christian spouse defiles the Christian by declaring that, on the contrary, the unbeliever is sanctified in his or her marriage relationship with the believer.

(a) This does not mean they are saved, something v. 16 makes clear; it means they are not *defiling*. So it is not like having sex with a pagan to whom you are not married.

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[66] Schreiner (2018), 141.
[67] Blomberg (1994), 139.

(b) If the believer in a family did not have such a sanctifying effect on the spouse, then their children, the product of their defiling sexual union, would be unclean or defiling. In that case, maintaining a family relationship with their children would be impossible, which was not something they were willing to accept. So Paul engages in a *reductio ad absurdum*, showing that their position led logically to an absurdity, a result with which they were unwilling to live.

c. Though the *Christian* in a mixed marriage is forbidden from divorcing, Paul says in v. 15a that in the event the *unbeliever* leaves, the believer is to let the unbeliever go, meaning he or she is to accept the fact of the divorce. The believer has not been made a slave in such circumstances, as Paul says in v. 15b, in that the believer is not thereby put under an obligation to prevent the divorce or restore the marriage afterward.

(1) If this is right, then this text does not speak directly to the issue of whether the divorced believer is free to remarry. But I think remarriage is permitted in such cases simply because that right normally would accompany a permissible divorce. In other words, permission to allow a divorce normally would be understood to include a right to remarry. As David Instone-Brewer states:

> When Paul says they are "no longer enslaved," any first century reader would understand him to mean that they can remarry, because they would think of the words in both Jewish and non-Jewish divorce certificates: "You are free to marry." If Paul had meant something else, he would have had to state this very clearly, in order to avoid being misunderstood by everyone who read his epistle.[68]

(2) Any uncertainty about a right of remarriage in such cases is not a major issue in the church today because in our society a divorcing unbeliever is usually quick to engage in sexual relations. In my understanding, that provides a basis for remarriage.

d. The permission given the believer to allow a divorcing unbeliever to leave is, however, the exception. The rule is that God has called the believer to peace, which in this case means to live in peace with the unbelieving spouse, to maintain the marriage bond. After all, by doing so the believing wife may eventually save her pagan husband or the believing husband may eventually save his pagan wife.

5. Basic principle that Christian conversion does not require changing social relationships (7:17-24)

[17]Nevertheless, as the Lord allotted to each, as God has called each, so let him walk. And so I command in all the churches. [18]Was anyone

[68] David Instone-Brewer, "1 Corinthians 7 in the Light of the Jewish Greek and Aramaic Marriage and Divorce Papyri," *Tyndale Bulletin* 52 (2001), 241.

called having already been circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Has anyone been called in uncircumcision? Let him not be circumcised. [19]Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God [is everything]. [20]Let each remain in the calling in which he was called. [21]Were you called being a slave? Do not let it be a concern to you; but if indeed you are able to become free, by all means use [it]. [22]For the one who was called in the Lord being a slave is the Lord's freedman; likewise, the one who was called being free is Christ's slave. [23]You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men. [24]Let each one, brothers, in whatever [state] he was called, remain in this [state] with God.

a. Despite the fact the believer is free to let the unbeliever leave if the unbeliever so chooses, the basic principle is that the Christian should not use the fact he has been called into fellowship with Christ as a basis for changing his social state (in this particular case, his or her marital status). As far as a person's being a Christian is concerned, *as far as that is the determining factor in the decision*, he is to continue in the setting he was in at the time of his conversion.

(1) This does not mean that a Christian cannot change his social circumstance. It simply means that his being a Christian does not compel him to do so.

(2) By calling a person to Christ in a particular social setting, that setting itself is given by the Lord as an appropriate place for living out one's life in Christ. God's call thus eliminates their social setting as having any kind of religious significance, as being something one must leave or change because one is now a Christian.

b. Paul illustrates the point by way of another social setting, the matter of Jews and Gentiles.

(1) Those called having already been circumcised (Jews) should not therefore seek to become Gentiles by having an operation to conceal their circumcision, and those called being uncircumcised (Gentiles) should not therefore seek to become Jews via circumcision.

(2) The gospel transcends the social distinction between Jew and Gentile, bringing the two together into one body, and thereby renders it religiously insignificant. Being a Jew or Gentile makes no difference to God spiritually, so whatever one was when one was called, there is no need to change.

(3) Paul intends for the Corinthians to transfer the principle to their desire to divorce for religious reasons. Just like circumcision and uncircumcision are nothing in the sense that being a Christian does not demand a change from one to the other, being married and not being married are nothing in the sense that being a Christian does not demand a change from one to the other.

(4) What matters is not one's social state but the authenticity of one's faith as expressed in keeping the ethical imperatives of the Christian faith. (Paul did not want the Corinthians to turn his statement that "circumcision is nothing" into "obedience to the will of God is nothing.")

c. Paul repeats the principle in v. 20: "Let each man remain in the calling in which he was called." As far being a Christian is concerned, they can live in whatever social circumstance they were in when God called them, so there is no spiritual reason to change.

d. Paul uses slavery for his second supporting illustration.

(1) If one was converted as a slave, it is not to be a source of concern because one's status as a slave is not religiously significant. Neither slavery nor freedom counts for anything to the one who is called into fellowship with Christ. The slave should not consider his status a matter of importance because he has become the Lord's freedman. Likewise, the converted free person should not consider his status a matter of importance because he has become Christ's slave.

(2) The fact Paul parenthetically notes that if the converted slave is able to become free he should take advantage of the opportunity makes clear that his point throughout has not been that Christians *must* stay where they are but that their social condition is not to be of religious concern. If the slave can get free, he should do so but not because he is a Christian, i.e., not for religious reasons.

(3) Because the Lord has purchased both slaves and free persons by his blood, he is the one to whom they owe allegiance, so they must not become slaves of men in the sense of coming under the bondage of merely human teaching. Particularly, they must not let merely human wisdom, disguised as "spirituality," dictate their present anxieties about the need to be free from certain social settings, especially marriage.

e. Paul concludes with a variation of his refrain: Each is to remain with God in whatever social state he was in when converted. It has God's blessing and can be an avenue of faithful Christian service.

f. Here is how Garland summarizes the point of vv. 17-24:

> What do uncircumcision and circumcision, slavery and freedom, have to do with marriage, divorce, and celibacy? They illustrate the divine principle that no earthly status, such as one's racial heritage or social standing, is incompatible with the Christian's calling by God [cite omitted]. Those who were circumcised when God called them do not advance their spiritual condition by undergoing an operation to restore their foreskin, nor do those who were uncircumcised when God called them enhance their standing with

God by undergoing circumcision. Slaves are no less accepted by God than are free persons. Both belong to Christ, and their social status has no spiritual significance. Whether a Christian is circumcised or uncircumcised, slave or free, married or single is inconsequential to God. One condition is not bad and the other good, nor is one condition less good and the other better. No condition presents an obstacle to living the Christian life, since a Christian is now defined by God's call (1:9) and nothing else.[69]

6. The case of betrothed women ("the virgins") (7:25-40)

a. Advice in light of the present distress (7:25-28)

[25]Now about the virgins, I do not have a commandment of the Lord, but I give a judgment as one having been given mercy by the Lord to be faithful. [26]Therefore, I consider this to be good because of the present distress, [namely] that what is so is good for a man. [27]Are you bound to a woman? Do not seek release. Are you free from a woman? Do not seek a wife. [28]But if indeed you marry, you have not sinned; and if the virgin marries, she has not sinned. But such people will have affliction in the flesh, and I am trying to spare you.

(1) Having dealt with the married people interested in altering their present situation, Paul now turns his attention to the matter of "the virgins" that they raised in their letter. "The virgins" probably refers to some young, betrothed women who, along with their fiancés, were being told by the "spiritual ones" in Corinth that it would be sinful for them to go through with their marriages.

(2) Paul has no command from the Lord on this matter, but he gives a judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy has trustworthy judgment on the matter.

(a) He agrees with the general Corinthian claim that it is good for a man to maintain the status quo with regard to the virgins, to freeze the situation, but he does so not because it is unspiritual to marry but because of "the present distress." In other words, he would agree that the betrothed should not go through with their marriages, as being urged by those with a misguided sense of spirituality, but for a significantly different reason.

(b) The "present distress" that causes Paul to counsel against getting married is some hardship the Corinthians currently are undergoing. Suggestions include persecution or a famine,[70] but whatever it was, the following verses (vv.

[69] Garland (2003), 299.
[70] See, e.g., Garland (2003), 324.

29-35) suggest that Paul sees it in the larger context of the hardships the church must face in these last days, in the time before Christ's return. He wants to spare them the increase in troubles that being married will bring during this particular spasm of distress they are experiencing in an age of distress. Having a spouse and the children that follow increases the difficulty and pressure of living through hardship.

(c) In his examples of maintaining the status quo in relation to the virgins, he says that men who are betrothed should not break off the engagement (seek a release from that bond) and those who are not betrothed (or perhaps already broke their betrothal) should remain so and not hunt for a wife.

(d) Though he agreed that the betrothed should not go through with their marriages in the present situation, which would be changing the status quo, he did not include that as an example because he did not want to give any ammunition to the Corinthian's false claim that it was *sinful* to do so. As he makes clear in v. 28, this was a matter of wise advice, not a matter of sin.

(e) Fee summarizes Paul's argument this way: "(a) I agree, it is good for the 'virgins' to remain single, but that is because of the present crisis/distress; but (b) it is certainly no sin to marry; nonetheless (a) those who do marry will experience many difficulties (because of the present crisis/distress), and I would spare them that."[71]

(f) Fee writes:

> [W]hat is often heard is that Paul prefers singleness to marriage, which he does. But quite in contrast to Paul's own position over against the Corinthians, we often read into that preference that singleness is somehow a superior status. That causes some who do not wish to remain single to become anxious about God's will in their lives. Such people need to hear it again: Marriage or singleness per se lies totally outside the category of "commandments" to be obeyed or "sin" if one does otherwise; and Paul's preference here is not predicated on "spiritual" grounds but on pastoral concerns. It is not only perfectly all right to marry, but for those of us who are happily married it goes beyond "all right" to "good."
>
> Unfortunately, our reading of the text from such a perspective cuts in two ways. Our present culture, especially Christian subculture, tends to think of marriage as the norm in such a way that singles are sometimes second-class citizens. For such people, this text is merely "Paul's opinion," and is seldom listened to at all. That, too, misses Paul's point. Some are called to singleness still; such believers need to be able to live in the local Christian community with full acceptance, and beyond suspicion.[72]

[71] Fee (2014), 368.
[72] Fee (2014), 369.

b. Need to live as end-time people (7:29-35)

> **[29]Now this I say, brothers, the time is shortened, so that from now on those having wives should be as not having, [30]and those weeping as not weeping, and those rejoicing as not rejoicing, and those buying as not possessing, [31]and those using the world as not making full use of it. For the present form of this world is passing away.**
>
> **[32]Now I want you to be without anxiety. The unmarried man is concerned for the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; [33]but the married man is concerned for the things of the world, how he may please the wife, [34]and he is divided. And the unmarried woman and the virgin are concerned for the things of the Lord, so that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but the married woman is concerned for the things of the world, how she may please the husband. [35]Now this I say for your own advantage, not that I may throw a noose around you but for the sake of propriety and devotion to the Lord without distraction.**

(1) The afflictions the Corinthians currently are suffering are a specific expression of the fact we are in the last days (Acts 2:16-17; Heb. 1:2), the fact that the "time is shortened" in the sense that we are at the end of history, an end which has been brought clearly into view. We must allow that reality to control our relationships in the present.

(2) Garland writes:

> Paul is not concerned about the duration of time (chronos; cf. 7:39) but the character of the time. He is talking not about how little time is left but about how Christ's death and resurrection have changed how Christians should look at the time that is left. . . . [H]e understands the compressing of the time to mean that the future outcome of this world has become crystal clear. The time has been "foreshortened," which means that "the event of Christ has now compressed the time in such a way that the future has been brought forward to be clearly visible" (Fee 1987: 339 n. 14). Fee comments (1987: 339), "Those who have a definite future and see it clearly live in the present with radically altered values as to what counts and what does not."[73]

(3) We must live as an end-time people, as those who are not unduly vested in the world, because the world is on its way out. Every aspect of our relationship with the world is to be affected. We must not lean too heavily on anything that is passing.

(a) We continue to be involved in the things of the world, but we are not to do so with the same attitude as those lacking our end-time perspective. None of these temporary things are to be seen as things of ultimate importance.

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[73] Garland (2003), 329.

(b) Our knowledge that this world is already passing is to inform every aspect of our involvement with the world. Just like Paul told the Thessalonian Christians not "to grieve like the rest of men who have no hope" (1 Thess. 4:13), we are not to view our wives like the rest of men or to weep like the rest of men or to rejoice (in the things of the world) like the rest of men or to purchase things like the rest of men or to use things like the rest of men. As Garland says, "The 'as nots' are a rhetorically more dashing way of saying, 'Do not be conformed to this world' (Rom. 12:2)."[74]

(4) Paul wants them to be free from anxiety by living according to the end-time perspective he has just mentioned.

(a) Doing some reading between the lines, I think Paul means that the key to being without "anxiety" is to live "as not." In other words, he told them in vv. 29-31 to live "as not" *because* he wants them to be free of anxiety. But married people rightly are concerned (anxious in a good sense) about pleasing their spouses, in addition to being concerned about pleasing the Lord, and that makes it a challenge to keep a spouse in proper perspective, to have a spouse "as not" having a spouse. In times of distress, such as the Corinthians were experiencing, the potential anxiety from failing to meet the challenge of keeping one's spouse in proper perspective is so great that the distraction it poses to discipleship makes it generally a wise thing not to marry.

(b) In other words, because we rightly are concerned about our spouses, there is a higher-than-normal risk of placing undue importance on them, and if we do that in times of distress, we are set up for such high anxiety that the distraction it poses to our discipleship makes it generally wiser not to get married *under such circumstances*.

(c) Paul says what he says to benefit them. He does not say it to restrict them but to increase the likelihood in the present situation of their living with a devotion to the Lord that is unhindered by the distraction of anxiety.

c. Reassurance regarding decision about marrying betrothed (7:36-38)

> **[36]But if anyone thinks he is behaving shamefully toward his virgin, if his passions are strong, and thus it ought to be, let him do what he wishes. He is not sinning; let them marry. [37]But he who stands firm in his heart, who, rather than being under necessity, has authority concerning his own will and has decided in his own heart to keep his own virgin [as she is], he will do well. [38]So then, he who marries his own virgin does well, and he who does not marry [her] will do better.**

[74] Garland (2003), 331.

(1) Paul again assures the betrothed man, against the "spiritual ones" in Corinth, that if he thinks he is behaving shamefully toward his virgin by not marrying her and if his passions are strong, he should do what he wants and marry her. He is not sinning by doing so.

(2) On the other hand, the one who makes up his own mind not to go through with the marriage, as opposed to having that decision forced on him by the "spiritual ones," will do well, meaning act in an appropriate or proper fashion. NIV's "does the *right* thing" has moral overtones which incorrectly imply that the contrary is somehow "wrong."

(3) The bottom line in Paul's view is that the man who marries his virgin does well (it is in no sense bad) and the one who does not marry her will do better (because of the present distress).

d. Reminder for the virgins who do marry (7:39-40)

> **[39]A wife is bound for as long as her husband lives, but if the husband falls asleep, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. [40]But she is happier, in my judgment, if she remains that way; and I think that I too have the Spirit of God.**

(1) Paul concludes by reiterating for the virgins who go through with their marriages what he previously said to the married Christians. They are to remain married for life. In other words, divorce is not an option for Christians (with the exception not relevant to this context).

(2) If her husband dies, however, she is perfectly free to remarry; it is in no way sinful or unspiritual to do so. With the large majority of interpreters, I take the restriction "only in the Lord" to mean that her new husband must be a Christian. Paul uses "in the Lord" to mean Christians in Rom. 16:11. Even if one takes "only in the Lord" to mean she is to marry in a way fitting for a Christian, I think one winds up at the same conclusion. As Fee remarks:

> To be "in the Lord" is to have one's life come under the eschatological view of existence outlined in vv. 29-31. Such a woman lives from such a radically different perspective and value system from that of a pagan husband that a "mixed" marriage, where the "two become one," is simply unthinkable. If she becomes a believer after marriage, then she should maintain the marriage with the hope of winning him to the Lord (vv. 12-16); but it makes no sense from Paul's perspective for one to engage such a marriage once one is a Christian.

(3) As he said in 7:8-9 regarding widowers and widows, it is a good thing for a widow (or widower) to remain unmarried. Here he gives his judgment

that the widow will be happier under the present circumstances if she does so, but other factors may influence the desire to marry. Again, she is free to marry but not obligated to do so.

B. Food Offered to Idols – (8:1 – 11:1)

Introduction to Section

Paul turns his attention to the matter of food sacrificed to idols, a subject that will occupy him for the next three chapters. I follow the view of Gordon Fee, Ben Witherington, and others that the basic problem to which Paul is responding throughout this section is the eating of sacrificial food at the ritual meals in the pagan temples. In other words, the primary problem is not idol food sold in the marketplace and eaten in private homes; that does not get addressed until 10:23-11:1. Paul is objecting to consuming sacrificial meat in the pagan temple precinct as part of a pagan ritual.

Cultic or ritual meals were a regular part of worship in antiquity. Following the sacrifice, some of the meat would be burned before the god, some would be placed on the "table of the god," which was attended by cultic ministers, and some would be eaten by the worshippers as a feast. What was left over from the "god's table" was often sold in the marketplace.

These meals were both religious and social. The gods were thought to be present, since the meals were held in their honor and sacrifices made to them, but it was also the way in which almost every social occasion was celebrated. In this sense, one writer says the temple was the basic "restaurant" in antiquity. Gentile converts in Corinth had probably attended such meals all their lives.

Fee reconstructs the problem in the Corinthian church as follows:[75]

After Paul left Corinth, some of the Christians there returned to the practice of attending the cultic meals. In his earlier letter, Paul forbid such idolatry (note the reference to "idolaters" in 5:10-11), but they took exception to his doing this and in their letter made four points, several of which Paul will allude to in his response:

- They argued that "all have knowledge" about idols. Since there is only one God, the idols cannot be real gods, a point with which Paul will, of course, agree. Therefore, their eating in the temple was not an act of worship but a purely social matter. They were not worshipping what they knew did not exist.

- They also have knowledge that food is a matter of indifference to God, another point on which Paul will agree. Putting this with the first argument, their conclusion is that it does not matter *what* they eat or *where* they eat. So how can Paul forbid their going to temples?

[75] Fee (2014), 398-399.

- They seem to have a somewhat "magical" view of the sacraments, a view that those who have been baptized and who take the Lord's Supper are not in any danger of falling.

- A number of them also doubt that Paul has the proper apostolic authority to forbid them on this matter. In their minds, this doubt has been substantiated by the fact Paul did not accept support from them while he was with them and the fact he seemed to compromise his own stance on eating idol food sold in the marketplace (he ate when eating with Gentiles but abstained when eating with Jews).

Those pushing to eat the temple meals probably also were arguing that others would be "built up" by taking "authority" in this matter. In any event, they pressed for this right in the name of "knowledge" and would invite other brothers and sisters to join them at the banquets.

1. Christian behavior is not predicated solely on knowledge (8:1-6)

Now about things sacrificed to idols, we know that "we all have knowledge." Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. [2]If anyone thinks he has come to know something, he has not yet come to know as he needs to know; [3]but if anyone loves, this one [truly] knows.*

[4]Concerning, then, the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that "there is no idol in the world," and that "there is no God but one." [5]For even if there are those called gods, either in heaven or on earth – as indeed there are many gods and many lords, [6]but for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we are for him, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we are through him.

a. Paul opens his attack on their objection to his prohibition of attending temple feasts by challenging its faulty ethical premise. The assumption behind their argument was that Christian behavior is predicated solely on knowledge, that knowing that something is not forbidden automatically authorizes one to do it. Paul's point in this section is that *even if their arguments about the propriety of eating in the temples were correct*, which they were not (as he will make clear in 10:14-22), the principle of brotherly love would still require that they forego the practice.

b. Paul accepts the Corinthians' point that all Christians possess knowledge, but as v. 7 makes clear, he realizes there are varying levels of that knowledge. He breaks off his comment to attack the concept of knowledge as represented in Corinth.

(1) Knowledge by itself, without any other guiding principles, simply puffs a person up. It causes him to see himself as superior and then to run

roughshod over those who are beneath him. They are the ignorant who are not worth worrying about.

(2) Love, on the other hand, builds up the community of faith. It focuses one on the welfare of one's brothers and sisters.

(3) Alluding to the knowledge that some were claiming authorized their attending the temple feasts, Paul says that anyone who thinks he is in the know on such a matter does not know as he needs to know. Such a person thinks he has got knowledge, but true knowledge has escaped him because he has overlooked the essential role of love.

c. There is a textual issue with v. 3.

(1) The shorter text, found in some very early witnesses (P^{46}, the oldest manuscript of 1 Corinthians, and Clement of Alexandria) reads, "If anyone loves, this one truly knows."[76] That reinforces the point that love is a part of true knowing. That reading better fits the context and is favored as the original text by quite a few scholars, including Fee, Thiselton,[77] and the textual critic Philip Comfort.[78] The most recent and thorough defense of the short reading is Mark Letteney's 2016 article in the *Journal of Biblical Literature*.[79]

(2) The longer text of v. 3 reads: "but if anyone loves God, this person has been known by him." If that is the correct reading, Paul here reminds them that their love for God means they are known by God (special to him as recipients of his saving grace) because that "sets them apart from worshipers of false gods and delimits what they may and may not do. Those who love God and are known by God may not dally in the shrines of other gods."[80]

d. Having interjected a qualifying word about the way of love superseding the way of knowledge, Paul in v. 4 picks back up what he began in v. 1. He naturally agrees with the Corinthian position that "there is no idol in the world" (in the sense of being a god) and that "there is no God but one." The fact there is only one God means that the idols of the pagan world cannot be *gods*. (As he will specify later, demons are behind these pagan gods.)

(1) Paul begins v. 5 with the phrase, "For even if there are those *called* gods," meaning things that are not really gods but are called gods by people, but he does not finish that sentence. It seems that he was going to say that even if there are so-called gods, they do not really exist, at least as they are portrayed.

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[76] Fee (2014), 405-406.
[77] Thiselton (2000), 625-626.
[78] Philip W. Comfort, *New Testament Text and Translation Commentary* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2008), 501.
[79] Mark Letteney, "Toward a New Scribal Tendency: Reciprocal Corruptions and the Text of 1 Corinthians 8:2–3," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 135, no. 2 (2016): 391–404.
[80] Garland (2003), 371.

(2) Instead of completing his thought, Paul interjects an acknowledgement of the fact that there are many gods (traditional Greco-Roman deities) and lords (deities of the Oriental mystery cults). They were everywhere in the ancient world. But Paul is not saying that these deities really exist (at least not as deities – see, 10:19-20); he is simply saying that people believe they exist. They are "so-called" gods.

(3) He grants that there are many "so-called" gods and lords, but that is only true for pagans. Christians know better (at least intellectually); for us there is only one God, *from whom* all things have been made, and only one Lord, *through whom* all things have been made. The unity of God the Father and the Lord Jesus is hinted at in their unity of purpose and action in the divine work of creation, especially in light of the Jewish confession "The Lord our God is one Lord" (Deut. 6:4). Garland states, "Paul creatively christianizes the foundational Jewish monotheistic confession: 'The Lord our God is one Lord' (Deut. 6:4). He glosses the reference to Lord and God in that confession so that 'God' refers to the Father and 'the Lord' refers to Christ."[81]

2. Brotherly love requires that they forego eating in the temples (8:7-13)

> **[7]But this knowledge is not in everyone. Some, by reason of being accustomed until now to the idol, eat [the meat] as a thing sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. [8]Now food will not present us to God; neither if we do not eat are we inferior, nor if we eat do we excel. [9]But watch out lest somehow this authority of yours becomes a stumbling-block to the weak. [10]For if anyone sees you, the one having knowledge, reclining at a table in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, which is weak, be built up to eat the things sacrificed to idols? [11]For the one who is weak is destroyed by your knowledge, the brother for whom Christ died. [12]And by sinning this way against the brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. [13]Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat forevermore, so that I not cause my brother to stumble.**

a. All the Corinthian Christians knew intellectually or theoretically that there is only one God, but not all had internalized that knowledge at an emotional or experiential level. They were so used to associating with the idol as a god that they could not return to their former place of worship and join in the temple meal without some sense of feeling that the idol to whom the food was offered was real, a rival god.

b. In other words, because of the relative weakness of their monotheistic convictions, they could not participate in the temple feasts as a purely social

[81] Garland (2003), 375.

matter. For them, it was at some level engaging in the worship of an idol, and the practice therefore defiled their consciences; it violated their sense of loyalty to the one true God.

c. Verse 8 is a reference to the Corinthian claim that food is a matter of indifference to God. (NIV's "But" is better translated "Now" in this context.) They had probably taken something Paul had said about the irrelevance of Jewish food laws and converted it into a justification for eating food being sacrificed to idols. (This explains the imprecise fit of the phrase with their argument. You would expect them to claim that abstaining did not make one *superior* and that eating did not make one *inferior*, but v. 8 says the opposite.)

d. Verse 9 shows that v. 8 is part of the Corinthian argument against Paul. He cites their claim and then counters with, "But watch out lest somehow this authority of yours becomes a stumbling block to the weak." By misapplying the general freedom that Christians have regarding Jewish food laws, it would become a stumbling block for others. Paul explains:

(1) For the one with a weak conscience, meaning weak in terms of monotheistic convictions, who *sees them* (probably via invitation) eating in an idol's temple will have his conscience "built up" (a bit of irony) "to eat the things sacrificed to idols," i.e., to participate in idolatry! The weak one does not simply eat food; he eats food "sacrificed to idols."

(2) That is why Paul says in v. 11, "For the one who is weak is *destroyed* by your knowledge." By their so-called knowledge, they are pushing the brother for whom Christ died into eternal ruin. Pressuring someone to act in violation of his conscience can destroy him spiritually by beginning a hardening process, a searing of his conscience, which leads to alienation from God.

(3) Paul makes the same point in a different context in Romans 14-15 (see esp. 14:15). There he requires Christians to abstain from eating meat in the presence of a Jewish brother whose conscience was not free to eat such meat. Here he puts aside the issue of whether participating in temple feasts was morally acceptable, which he will make clear in 10:14-22 it is not, to say that even if that were the case they still are required by love to abstain from doing so in the presence of a brother whose conscience was not free to do so.

(4) By sinning against the brothers in this way, by eating temple meals in their presence in the name of enlightened freedom so as pressure them to violate their idol-sensitive (weak) consciences, they are sinning against Christ himself. Jesus so identifies with his brothers and sisters.

e. Given what he has just said, Paul in v. 13 sums up with a declaration of the principle of love put in the context of eating. Paul is not so concerned with his right to eat something, his knowledge it is permissible, that he will insist on it to the

detriment of his brothers. This broader statement and shift to first person leads into the following section.

f. In applying the principle given in this section and in Romans 14-15, it is helpful to keep a number of things in mind. I have shared my thoughts on some application issues in other classes, so I will not belabor the point here. But notice the following limitations:

(1) Paul is speaking about genuine matters of *conscience*, not matters of *preference*.

(a) Of course, conscience can be malformed at a level deeper than intellectual understanding. One can assent to a truth intellectually but still have a restriction of conscience rooted in one's life experience. The intellectual understanding has not yet been internalized in the heart. And that must be respected.

(b) You may be better able to recognize how conscience can be out of step with intellectual understanding in the case of a soldier who accepts intellectually that killing is morally acceptable in a just war. He may know the reasoning behind that conclusion and may find it intellectually persuasive and yet still be unable to kill with a clear conscience.

(2) Second, he is speaking about *conduct*, not teaching, that is done *in the presence of* the brother or sister with the narrower conscience.

(a) That is why in Rom. 14:22a he tells those with a broader conscience to keep the convictions they have *to themselves before God* and why in 1 Cor. 8:10 he speaks of the one who *sees them* eating in the temple. Christians are free to enjoy the liberty they have in Christ when they are away from brothers with a narrower conscience. Indeed, Paul in Rom. 14:22b labels as "blessed" the man who can enjoy his liberty with a clear conscience.

(b) The restriction is limited to being in the other's presence presumably because doing something in someone's presence increases the pressure on that person to engage in it before he or she is truly ready. Teaching someone that his belief is incorrect also pressures him to engage in the practice, but that is acceptable because it is a different kind of pressure than modeling the behavior in his presence. It is a different social and psychological dynamic. So if, for example, one's brother cannot play cards with a clear conscience, one is free to play cards outside of the brother's presence but not to invite him over and play cards in his face.

(3) Third, he is speaking of personal conduct that the brother or sister with a narrower conscience *can be induced to imitate*. Some things are thought by some to be wrong only for the church, the congregational entity, to do. A person may believe, for example, that it is sinful for *a church* to incorporate or to have a kitchen. He has no problem with individual Christians incorporating or having kitchens; he just thinks it is

wrong for the church to do so. I see those situations as being outside the scope of Paul's teaching here and in Romans 14-15 because an individual cannot act as a church, as a congregation, and thus the Christian with the narrower conscience cannot be induced to imitate the behavior so as to violate his conscience.

(4) And fourth, he is speaking of optional conduct (assumed to be so in 1 Corinthians 8 for purpose of argument) the foregoing of which does not leave one with only a substantially more burdensome way of obeying a divine command. I would put the dispute over one cup versus multiple communion cups in this category. Unlike abstaining from temple feasts (or from meat and wine in Romans 14-15) for the sake of a brother's narrower conscience, abstaining from multiple cups leaves only the one-cup option for obeying the command to participate in the Lord's Supper, which for many is a significant emotional hindrance to taking the Supper (or doing so with a worshipful spirit). Since abstaining from temple feasts (or meat and wine) creates no such spiritual cost, does not leave one with only a substantially more burdensome way of obeying a command, the one-cup dispute seems to me to be outside the scope of Paul's teaching.

3. Response to those challenging the prohibition of attending temple meals by calling into question his apostolic authority (9:1-23)

a. Response re his not accepting their material support (9:1-18)

(1) He had a *right* to their support as an apostle (9:1-14)

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? [2]If to others I am not an apostle, yet at least I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.
[3]My defense to those who are judging me is this: [4]Can it be that we do not have authority to eat and drink? [5]Can it be that we do not have authority to take along a wife who is a sister, as also the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? [6]Or do only I and Barnabas not have authority not to work? [7]Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its fruit? Or who shepherds a flock and does not drink of the flock's milk? [8]Do I say these things as a man, or does not the law also say these things? [9]For it is written in the Law of Moses, "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is the [matter] of oxen a concern to God, [10]or does it not undoubtedly speak for us? Indeed, it was written for us because the one who plows ought to plow in hope and the one who threshes [to thresh] in hope of sharing [in the crop]. [11]If we sowed spiritual things among you, is it a great matter if we shall reap your

material things? [12]If others share in authority over you, do we not all the more?

But we did not use this authority; instead, we put up with all things so that we not give any kind of hindrance to the gospel of Christ. [13]Do you not know that those who conduct the sacred [rites] eat the things of the temple, that those who serve at the altar share in [what is offered on] the altar? [14]So also the Lord ordained those who proclaim the gospel to live from the gospel.

(a) Paul now jumps the Corinthians for challenging his prohibition of attending temple meals by calling into question his apostolic authority. It seems that the challenge to that authority was being framed in terms of the fact he did not accept material support from them and the fact he seemed to go both ways on the issue of eating marketplace food.

(b) He begins with a flood of rhetorical questions, the answer to each of which is "of course." He asks, "Am I not free?" which relates to their attempt to deny him the freedom to forego support from them and the freedom to eat or reject food. He picks this point up in vv. 15-23. The second question, "Am I not an apostle?" is the focus of vv. 1-14.

(c) Proof of his apostleship is in the following rhetorical questions. He reminds them that he had seen Jesus, referring to his Damascus road experience, and that they were the result of his labor in the Lord. Their very existence authenticates or serves as a "seal" of his apostleship because church planting is what apostles do.

(d) In vv. 3-14 Paul plays variations on the single theme that he had a *right* to their material support. It seems that his failure to take support from the Corinthians was used against him to call his apostolic authenticity into question.

[1] Fee states, "Philosophers and wandering missionaries in the Greco-Roman world made their living in one of four ways: fees, patronage, begging, and working. Each of these had both proponents and detractors, who viewed rival forms as unworthy of philosophy."[82] By the time of his ministry in Corinth, Paul had chosen manual labor (tent making) as his basic means of support (2 Thess. 3:7-9; 1 Cor. 4:12; Acts 18:3).

[2] When later teachers, such as Apollos and possibly Peter, came to Corinth and accepted patronage, it focused attention on Paul's failure to do so. His failure to accept patronage was interpreted to mean that he had no *right* to such support, which, given that other apostles (broader than the Twelve) were entitled to it, called his apostleship into question.[83]

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[82] Fee (2014), 441; see also, Oster, 207.
[83] Fee (2014), 441-442.

[3] So Paul first establishes that he was also entitled to their financial support before he defends his renunciation of that right.

(e) Verses 4-6 are a series of intense rhetorical questions designed to force them to recognize what they should already know, i.e., that Paul has all the rights of an apostle. The first two are best translated as beginning "Can it be that we do not have authority (or the right) to eat and drink? Can it be that we do not have authority to take along a wife who is a sister, as also the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?" The expected answer is "No!"

[1] The question about the authority to take along a believing wife shows that the apostles' right to support extended to their wives as well. Not only were they entitled to support themselves, but they were entitled to bring their wives and to have them supported.

[2] Given that others typically were accompanied by their wives, Paul's minority practice of not being accompanied by a wife was taken as a strike against his authenticity. His practice was attributed to the fact he lacked the apostolic authority to have a wife be supported. That was either why he did not marry or, for those who assumed he was married, why he did not bring his wife.

[3] V. 6 shows that v. 5 is related to the issue of support. Paul asks, "*Or* do only I and Barnabas not have authority not to work?"

(f) In v. 7 he uses a soldier, a farmer, and a shepherd to illustrate his right to support. In vv. 8-10 he illustrates his right to support from the OT. In v. 11-12a, he applies these points to his own situation in Corinth.

(g) In v. 12b he starts to explain why he gave up his right to support, but then adds two more pieces of evidence establishing his right to their support: general religious practice (v. 13) and the teaching of Christ (v. 14).

[1] Paul says he chose to give up his right to support so as not to hinder the gospel of Christ. He does not say how accepting support from them would hinder the gospel, but it seems from the following paragraph (vv. 15-18) that he thinks doing so would risk misrepresenting the nature of his call by God by suggesting he had an option whether to preach, that it conditioned on his receiving support. He was convinced that in his case, perhaps because of the unusual way in which he became an apostle, that misperception could make him less effective. The bottom line is that he gave up a right out of his love for others in order that he might bless them.

[2] In both Jewish and pagan temples, the priest who served in making the sacrifices shared in the sacrificial food. So Paul is entitled to support from his religious labor.

[3] Paul clinches the argument with reference to the teaching of Christ. In Lk. 10:7 he says, "The worker deserves his wages."

(2) His renunciation of his right to their support (9:15-18)

> **[15]But I have not used any of these things, and I do not write these things in order that it might happen this way in my case. For it is good for me rather to die than – no one shall empty my boast. [16]For if I preach the gospel, there is no boast for me, for necessity is laid on me, for woe is to me if I do not preach the gospel. [17]For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if involuntarily, I have been entrusted with a stewardship. [18]What then is my reward? That in preaching the gospel I may present the gospel without charge so as not to make full use of my authority in the gospel.**

(a) Paul did not use his right to support and is not now seeking it. On the contrary, he is *firmly* resolved not to allow anyone to nullify his "boast."

[1] He feels so strongly about this because he has concluded that taking support from locals will hinder his evangelistic efforts by making it look like he has a choice of whether or not to preach, as though his doing so might depend on his receiving support. The fact is that he has no choice; God called him and put him under divine obligation to preach. By giving the impression that he has a choice whether to preach, he would misrepresent the true nature of his calling, which misrepresentation, in his case and circumstance, would be worse for the cause of the gospel than whatever questions his refusing support might generate. And Paul would rather die than hinder the gospel by standing on his rights.

[2] Paul "boasts" in the fact he supported himself via manual labor because this was a humbling of himself for the sake of the gospel. God used this humiliation, this weakness, to save others (see 4:12, 9:12b, and 2 Cor. 11:7-10).

(b) He explains that merely preaching the gospel does not provide him a reason for boasting (perhaps implying "unlike some others") because he has no choice in the matter. He was conscripted and is under divine compulsion to preach. The man who is drafted and ordered into battle stands on a different footing than the one who enlists and asks to go to the front line.

[1] For if he preached voluntarily, he would have a reward: the special honor that accompanies voluntary service. But since he was drafted, since he was involuntarily assigned the task of preaching, that reward, that boast, is not available to him. He simply is a slave discharging his duty.

[2] Does he then, as a draftee, have a reward in preaching? Yes. His reward, his "boast," is the freedom to humble himself by preaching the gospel free of charge, to voluntarily forego his rights in preaching so as not to hinder the gospel. In other words, his reward in preaching is the freedom to preach without a financial reward!

b. Response re his seemingly wishy-washy conduct in matters of social relationships (9:19-23)

> **[19]For though being free from all men, I made myself a slave to all men in order that I might gain [all] the more. [20]To the Jews, I became like a Jew, in order that I might gain Jews. To those under the law, [I became] like [one] under the law, though myself not being under the law, in order that I might gain those under the law. [21]To those without the law, [I became] like [one] without the law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, in order that I might gain those without the law. [22]To the weak, I became weak, in order that I might gain the weak. I have become all things to all men, in order that by all means I might save some. [23]Now I do all things for the sake of the gospel, in order that I might be a fellow sharer in it.**

(1) Having defended his apostolic authenticity by arguing for both his right to their material support and his freedom to turn it down, Paul continues with the theme of his freedom to forego his rights for the sake of the gospel to explain his seemingly wishy-washy conduct in matters of social relationships.

(a) It seems (see 10:23-33) that the problem had to do in part at least with Paul's actions toward marketplace food. When eating with Jews he adopted their dietary scruples but when eating with Gentiles, he adopted theirs.

(b) This seeming inconsistency struck some as conduct unbecoming an apostle, especially an apostle who would deny them the "right" to attend cultic meals with their friends.

(2) Paul says that though he was free from all men, harking back to 9:1, he gave up that right for the sake of the gospel. He lived how others wanted him to live in order to win them to Christ.

(a) To Jews Paul became like a Jew. In other words, he would adopt Jewish religious practices, such things as their food laws, which he as a Christian had long ago given up as being irrelevant to one's relationship with God. He would do so, however, purely as an accommodation, not because they were obligations.

(b) "Those under the law" is simply another way of referring to the Jews. He may have included this reference because the specific issue was

especially related to Jewish legal requirements, not simply to matters of national origin. The parenthetical comment that he is not under the law is to clarify that his own conduct is a matter of freedom, not obligation.

(c) "Those without the law" refers to Gentiles, including the majority of Corinthian believers and those who stood against him. As he notes in 10:27, with them he ate whatever was put before him without raising questions of conscience. The fact he ate with them but abstained when with the Jews made them think Paul lacked principle.

(d) The parenthetical comment that he is not without God's law but under the law of Christ is to clarify that he is not lawless in the sense of behaving in a godless way. He is not under the Jewish law, but he is under the ethical imperatives of the Christian faith, the ethics of the new age (which in certain specifics overlaps the Mosaic law).

(e) "The weak" are probably the socially weak, those without much social power or influence. That is the group into which most of the Corinthian Christians fell (1:26-31). Paul lowered himself by "stooping" to manual labor and doing without much (e.g., 4:8-13) so that his outreach to such people not be hindered.

(f) V. 22b summarizes the argument: "I have become all things to all men, in order that by all means I might save some." That is why he made the choices that he made with regard to nonessentials, why he seemed to go both ways on such matters as marketplace food. The bottom line is that what some were interpreting as a strike against his genuineness was in reality fruit of his zeal for the gospel, a hallmark of apostolic authenticity.

(3) In v. 23 he says that he acts in this way, that he does all things for the sake of the gospel, (literally) "in order that I might be a fellow participant in it." In other words, he does this so that he might be a fellow participant [with the Lord] in the [cause of the] gospel, that he might share Christ's cause as his own, rather than have it be just an assignment that he carries out.

4. Exhortation to put great effort into Christian living (9:24-27)

[24]Do you not know that all those running in a stadium run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win [it]. [25]Everyone who competes in an athletic contest exercises self-control in all things. They, however, [do it] that they may receive a perishable crown, but we [to receive] an imperishable one. [26]I, therefore, run this way, not as [one] without a fixed goal; I box this way, not as one beating the air. [27]Rather, I bruise my body and enslave it, lest somehow, having preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

a. This is a transitional paragraph in which Paul moves from defending his apostleship against their criticism of his choices to exhorting them to put great effort into Christian living. He is turning the subject back to their insistence on eating cultic meals in the temples.

b. Being faithful to Christ requires discipline, self-denial, and self-control. Perhaps alluding to the Isthmian Games that were held in Corinth every other year, Paul says that if an athlete denies himself things he wants for the sake of a perishable crown, how much more should the Christian deny himself things he wants for the sake of an eternal one?

c. Christ calls us to deny ourselves, to live as he wants us to live, and if we reject that call for the sake of self-indulgence, we will be disqualified for the prize. That is why Paul is so serious about obeying. He lives a life of self-discipline and denial because he has his eye on the prize, the imperishable crown that follows a life of faith (see, 2 Tim. 4:6-8).

5. Baptism and participation in the Lord's Supper will not save them if they continue eating meals at the idol temples (10:1-5)

> **For I do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, [2]and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, [3]and all ate the same spiritual food, [4]and all drank the same spiritual drink; for they were drinking from a spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was the Christ. [5]Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, for they were struck down in the wilderness.**

a. Having exhorted the Corinthians to live a disciplined Christian life and warned them of the danger of self-indulgence, Paul wants to remove any notion that their baptism and participation in the Lord's Supper makes them immune or invulnerable to disqualification. Those sacraments will not save them if they continue attending the meals at the idol temples.

b. He does not want them to be ignorant of the fact that all the Israelites who came out of Egypt participated in a type of baptism and shared in a type of Lord's Supper, yet *most* of them were struck down in the wilderness.

(1) Ancient Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage was finalized by their passing through the Red Sea, a passage that began with their going under God's guiding cloud as it moved from their front to their rear to separate them from the Egyptian army (Ex. 14:19-20). Paul characterizes this water passage of deliverance as a baptism into Moses, paralleling it to their baptism into Christ.

(2) After their "baptism," all of the ancient Israelites were sustained in the desert by the food (manna) and drink (water) that were supernaturally provided for them. They all shared in the same provision.

(a) Manna was a bread that God rained down from heaven. He provided it for the Israelites throughout their wilderness period (Exodus 16). The drink referred to is the water supplied from the rock at Meribah in Exodus 17 and the rock at Kadesh Barnea in Numbers 20.

(b) The manna and water from the rock were "spiritual" not in the sense they were immaterial – they clearly were physical – but in the sense they were miraculously or supernaturally provided, and they had a spiritual significance in that they served as a type or analogy of the Lord's Supper.

(c) Jews of Paul's day interpreted the texts in Exodus and Numbers to mean that the rock from which God supplied the Israelites with water traveled with them during the Exodus. God continued to supply them from the same rock.

(d) Paul explains that in a sense that was correct – they *were* accompanied throughout by a Rock – but the Rock that accompanied them was not the physical rock from which the water came but the pre-incarnate Christ who was the divine source or agent of that sustaining miracle. This identification was no doubt traceable to OT references to God as the Rock (Deut. 32:4, 15, 18, 30-31). So Paul is making a powerful claim of Christ's divinity by identifying him as the Rock.

(3) Despite these sacred privileges, which were similar in kind to those the Corinthians felt (or might be tempted to feel) made them invincible, God was not pleased with *most* of them, as evidenced by the fact they were killed in the wilderness.

6. Warning not to follow Israel's example (10:6-10)

[6]Now these things became our examples, so that we should not be people who lust after evil things, as they lusted. [7]Neither be idolaters as some of them [were], just as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and to drink, and they rose up to play." [8]Neither let us engage in sexual immorality, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. [9]Neither let us put Christ to the test, as some of them tested and were destroyed by the snakes. [10]Neither grumble, as some of them grumbled and were destroyed by the destroyer.

a. God's repeated striking down of "baptized communicants" of Israel serves to warn us that we should not be people who lust after evil things as they did. Paul's specific concern here is with their idolatry in attending the temple meals, as suggested by his examples of evil things.

b. Paul first urges them not to follow the Israelite example of idolatry and refers to the episode in Exodus 32 when they worshipped the golden calf.

(1) He cites Ex. 32:6b ("The people sat down to eat and to drink, and they rose up to play") rather than a text more specifically related to idolatry *per se* (e.g., 6a or 31c) because it involves the people *eating* in the presence of the calf, precisely his concern with the Corinthians attending their cultic meals.

(2) The phrase "they rose up to play" (NIV "to engage in pagan revelry") probably has sexual overtones (as in Gen. 26:8 and 39:17). It was so understood by the rabbis and by the early church. There was a connection between idol worship and sexual immorality (e.g., Num. 25:1-9), a connection that continued into the NT era (see, Rev. 2:14, 20).

c. The reference to sexual immorality leads into Paul's next example. They are not to engage in sexual immorality as some of the Israelites did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day!

(1) Paul probably raises this subject, not as an isolated word against sexual immorality, but because of the connection between sexual immorality and idol worship. Not only does the preceding text link idolatrous eating and sexual play, but Paul is most likely referring to the event in Num. 25:1-9 where sexual immorality is specifically joined with eating in the presence of Baal of Peor (vv. 1-3). (Paul apparently knew from revelation or from a reliable tradition [for which no other evidence has yet been found] that of the 24,000 who died as a result of this sin, 23,000 died *in a single day*. If he is referring to Exodus 32 instead of Numbers 25, he knew from revelation or from a reliable tradition that 23,000 died in a day from the plague in Ex. 32:35.)

(2) Rev. 2:14 and 2:20 connect eating idol sacrifices with sexual immorality, and 2:14 refers to the same event in Numbers 25.

d. The third example they are not to follow is the Israelites' "putting Christ to the test," which resulted in some of them being destroyed by snakes.

(1) This is a reference to Num. 21:4-7 where the Israelites complained against God and against Moses because they had to eat manna rather than more ordinary food (see, Num. 11:4-6). They detested the food God had made available to them. The Corinthians were doing the same kind of thing in complaining against Paul's prohibition against their eating idol food. What God made available, the universe of non-idol food, was not acceptable!

(2) Paul awareness of Christ's divinity is again on display when he describes the conduct of the ancient Israelites as "putting Christ to the test." This is the very thing that, according to 1 Cor. 10:22, the Corinthians were doing by insisting on their right to eat the temple meals.

e. The final example they are not to follow is the Israelites' grumbling or complaining, which resulted in some of them being destroyed by the destroyer.

(1) Paul is probably referring to Numbers 14 where the community, following the bad report about Canaan by all the spies except Joshua and Caleb, grumbled against Moses' leadership and spoke of returning to Egypt. Numbers 14:37 states that those responsible for the bad report were struck down by a plague, which Paul understands to have been carried out by the Destroyer of Ex. 12:23.

(2) The Corinthians were doing the same kind of thing in grumbling against Paul's (and ultimately against God's) prohibition of their attending the temple meals.

7. Those attending cultic meals with a sense of security must wake up to the danger (10:11-13)

> **[11]Now these things happened to those men as examples and were written down as a warning for us, on whom the ends of the ages have come. [12]So then, let the one who thinks he is standing firm watch out lest he fall. [13]No testing has overtaken you except what is common to humanity. But God is faithful; he will not allow you to be tested beyond what you are able [to bear], but with the testing, he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure.**

a. Paul reiterates that the OT episodes to which he has referred serve as negative examples for them and were written down as a warning for us, for those in the time following Christ's incarnation.

b. That being so, those who think they are standing firm, i.e., those who attend the cultic meals with a sense of security, must become aware of the danger they are in, or they too will fall.

c. Paul tells them that their testing, the social pressures they faced to participate in the idol feasts, was not uniquely severe but was the kind of thing faced by people generally. And he then reassures them that God will not allow such tests to be something for which there is no way out except to sin. He will enable them to endure the testing by providing a way out that does not involve surrendering to sin. The real danger they face is not from whatever testing may come upon them from the outside but from their *choosing inwardly* to test Christ via idolatry (see, 10:22), from their voluntarily seeking out what is contrary to his will. There is no escape from what wants, what one actively seeks.

8. They must stop attending the temple meals (10:14-22)

[14]Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. [15]I speak as to wise men: judge for yourselves what I say. [16]The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a sharing of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a sharing of the body of Christ? [17]Because there is one bread, we, the many, are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. [18]Consider Israel according to the flesh: Are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers of the altar? [19]What, then, am I saying? That things sacrificed to idols are anything or that an idol is anything? [20]To the contrary, [I am saying] that the things which they sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to a god. And I do not want you to be sharers of demons. [21]You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. [22]Or should we try to provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

a. The conclusion (v. 14) is that they must flee from idolatry. They cannot continue to pursue it, to attend the temple meals, and expect to avoid God's judgment. Their baptism and participation in the Lord's Supper will not protect them.

b. Paul uses their knowledge of the nature of the Lord's Supper and OT sacred meals to show how sensible his prohibition is. They already understood that eating and drinking in specific contexts could be an act of religious devotion or affiliation

(1) Those who eat the Lord's Supper are sharers or participants in the divinely ordained symbols of the blood and body of Christ, meaning they are offering to God the remembrance that Christ commanded. And in that Supper, the participants "affirm that they together make up the 'body of Christ.'"[84] The implication is that as the one body of Christ, they cannot "become partners in similar associations that honor demons."[85]

(2) Paul adds a further analogy of the sacred meals in Israel (e.g., Deut. 14:22-26), probably because the Lord's Supper did not involve eating food that had first been offered in sacrifice (as did the temple meals). Those who shared in the meal following the sacrifice were in that act sharing together in the sacrificial worship of Yahweh. The implication is that eating the cultic meals in pagan temples is also a sharing in the worship of the idol.

c. In vv. 19-20 Paul clarifies his argument to make clear that he is not implying that the idols to whom sacrifices are offered in the pagan temples are actually gods. He and the Corinthians are in complete agreement that there is only one God. Rather, his point is that, though idols are not gods, they do represent demonic powers. Paul does not want them to be sharers in sacrificial offerings to demons.

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[84] Fee (2014), 518.
[85] Fee (2014), 518.

d. In v. 21 Paul both warns and prohibits them: "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons."

e. In v. 22 he asks, "Or should we try to provoke the Lord to jealousy?" By joining in the idol feasts – by drinking the cup of demons, by partaking of the table of demons – they would be trying to provoke the Lord to jealousy because participating in the idol feasts was an act of idolatry. It was worshiping a demon rather than the Lord; it was giving to a demon what rightly belonged to the Lord. They will not win that battle because they certainly are not stronger than God!

9. Sacrificed meat that is later sold for home consumption (10:23-11:1)

[23]"All things are lawful," but not all things are beneficial. "All things are lawful," but not all things build up. [24]Let no one seek his own [good] but the [good] of the other. [25]Eat everything sold in the meat market, questioning nothing on account of conscience, [26]for "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness of it." [27]If one of the unbelievers invites you, and you want to go, eat everything that is set before you, questioning nothing on account of conscience. [28]But if anyone says to you, "This is meat offered in sacrifice," do not eat, on account of that person who pointed [it] out and on account of conscience - [29]I mean not one's own conscience but the [conscience] of the other. For why is my freedom being judged by the conscience of another? [30]If I partake with gratitude, why am I reviled because of that for which I give thanks?

[31]Therefore, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all things to the glory of God. [32]Be not a stumbling-block to Jews, to Greeks, or to the church of God, [33]even as I also try to please all men in all things, not seeking my own advantage but the [advantage] of many, so that they may be saved. 11 Be imitators of me, as I also [am] of Christ.

a. Having finished his discussion of eating the temple meals with a strong reiteration of his prohibition, Paul now addresses the subject of sacrificed meat that is later sold in the marketplace for home consumption. Paul spoke about this in more general terms in 9:19-23 in the context of defending himself against the charge of hypocrisy for abstaining from eating such meat when with Jews but gobbling it down when with Gentiles.

b. He returns to the subject here in more detail, not simply to explain his own conduct but to provide guidance for the behavior of others. He spells out the Christian's freedom and responsibility regarding sacrificed meat in a non-temple setting and, in the process, provides further explanation for his own actions.

c. The rule in such cases is indeed freedom, just as their quoted slogan indicated, but Paul reminds them that this freedom is not absolute; it must be qualified by concern for the welfare of others. The principle of freedom is clearly declared in vv. 25-27.

(1) The Christian is free to eat everything sold in the meat market. Before buying it, he is not to investigate the meat's history for possible religious contamination because, as suggested by Ps. 24:1, God is the ultimate source of all food, even food that was previously offered in sacrifice. The implication is that nothing that is done to food makes the food itself taboo (as opposed to the context of the eating).

(2) Likewise, the Christian who accepts an unbeliever's invitation to dinner is free to eat whatever is served without conducting any kind of investigation into the food's origin. All food is acceptable for eating, regardless of what someone may have done to it along the way. So food *per se* is not to be a matter of Christian conscience.

d. *But* if someone attending the dinner at the unbeliever's house informs the Christian that the meat was offered in sacrifice, then the qualification of freedom comes into play; in that case, the Christian is to abstain.

(1) It is probable that Paul's hypothetical informant is himself an unbelieving fellow guest.

(a) It is unlikely that a Christian who objected to eating sacrificed meat would accept an invitation to a pagan dinner, but more importantly, Paul has the informant describing the meat to the Christian in pagan terminology ("offered in sacrifice") rather than in Jewish-Christian terminology ("sacrificed to idols").

(b) Verses 32-33 suggest that the emphasis here, as in 9:19-23, is on not hindering an unbeliever's path to salvation.

(c) The unbeliever may be trying to help the Christian out in the mistaken belief that Christians had the same view of sacrificed meat as Jews. In other words, the unbeliever would tip him off to prevent his Christian fellow guest from unwittingly violating the dietary scruples that the unbeliever mistakenly ascribed to him. If, for example, you thought a fellow dinner guest was religiously opposed to consuming alcohol in any form, you might warn him that the punch was spiked.

(2) Paul says that in such a situation, the Christian is to abstain on account of the informant and conscience, and then he immediately clarifies that he means the conscience of the informant, not the Christian.

(a) He adds the clarification because he does not want someone to conclude that the actual knowledge imparted by the informant changes what he has twice said about food not being a matter of Christian conscience. He wants it clear that

the Christian is to abstain as a matter of freedom, as an *entitlement* he is giving up, not as a matter of conscience, not because he believes that eating such meat is inherently wrong.

(b) The Christian is to abstain for the good of the informant who will potentially be harmed by the Christian eating something which the informant, for whatever reason, thinks he should not be eating ("conscience" in the broad sense of moral consciousness or moral expectations, a sense of ought). This dissonance between the informant's expectations and the Christian's practice may negatively taint the informant's view of Christianity. Given that eating sacrificed food is completely optional for the Christian, the risk of such alienation is totally unnecessary.

(c) It is similar to Paul's decision in Acts 16:1-2 to circumcise Timothy so as not to create an unnecessary obstacle to his evangelism among the Jews (see, 1 Cor. 7:19). If, on the other hand, some had been insisting that abstaining from sacrificed meat was necessary for salvation, then I suspect that the welfare of others would demand that the Christian stand for the truth of freedom by eating the food, just as when Paul refused to circumcise Titus when some insisted that circumcision was necessary for salvation (Gal 2:1-5).

e. Having made the point that abstaining in such situations is not a matter of the *Christian's* conscience, Paul in vv. 29b-30 turns the discussion to his own situation with the rhetorical question, "For why is my freedom being judged by the conscience of another?"

(1) The understood answer is that it should not be, but that is precisely what they were doing in holding him to the limits of the person's conscience to whom he had deferred. He abstained at some pagan dinners purely as an accommodation for the good of another person, a concept they could not seem to grasp, not because he had any moral qualms about eating such food. His abstaining was not an expression of his own conscience on the matter.

(2) That being so, there was no justification for their charge of hypocrisy, their reviling of him, for his eating sacrificed meat on other occasions. When properly understood, his actions were perfectly consistent. He always believed it was permissible to eat the meat; he simply decided that on occasions it was not expedient to do so. As he asks in v. 30, "If I partake with gratitude (i.e., with a conviction that it has been provided by God for his eating), why am I reviled because of that for which I give thanks?"

f. The conclusion in 10:31-11:1 is that whatever optional conduct in which a Christian might engage, whether eating, drinking, or anything else, it must be done to the glory of God, meaning in a way that brings him glory, honor, and praise. An important aspect of this is to avoid being a "stumbling block" to Jews, Greeks or the church of God. A Christian is not to use his freedom in such a way that it hinders someone else from hearing the gospel or alienates someone who is already a brother or sister. As with Paul, our concern for the salvation of others is to control our exercise of freedom. In that, we are to imitate him as he imitates Christ!

V. Conduct in the Assembly (11:2 – 14:40)

A. Maintaining cultural sexual distinctions in attire (11:2-16)

Preliminary remarks

Some who are confused or eager to accuse the church of hypocrisy insist that God in these verses commands all Christian women to wear a head covering in church and that we simply ignore the command because we do not like it; we find it inconvenient or culturally unacceptable. If that were true, it would be a serious indictment because no one has the right to override God's commands.

I have had people tell me that not requiring female head coverings in the worship assembly is an *arbitrary rule in churches of Christ*, meaning it is something we arrived at by *arbitrarily* or *unjustifiably* ignoring the alleged command to wear the covering. Someone asked me in an email years ago: "Why is the Church of Christ so strict about some doctrine but *ignores* 1 Corinthians 11 where it talks about women using head coverings in church?" My response to that person, which provides a preview of my understanding, was:

> I cannot speak for others, but I do not ignore what Paul says in 1 Cor. 11:2-16 about women covering their heads when praying in church. Rather, in a nutshell, Paul prohibited women from praying uncovered in the assembly because in the Mediterranean world of the first century the covering was a cultural symbol of gender distinction such that a woman who discarded it to pray publicly would be praying dressed like a man. It would be something like a man in western culture praying in a dress. Since head coverings do not have that significance in modern western societies, the prohibition based on that cultural significance no longer applies. That is not ignoring the command; it is understanding and applying the command properly.
>
> And I might add . . . that virtually all Christian groups (Catholics, Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, etc.) recognize the inapplicability of Paul's instruction about head coverings to modern western society. So it is not a "Church of Christ" thing.

I wrestled a lot with how best to teach this section. It is difficult to understand, and there is much debate about it. I decided to walk through the verses in order and to detour as needed to address the various issues that arise.

It may be helpful to state up front that, with the overwhelming majority of commentators,[86] including such notable figures of the American Restoration Movement as J. W. McGarvey, David Lipscomb, J. W. Roberts, C. R. Nichol, and Guy Woods,[87] I am convinced that at least some of the female speech Paul is addressing in 11:2-16 took place in the worship assembly. This is suggested by multiple lines of evidence, which will be discussed further in due course.

- 11:17-34 deals with an assembly in which the Lord's Supper is shared, so that clearly is a reference to the gathering of the church for worship on the Lord's Day. The repeated use in 11:2 and 11:17 of the identical form of a verb rarely used by Paul ("Now I praise you"; "But in giving this instruction, I do not praise you") is a rhetorical tie, which suggests some kind of continuity between the sections.[88] A common forum in which the different conduct took place would qualify.

- The phrase "on account of the angels" in 11:10 is best understood as a reference to angelic oversight of the worship assembly of the people of God.[89] There is Jewish precedent for the notion of angels being present at the community gatherings,[90] and this perspective was reflected in the early church.[91]

- When regulating conduct in a worship assembly, Paul in 14:33b appeals to the universal practice of "the churches." So we know there was a universal, churchwide norm regarding the worship assembly and that Paul would appeal to that norm to compel certain conduct. We do not know of a churchwide norm

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[86] Commentators recognizing that 1 Cor. 11:2-16 addresses conduct in a worship assembly include H. L. Goudge (1909), Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer (1914), C. K. Barrett (1968), F. F. Bruce (1971), Hans Conzelmann (1975), William Orr and James Walther (1976), W. Harold Mare (1976), Jerome Murphy-O'Connor (1979), Nigel Watson (1992), Simon Kistemaker (1993), Craig Blomberg (1994), Richard Oster (1995), Ben Witherington III (1995), Richard Hays (1997), Richard Horsley (1998), Marion Soards (1999), Anthony Thiselton (2000), J. Paul Sampley (2002), Stephen Barton (2003), David Garland (2003), Alan Johnson (2004), Craig Keener (2005), Joseph Fitzmyer (2008), Verlyn Verbrugge (2008), Roy Ciampa and Brian Rosner (2010), Pheme Perkins (2012), Gordon Fee (2014), Mark Taylor (2014), Thomas Schreiner (2018), and Paul Gardner (2018).

[87] Gary T. Burke, *God's Women Revisited* (Eugene, OR: Luminare Press, 2019), 16, 22, 222 (fn. 5).

[88] Paul uses *epaineō* only four times in his writings, one of which (Rom. 15:11) is a citation of Ps. 117:1 from LXX. The three uses that are not determined by a cited text are all in 1 Corinthians 11 (vv. 2, 17, 22), and they are identical in form (*epainō*).

[89] Thomas Schreiner states in *1 Corinthians*, TNTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), "The best solution is probably that the angels are good angels who assist in worship and desire to see the order of creation maintained."

[90] Joseph Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, Anchor Bible (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 418-419.

[91] Larry Hurtado writes in *At the Origins of Christian Worship: The Context and Character of Earliest Christian Devotion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 50-51:

> [Christians] experienced their assemblies as not merely human events but as having a transcendent dimension. They sensed God as directly and really present in their meetings through his Spirit. . . . In 1 Corinthians 11:10, the curious passing reference to the angels present in the worship assembly shows how familiar the idea was. Paul's Corinthian readers apparently needed no further explanation (though we could wish for one!). As the 'holy ones' (saints) of God, believers saw their worship gatherings as attended by heavenly 'holy ones', angels, whose presence signified the heavenly significance of their humble house-church assemblies.

regarding practices in public forums other than a worship assembly. Therefore, the fact Paul in 11:16 appeals to the universal practice of "the churches" suggests he is doing so with regard to a worship assembly, as he does three chapters later in 14:33b.

- The fact Paul does not refer to their "coming together" in 11:2-16 but does so repeatedly in 11:17-34 does not mean that the problem of women praying uncovered (11:13) was occurring somewhere other than a worship assembly. The problem for which he rebukes them in 11:17-34 was their maintenance of social divisions *as manifested in the Lord's Supper*. The Lord's Supper (and love feast) was shared only in the congregational assembly, but since Christian women prayed publicly both in and out of the assembly (and prophesied outside the assembly), I suspect Paul did not say "when you come together" in 11:2-16 because he did not want to give the impression that his instruction about head coverings applied only when speaking in the congregational assembly. Being an issue of cultural gender propriety, it also applied to speaking in public (praying and prophesying) outside the assembly.

- That women prayed vocally in Christian assemblies is suggested in Acts 1:13-15, 4:23-24, and 12:12-13, and I think Paul in Eph. 6:18a and 1 Tim. 2:9 assumed women would be praying in worship assemblies.[92] This is also indicated by church history.[93] In that light, there is no reason to assume that the women in 11:2-16 were praying somewhere other than a worship assembly.

- It is agreed by virtually everyone that women are included in the obligation to sing to the Lord in congregational assemblies (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), which is

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[92] In my judgment, 1 Tim. 2:9 is better understood as: "Likewise [I want] women [to pray] in appropriate attire, to adorn themselves with modesty and decency."

[93] Women did not prophesy or teach in the assembly of the mainstream post-apostolic church. Everett Ferguson states in *Women in the Church: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, 2nd ed. (Abilene, TX: Desert Willow Publishing, 2015), Kindle 964, "Women were not appointed as elders, nor did they take public speaking roles in the assembly *as prophets, teachers, or leaders* in the assembly. Where women did take these roles in heretical and schismatic groups, the practice was a basis for objection to these groups." Regarding prayer, however, Justin Martyr says of a worship assembly in the mid-second century (*First Apology*, 67):

> And on the day called *Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place*, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then *we all rise together and pray*, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, *saying Amen*; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons.

The *Apostolic Constitutions* (Book III, Ch. VI), a collection of earlier materials on church order that was compiled in the fourth century, states, "We do not permit 'our women to *teach in the church*,' but only *to pray* and hear those that teach."

confirmed by church history.[94] Since praying to God is analogous to singing to him, there is no theological reason to insist that women did not pray vocally in congregational assemblies, especially if they prayed with the congregation, as I think is indicated in Acts 4:23-24. That fits with the general understanding that the congregational "Amen" was spoken by all (1 Cor. 14:16; 2 Cor. 1:20).

1. Given continuing relevance of sexual distinctions for those in Christ, it is inappropriate to reject cultural sex distinctions in attire when speaking publicly to or on behalf of God (11:2-6)

> **[2]Now I praise you because you have remembered me in all things and hold fast the traditions, just as I delivered [them] to you. [3]And I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God. [4]Every man who prays or prophesies having [the covering] upon the head disgraces his head, [5]and every woman who prays or prophesies uncovered as to the head disgraces her head, for she is one and the same thing with the woman who has been shaved. [6]For if a woman does not cover herself, let her also have her hair cut short; and if it is shameful for a woman to have her hair cut short or to be shaved, let her cover herself.**

a. 11:2 – **Now I praise you because you have remembered me in all things and hold fast the traditions, just as I delivered [them] to you.**

(1) Paul begins by praising them because they had remembered him in all things and were holding fast to the traditions, just as he had delivered them. So it seems the leaders had held the line against some pressure to deviate from the traditions Paul had passed on to them, and Paul praises them for their faithfulness in that regard.

(2) His statement that they remembered him "in all things" and were holding fast "the traditions" did not mean they were holding fast to *all* the traditions. This is clear from the fact that in 11:17, 22 he says he does *not* praise them regarding their conduct of the Lord's Supper. His praise is for how, in addressing the issue that had arisen regarding head coverings, they had resisted a practice that was contrary to or inconsistent with what he previously had told them. They had gotten it right.

(3) The Greek noun translated "tradition" refers to teaching that had been handed over or passed on from one person to another. It could be a mere human teaching, a "tradition *of men*," as it is expressly labeled in Mk. 7:8 and Col. 2:8, but it also could be a teaching *of God*. Thus, Paul tells the Thessalonians in 2 Thess. 2:15

[94] Everett Ferguson states in *Women in the Church* (Chickasha, OK: Yeoman Press, 2003), 52-53: "Several early writers mention that 'all' sang," and then to remove any doubt that women were included, he mentions several passages in which women are expressly identified.

to "stand firm and hold fast to the traditions which you were taught, whether by our word or by our letter," referring to the divine truths that he and the missionaries had passed on to them. He commands them in 2 Thess. 3:6 "to keep away from every brother walking in idleness and not according to the tradition which they received from us." There is a connotation that the teaching has some age to it, that it is not something entirely new, which enhances its credibility.

b. 11:3 – **And I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God.**

(1) After praising the leaders for resisting a practice involving head coverings that was contrary to or inconsistent with teaching he had previously given them, Paul proceeds to flesh out that teaching to help fortify their position against the current challenge.

(2) Though some argue that "man" should here be rendered "husband" and "woman" should be rendered "wife," I am in broad scholarly company in rejecting that claim. Thiselton notes, "A few commentators defend *husband*, but the overwhelming majority of writers convincingly argue that the issue concerns gender relations as a whole, not simply those within the more restricted family circle."[95] This is why the vast majority of English translations render the words "man" and "woman" (KJV, ERV, ASV, NAS, NJB, NEB, NKJV, REB, ISV, NASU, HCSB, NIV, NET, CSB, LSB).

(3) Paul begins by denying the notion that sex or gender, maleness and femaleness, is completely irrelevant in the church. Perhaps some had begun thinking that in the church, the community of the kingdom that Christ inaugurated, being male or female was no longer a classification of significance, that the arrival of the new age in Christ removed distinctions attached to those classifications.

(a) Things Paul taught could be misunderstood in that direction, most famously his statement in Gal. 3:28 – *[28]There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; there is neither male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

(b) The Lord's teaching, recorded in Mat. 22:30, that in the eternal state, the time of resurrection existence, people "neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven," could lead some to overly downplay sex distinctions in the present age, the time of the inaugurated kingdom.

(4) Paul denies the notion that gender is completely irrelevant in the church by pointing out there is a difference between the sexes regarding leadership. Whereas every man is under the headship of Christ, man is not under the headship of woman. Rather, it is woman who is under the headship of the man. And Christ himself is under the headship of God the Father. The fact the man has a distinctive

[95] Thiselton (2000), 822.

leadership role in relation to the woman means that gender continues to matter; its significance has not been obliterated.

(a) When I apply to the word "head" the metaphorical meaning of "headship," I am indicating that the word "head" in this context carries a notion of authority, that it includes a right and responsibility of leadership. In our modern era, that claim has become controversial, but I think it is correct.

[1] Paul Gardner observes, "The meaning of the word 'head' has traditionally been understood to involve a certain degree of authority or hierarchy when it is used metaphorically in v. 3 (it is used literally in v. 4). All lexicons support this metaphorical understanding of the word."[96] That is the understanding that best fits the context. As Ciampa and Rosner state with reference to 1 Cor. 11:3, "In this context the word ["head"] almost certainly refers to one with authority over the other."[97]

[2] Kevin DeYoung notes, "we have other examples in Paul's writings where *kephale* must mean something like 'authority over.'" He continues:

> In Ephesians 1, Paul says that Christ has been seated at God's right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and all things have been placed under his feet, and he has been made head (*kephale*) over all things for the church (1:20-22). The context demands that *kephale* refer to Christ's authority over the church, not merely that the church had its origin in Christ. Likewise, in Ephesians 5 Paul says wives are to submit to their husbands, for the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church (5:22-23). Citing the headship of the husband as a reason for the wife's submission makes little sense if headship implies only source or origin without any reference to male leadership. *Kephale*, in at least these two instances in Ephesians, must mean "authority over." And there are no grammatical or contextual reasons to think Paul is using *kephale* in a different way in 1 Corinthians 11.[98]

[3] Though it is often asserted that *kephalē* in 11:3 means "origin" or "source" with no connotation of authority, Moisés Silva states, "The view that κεφαλή here means 'source/origin' rather than 'chief/ruler' is not supported by the lexicographical evidence" (citations omitted).[99]

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[96] Paul Gardner, *1 Corinthians*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 480.
[97] Ciampa and Rosner (2010), 509. Witherington (1995), 237-238, similarly remarks that "since the context has to do with authority, authorization, and order in worship, it would seem more probable that *kephalē* has the metaphorical sense demonstrated by Fitzmyer" (i.e., that of leader).
[98] Kevin DeYoung, *Men and Women in the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 51.
[99] Moisés Silva, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 2:672. Those interested in the details should consult Wayne Grudem, Does *Kephale* ('Head') Mean 'Source' Or 'Authority Over' in Greek Literature? A Survey of 2,336 Examples," *Trinity Journal* 6.1 (Spring 1985): 38-59; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "Another Look at *Kephalē* in

[4] Paul expresses the leadership role as being "head" because it plays into the specific issue he is addressing, which involves covering the physical head.

(b) This "headship" or leadership responsibility was put on men by God in the beginning. This is indicated in a number of ways.

[1] The first indication is the fact God created the man first (Gen. 2:20-21). In 1 Tim. 2:11-12, Paul restricts women leading in the church, teaching or having authority over men, and then in 2:13 he grounds that restriction on the fact Adam was formed first, then Eve. He does not explain *how* Adam's being created first supports the restriction, but the notion of the "firstborn" being the leader required no explanation in the first century.[100] The leadership right of the firstborn is all over the OT and was taken for granted.[101] Jacob Neusner states, "The laws of primogeniture mandate for firstborn sons a special blessing and a double portion of inheritance (Deut. 21:15-17; see also, Gen. 25:29-34), regardless of the father's greater affection for another wife and/or her children. The firstborn also receives authority over other family members (Gen. 27)."[102] So by creating the man first, God was signaling his intention to put the leadership responsibility on the man.

[2] That God placed the leadership responsibility on the man is also indicated by the fact the woman is described in Gen. 2:18, 20 as a helper fit or suitable for Adam. It is true that "helper" often is used of God, but the word itself says nothing about the kind of helper intended. John Piper and Wayne Grudem explain:

> The context must decide whether Eve is to "help" as a strong person who aids a weaker one, or as one who assists a loving leader. The context makes it very unlikely that "helper" should be read on the analogy of God's help, because in Genesis 2:19-20 Adam is caused to seek his "helper" first among the animals. But the animals will not do, because they are not "fit for him." So God makes woman "from man." Now there is a being who is "fit for him," sharing his human nature, equal to him in God-like personhood. She is infinitely different from an animal, and God highlights her value to man by

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1 Corinthians 11:3," *New Testament Studies* 35 (1989), 503-511; Wayne Grudem, "The Meaning of *Kephale* ('Head'): A Response to Recent Studies," *Trinity Journal* 11 NS (1990), 3-72; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "*Kephalē* in 1 Corinthians 11:3," *Interpretation* 47.1 (Jan. 1993): 52-59; Wayne Grudem, "The Meaning Of *Kephale* ('Head'): An Evaluation of New Evidence, Real and Alleged," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44:1 (March 2001): 25-65; Fitzmyer (2008), 409-411; Wayne Grudem, "Personal Reflections on the History of CBMW and the State of the Gender Debate," *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 14:1 (Spring 2009), 12-13.

[100] As Jerome D. Quinn and William C. Wacker observe about v. 13 in *The First and Second Letters of Timothy*, ECC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 227, "it is notable that its argument is not expanded upon but, for all its brevity, is taken for granted as familiar and immediately intelligible."

[101] Gen. 25:29-33, 27:1-40, 43:33; Deut. 21:15-17; 1 Chron. 5:1. See, James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 207-209.

[102] Jacob Neusner, *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 228.

> showing how no animal can fill her role. Yet in passing through "helpful" animals to woman, God teaches us that the woman is a man's "helper" in the sense of a loyal and suitable assistant in the life of the garden.[103]

[3] Other indications of male leadership include the fact the instructions about not eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil were given to the man (Gen. 2:16-17), the man named the woman (Gen. 2:23), and the serpent subverted male leadership by approaching Eve (Gen. 3:1-6). This all fits with Paul's statement in 1 Cor. 14:34 that the women in Christian assemblies are obligated to be in submission "as even the law says." The Spirit declares through Paul that "the law" says men have been given leadership responsibility.

(c) The fact men are to lead and women are to be helping partners in the joint enterprise of glorifying God does not mean women are inferior in character, intellect, value, or capability. It means only that God in his sovereignty and for his purpose chose to place the responsibility of leadership on men.

[1] As God made clear in Korah's rebellion (Numbers 16), he has the right to choose select groups for specific roles. He has a right to limit roles to people based on the group into which they were born. He is not obligated to grant everyone equal access to roles based on their ability. One may just as well challenge his right to give the tribe of Levi the exclusive responsibility to care for the Tabernacle (Num. 1:50-51; 1 Chron. 6:47, 23:26) or to give the family of Aaron the exclusive responsibility of serving as priests (Ex. 28:1, 29:4-9).

[2] That a submissive or nonleading role does not mean an inferior status is evident in the case of Jesus.

[a] He is God; he is one in nature, being, and essence with God the Father. So the Son is not inferior to or less worthy than the Father, yet he is functionally subordinate to the Father; he willingly submits to the Father's authority. This is made explicit in 1 Cor. 11:3 and is demonstrated in many ways in the NT. The difference between the Father and the Son is one of role or function. The Son freely embraces the leadership of the Father.

[b] If Jesus, being in very nature God, can submit to the Father's authority, then certainly women can submit to the leadership of men without denying their equal dignity or value. In doing so, they are acting like Christ. Thomas Schreiner states:

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[103] John Piper and Wayne Grudem, "Clarity, Charity, and Hope: The Controversy and the Cause of Christ" in John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Womanhood & Manhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 408-409. Paul makes clear in 1 Cor. 11:9 that this is the second element of the woman's nonreciprocal glorification of man. Not only was she created *from him*, but she also was created *on account of him*.

> A difference in role or function in no way implies that women are inferior to men. Even the Son submits to the Father (1 Cor. 15:28), and yet he is equal to the Father in essence, dignity, and personhood. It is a modern, democratic, Western notion that diverse functions suggest distinctions in worth between men and women. Paul believed that men and women were equal in personhood, dignity, and value but also taught that women had distinct roles from men.[104]

(d) I think it is helpful and humbling for us men to understand that our leadership responsibility is not an indication of superior ability but a role assigned by God in his sovereignty. Just as one should not conclude from the fact the Levites were given the exclusive responsibility of carrying items of the tabernacle (Num. 1:48-51, 4:15, 24-33) that they must be the best furniture luggers, so husbands, for example, should not conclude from the fact we are given the leadership responsibility in the home that we must be the most capable at that task. The election to those responsibilities is not merit based but tribe based (in the case of the Levites) and sex based (in the case of husbands). If we as husbands do not understand that fact, we can get puffed up, and as a result make poorer decisions as a leader because we neglect the wisdom and insights of our wife.

(e) It does not follow from the fact male leadership is rooted in creation that women are barred from having authority over men in *all* spheres, including business, education, and politics.

[1] Scripture indicates the contrary; God does not prohibit women from exercising authority over men in all spheres. The fact Deborah was a judge to whom people came to "have their disputes settled/decided" (NET, NIV; also, CSB) (Judg. 4:5) means she had some civil or administrative authority within Jewish society.

[2] The issue is not whether God *always* forbids women from exercising authority over men in *every* context but whether God desires that his choice regarding male leadership that was expressed in and from creation be acknowledged and honored in the church and home in the manner he has indicated. He is free to define how he wants the difference between the sexes to be manifested in the world, in the church, and in our assemblies, so one must be sensitive to differing situations and circumstances.

(f) In saying Christ is the head *of man*, I think Paul means Christ is the head of man in a distinctive sense, a sense in which he is not the head of woman. Specifically, because God in the beginning placed a leadership responsibility on the man in relation to the woman, Christ's headship over the woman is in some ways and to some extent expressed through the headship of the man, whereas Christ's headship over the man is not expressed through a headship of the woman. Similarly, God the

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[104] Thomas R. Schreiner, "An Interpretation of 1 Tim. 2:9-15" in Andreas Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner, eds., *Women in the Church*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 201-202.

Father is the head of Christ in a distinctive sense, a sense in which he is not the head of man. The Father's headship of man is expressed through the headship of his perfect Son, the Christ. Remember Paul is framing the leadership right in terms of "head" to play into the specific issue he is addressing, which involves covering the physical head. Ciampa and Rosner state:

> If some Corinthians were arguing that Christ, as head of the church, was head over men and women in the same way (since in the new creation there is no longer any "male and female") Paul seems to be affirming that the creation pattern is still significant and cannot be shrugged off. While there is tension between creation and new creation (esp. *fallen* creation and new creation), creation is the context in which Christians live out their lives and it cannot be passed off as irrelevant.[105]

c. 11:4-6 – **[4]Every man who prays or prophesies having [the covering] upon the head disgraces his head, [5]and every woman who prays or prophesies uncovered as to the head disgraces her head, for she is one and the same thing with the woman who has been shaved. [6]For if a woman does not cover herself, let her also have her hair cut short; and if it is shameful for a woman to have her hair cut short or to be shaved, let her cover herself.**

(1) Paul and the Corinthians knew the "covering problem" that had arisen in the church and knew the traditions Paul previously had passed on to them (v. 2). The leaders had resisted deviating from those traditions in the face of the "covering problem" and are therefore commended. So in his remarks, a lot of underlying knowledge is taken for granted, which makes his meaning less clear to those reading the letter without benefit of that knowledge.

(2) In 11:4-5 Paul speaks of *men* praying or prophesying "having upon the head" and *women* praying or prophesying "uncovered as to the head." He does not specify the object that was or was not upon the head presumably because it was understood that he was referring to the covering that was the subject of the current controversy.

(3) Some take this to mean Paul was addressing two separate problems related to head covering, one involving men and the other involving women, but I am with those who think that is a misunderstanding. I am persuaded that only one problem was being addressed, which was women who were seeking to discard the culturally expected female head covering when praying in the assembly. That is expressly identified as the issue in 11:13 – *Judge among yourselves: Is it proper that a woman pray to God uncovered?* As part of his response to that issue, Paul gives a hypothetical of men wearing *that* covering, the female head covering, because all would agree that that would be a disgraceful thing for a man to do. From that, he wants them to recognize it is equally disgraceful for a woman to dress like a man by discarding the culturally expected female head covering. It is two sides of the same gender-bending

[105] Ciampa and Rosner (2010), 510.

coin, which is what makes it a matter of disgrace, but only one side of that coin was actually occurring in Corinth.

(4) Fee states, "Paul seems to be setting up his argument with the women by means of a hypothetical situation for the man that would be equally shameful to his relationship to his 'head' as what the women are doing is to theirs."[106] Just as it would be disgraceful for a Christian man to wear the female covering when speaking publicly to or on God's behalf, so it is disgraceful for a Christian woman to speak publicly to or on behalf of God attired as a man, i.e., without wearing the cultural mark of femaleness. Hays states, "[S]ome of the Corinthians had enthusiastically embraced the early Christian tradition that in Christ there is no male and female, and they were seeking to transcend their sexuality. In keeping with this tendency, the Corinthian women who were removing their head covering . . . in worship were consciously discarding a traditional marker of gender distinction."[107]

(5) That the actual problem being addressed was *women praying uncovered* is indicated by the fact Paul in vv. 5-10 disproportionately focuses on the reasons why women are to be covered and the fact he commands the woman at the end of v. 6 to cover her head, whereas no similar imperative is issued to men. And most importantly, as already noted, when he specifies in 11:13 the issue he is addressing, he declares, "Judge among yourselves: Is it proper that *a woman* pray to God uncovered?"

(6) Joseph Fitzmyer states: "The problem is not that Corinthian men were praying or prophesying with covered heads, even though Paul's rhetorical comparison leads him to formulate it so in order to make his point by contrast. It is important not to confuse rhetoric with the substance of the argument."[108] He cites many modern commentators who agree with this assessment: Bruce, Conzelmann, Delobel, Garland, Grosheide, Kremer, Lietzmann, D. B. Martin, Perriman, Robertson-Plummer, Schrage, Senft, J. Weiss. To this list one could add Hurley,[109] Benjamin Edsall,[110] Fee,[111] and William Loader.[112]

(7) There is good reason to believe that Greek, Roman, and Jewish women in the first century were expected to wear some kind of covering on their heads when they were in public, which would include Christian assemblies. Even where Christians met in homes, which was "not as extensive and exclusive as is usually thought," there being many non-house settings in which they plausibly could have met,[113] as Elif Karaman has observed, "even though one's house is a private domain, during

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[106] Fee (2014), 557.
[107] Hays (1997), 183-184.
[108] Fitzmyer (2008), 405.
[109] Hurley (1981), 170.
[110] Benjamin A. Edsall, "Greco-Roman Costume and Paul's Fraught Argument in 1 Corinthians 11.2-16," *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism* 9 (2013), 138.
[111] Fee (2014), 557.
[112] Loader (2012), 371-372.
[113] Edward Adams, *The Earliest Christian Meeting Places: Almost Exclusively Houses?* rev. ed. (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016).

Christian gatherings this private domain would be transformed into a public or semi-public space. Choosing whether or not to cover your head at a church gathering, therefore, involved a consideration of how you would be perceived *publicly*."[114]

(8) Because those coverings were a culturally expected piece of female attire, they functioned in the ancient Mediterranean world as a traditional marker of femaleness, a marker of gender distinction.

(a) In 1986 New Testament scholar David Lowery wrote: "It cannot be unequivocally asserted, but the preponderance of evidence points toward the public head covering of women as a universal custom in the first century in both Jewish culture and Greco-Roman culture. The nature of the covering varied considerably, but it was commonly a portion of the outer garment (ἱμάτιον) drawn up over the head like a hood."[115] Though many dispute Lowery's assessment, a significant amount of subsequent scholarship supports it, some of which I provide in the paper on my website (www.theoutlet.us) titled "Expectations Regarding Female Head Covering in Greek, Roman, and Jewish Cultures of the First Century."

(b) The image on the left is a figurine from about 300 BC of a Greek woman wearing a *himation*. The image on the right is a statue dated to around AD 25 that shows a Roman woman wearing a *pallium*, which in prior centuries was referred to as a *palla*. Women in ancient Greece had more than one option for covering their heads. They could drape the *himation* over their head or wear a separate piece of material, like a large scarf, loosely over the head. There likewise were options other than the *pallium* that Roman women could use for covering their heads, most notably a scarf known as a *palliolum* (see the paper mentioned above).

Woman in Blue, Tanagra terracotta figurine, c. 300 BC, via Musée du Louvre, Paris

[114] Elif Hilal Karaman, *Ephesian Women in Greco-Roman and Early Christian Perspective* (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 128.
[115] David K. Lowery, "The Head Covering and the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11:2-34," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143 (1986), 157.

(c) Because the covering was a standard item of female dress, to discard it in first-century Greco-Roman culture would be to dress contrary to one's sex, to dress like a man. The classicist Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones states in his book *Aphrodite's Tortoise*, which a fellow classicist (Kelly Olson) described as a "masterful study," "So whatever the make-up of the women of the Christian assembly at Korinth – Greek, Roman, or even Jewish – their uncovered heads would have broken with a number of social conventions and appeared as anathema to Paul."[116]

(9) That the issue with the covering was one of gender distinction is indicated in vv. 5b-6. Paul declares that every woman who prays or prophesies with an uncovered head disgraces her head *because* ("for") a woman without a head covering is just like a woman who has been shaved. Verse 6 emphasizes the closeness of the parallel. A woman with a shaved head or very short hair was shameful because in that culture she was wearing her hair like a man.

(a) A couple of passages in the writings of Lucian, a second-century Greek satirist, clearly show that short hair on a woman was considered mannish.[117]

(b) New Testament scholar James B. De Young comments, "The shame seems related to a woman's becoming like a man in her style of hair, becoming 'mannish.' This suggests that the women at Corinth were blurring distinctions between men and women, especially sexual distinctions."[118] (There is no contemporary evidence for the view that short hair or a shaved head was the mark of Corinthian prostitutes.)[119]

(c) Fee remarks, "[T]he shame [of a woman having her hair cut short or her head shaved] seems clearly related to her becoming like a man with regard to her hair, thus by analogy suggesting that the women were blurring male/female relationships in general and sexual distinctions in particular."[120] He says the force of the statement, "If a woman does not cover herself then let her also be shorn" is "let her go the whole way to shame by having her hair like a man's."[121]

(d) Nigel Watson comments:

> Paul now reinforces the rule just laid down for the behavior of women. If a woman prays or prophesies bareheaded, it is as bad as if her head were shaved, and that, it is implied by v. 6, is generally recognized as

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[116] Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones, *Aphrodite's Tortoise: The Veiled Woman of Ancient Greece* (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2003), 280 (n. 105).
[117] There also is evidence that a shaved head marked a woman as an adulteress (see, Garland, 520), but that seems less relevant than the gender angle.
[118] James B. De Young, *Women in Ministry* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010), 26.
[119] Fee (2014), 563.
[120] Fee (2014), 563-564.
[121] Fee (2014), 564.

> something shameful. But why should it be shameful? There are passages in the second-century writer Lucian, which show that short hair on a woman was considered mannish. That appears to be the point.[122]

(e) Jennifer Knust concludes, "Therefore, when Paul stated that men ought never to wear their hair long and women ought never to wear their hair short, the maintenance of gender difference was clearly a primary concern."[123]

(10) Her shame was not from the short hair itself but from the fact short hair was culturally defined as the hair of a man. In the same way, the shame of going uncovered was not from the attire itself but from the fact the lack of a cover was culturally defined as the attire of a man. Schreiner states:

> Paul objects to men wearing head coverings in verse 4 because such adornment would be disgraceful. Why? Because that is what women wore (11:5-6), and thus a man who wore such a head covering would be shamefully depicting himself as a woman. Conversely, if women do not wear head coverings, their failure to be adorned properly would be shameful (11:5) because they would be dressing like men. That the shame involved is due to appearing like a man is confirmed by Paul's explanation in 11:5b-6. A woman's failure to wear a head covering is analogous to her having her hair cut short or shaved. Every woman in the culture of that day would have been ashamed of appearing in public with her head shaved or her hair cut short, because then she would have looked like a man.[124]

(11) A man engaging in such crossdressing would bring shame on his head, Christ, because he would be presenting that perversion as one under Christ's authority, as though Christ approved it. Though men sometimes covered their heads, they did not do so with a female covering, a *himation* or *pallium* or female scarf. Despite similarities in basic design, male and female clothing was distinct.[125] As observed by Kelly Olson (emphasis supplied):

> Women's clothing was ideally bound up with notions of honour and ideals of relations between sexes, and then as now played an important part in the cultural construction of sexual categories: *gender-specific clothing and adornment formed the normal aesthetic codes for men and women*. Although male and female clothing at Rome was similar in basic design,

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[122] Nigel Watson, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, EC (London: Epworth Press, 1992), 112.
[123] Jennifer Wright Knust, "Paul and the Politics of Virtue and Vice" in Richard A. Horsley, ed., *Paul and the Imperial Roman Order* (New York: Trinity Press International, 2004), 169.
[124] Thomas Schreiner, "Head Coverings, Prophecies, and the Trinity – 1 Corinthians 11:2-16" in John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 130-131 (p. 122 in online version).
[125] It appears the women deviated from clothing gender norms only by removing the female head cover. Perhaps one or a few did so as a ready way of expressing the theological point and promptly were restrained pending Paul's response, so the impulse, though alive, was kept from metastasizing to other clothing gender norms.

> *women's appearance was recognizably female*: *women clearly had a separate normal (and normative) style of clothing from that of men*.[126]

(12) A woman engaging in such crossdressing would bring shame on her head, the man, because she would be presenting that perversion as one under male leadership, as though men approved it.

(13) The specific matter in question, as framed by Paul in v. 13, is whether it was proper that a woman *pray to God* (in public) *uncovered*. This suggests that some were claiming that it was indeed proper to do so. That raises the question of how Christian women could get the idea that when praying in the assembly it would be proper to dress like a man by casting off the head covering, a cultural marker of femaleness. I suspect that happened because women in Christ were authorized to pray and prophesy in public. Since public speaking was a traditionally male activity, some may have believed that the authorization to engage in that male activity included a right to do so as a man, meaning bareheaded, without the head covering that was a cultural marker of femaleness.

(a) For example, the Greek philosopher and historian Plutarch (45-120 A.D.) famously stated, "not only the arm of the virtuous woman but her speech as well, ought not be for the public, and she ought to be modest and guarded about saying anything in the hearing of outsiders, since it is an exposure of herself."[127]

(b) Sarah Elise Phang states, "[I]n general, public speaking was regarded as inappropriate for women, a violation of their ideal of modesty."[128]

(c) Karaman states: "We have seen that, while social existence was not impossible for women in Greco-Roman society, they were not vocal among the community; even the offices they held did not require public speaking or administrative decision-making. Women were not seen as fit to declare opinion publicly, especially when men were present."[129]

(d) Ruthanna Hooke states:

> Beard adduces many other examples in ancient Greco-Roman culture of women being silenced, all of which prove that:
>
> > Public speaking and oratory were not merely things that ancient women didn't do: they were exclusive practices and skills that

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[126] Kelly Olson, *Dress and the Roman Woman* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 10.
[127] Plutarch, *Moralia*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928), 2:323.
[128] Sarah Elise Phang, *Daily Life of Women in Ancient Rome* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2022), 192.
[129] Karaman (2018), 162.

> defined masculinity as a gender. . . . Public speech was a – if not *the* – defining attribute of maleness. Or, to quote a well-known Roman slogan, the elite male citizen could be summed up a *vir bonus dicendi peritus*, "a good man, skilled in public speaking." A woman speaking in public was, in most circumstances, by definition not a woman.[130]

(14) That women prayed vocally in Christian assemblies fits not only with 11:13 but with what is reported in Acts 1:13-15, 12:12-13, and 4:23-24 and with what I think is the better understanding of 1 Tim. 2:8-9 (v. 9: "Likewise [I want] women [to pray] in appropriate attire, to adorn themselves with modesty and decency").

(a) Presenting the word of God to men in the assembly in the form of prophesying or teaching would be to direct and correct them and thus would be an exercise authority over them that is contrary to the submission a woman is called by God to manifest in the assembly. That is why in 1 Cor. 14:33b-35 women are forbidden from prophesying in church gatherings and in 1 Tim. 2:11-12 they are forbidden from teaching in church gatherings. But praying is different. It is not a way of directing or correcting men – getting them told – but, like singing, it is a non-instructive expression of praise, gratitude, and devotion to God and therefore is not contrary to the submission they are required to manifest in the assembly.[131]

(b) I do not think women *led* prayers on behalf of the church. In other words, I do not think they were appointed by the leaders to speak to God on behalf of the assembly. That, in my judgment, would be contrary to the biblical principle of male leadership that is to be expressed in the assembly (1 Cor. 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:11-12). Rather, the praying in which women engaged in the assembly may have involved the congregation repeating prayers a phrase at a time after a 'precentor,' as may be implied in Acts 4:23-30 (cf. 1:14).[132] As F. F. Bruce notes, "Their praying might be participation in congregational prayer."[133] There may also have been "open praying" in

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[130] Ruthanna B. Hooke, *Sacramental Presence: An Embodied Theology of Preaching* (New York: Lexington Books, 2023), 130.

[131] Like prayer, singing is directed "to God" and "to the Lord" (Acts 16:25; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). As Pliny reported to Emperor Trajan in the early second century, the Christians in their meetings sang "a hymn to Christ as to a god." Those who hear the praise, gratitude, and devotion expressed to God in prayer and song are edified, built up in their understanding and appreciation of who God is and what he has done, but as indirect beneficiaries rather than direct addressees (1 Cor. 14:15-17). Ephesians 5:19 indicates that the "speaking to one another" that takes place in the singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs occurs in our "singing and making music *to the Lord* with [our] hearts." The rich indwelling of the word of Christ in the community that Paul commands in Col. 3:16 involves teaching and instructing one another with all wisdom *and* singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (see RSV, REB, NJB, NEB, NRSV, CEV, NLT, HCSB). They are distinct activities. This is confirmed by the fact all are to sing but the number who teach is restricted (e.g., Jas. 3:1). If singing is viewed as directly instructive, its distinctiveness from the teaching in which women are forbidden to engage lies in the fact it is done collectively. Tongues also is speech directed to God (1 Cor. 14:2). Oster (1995), 328-329, rightly remarks, "tongue speaking is vertically directed to God rather than horizontally addressed to men."

[132] See, I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, TNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 103.

[133] F. F. Bruce, *I & II Corinthians*, NCBC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 104.

which all were invited to pray personally without any connotation of leading, that is, without appointment or designation to speak for the assembly.

(15) Some strongly oppose the suggestion that men covering their heads was not an actual problem being addressed because there is good evidence that Roman men in certain sacral roles, such as presiding over a sacrifice or engaging in Roman ritual augury, pulled a toga over their heads, thus performing the rite *capite velato*.[134] They claim that Paul is forbidding men in Corinth from following that Roman cultural practice when praying or prophesying, presumably because of its affiliation with pagan worship. I disagree with that.

(a) There is no reason to think that Christian men in Corinth who were steeped in Roman culture would pray to God and prophesy on his behalf *capite velato*, with a ritually covered head. Even if that practice could be extended beyond performing specific Roman rituals of sacrifice and augury to praying or Christian prophesying, which differed from augury in that it was speaking directly for God rather than divining the future through reading natural phenomena,[135] Romans employed that practice only when worshiping *certain gods*.

(b) Some gods were required to be worshiped with an uncovered head, *capite aperto*, the manner known as *Graeco ritu*, "in Greek fashion." This was true of the worship of Hercules, Saturn, Honor, Apollo, and Ceres. "It appears to have depended on the deity involved whether covering was required or not, but there is no clear division between 'Roman' and 'Greek' gods."[136] According to Rives, both Greek and Roman traditions held to the principle "that in matters of cult, difference in detail was the norm: each deity, each cult, each shrine was expected to have its own specific rules."[137] Therefore, a Roman would not simply assume that the Christian God was to be worshiped *capite velato*.

(c) If one assumes Paul is forbidding men from importing into the worship of the true God the Roman religious practice of *capite velato*, one is hard pressed to explain why he does so, given that God had no objection to Jewish priests serving with turbans on their heads (Ex. 28:36-41; Ezek. 44:15-18). It is sometimes suggested that the problem with a head covering on Christian men in Corinth

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[134] Richard Oster, "When Men Wore Veils to Worship: The Historical Context of 1 Corinthians 11.4," *New Testament Studies* 34 (October 1988), 481-505.

[135] David W. J. Gill notes in "The Importance of Roman Portraiture for Head-Coverings in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16" in *Tyndale Bulletin* 41.2 (1990), 248, "The covering of heads is not a general form of dress adopted by people attending a sacrifice; it is specific to those who are taking an active part." Emma-Jayne Graham states in *Reassembling Religion in Roman Italy* (New York: Routledge, 2021), 103, "Covering the head with material was an embodied gesture which set the performer of a sacrifice apart from everyone else." J. B. Rives states in *Animal Sacrifice in the Roman Empire (31 BCE – 395 CE)* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2024), 127: "Moreover, in Roman tradition, people veiled their heads not only when presiding over a sacrifice but also when performing other ritual acts, particularly the rituals of the distinctive Roman form of divination known as augury. A veiled head was thus a visual marker of a sacral, but not necessarily sacrificial, role."

[136] Ursula Rothe, *The Toga and Roman Identity* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 48.

[137] Rives, 86.

was the affiliation of head coverings in that social context with Roman pagan worship, but as I explained, Romans also worshiped pagan gods with their heads *uncovered*, as did the Greeks, so being uncovered would not avoid the association with pagan worship.

(d) Moreover, if he commands the men to be uncovered because worshiping with a head covering was affiliated with pagan worship, it is inexplicable why he then commands the women to pray *with a covering*. The only way to salvage the claim is to argue that two different covering practices were involved: a male practice of *capite velato* that smacked of pagan worship and a female head covering that carried no such connotations. But the text suggests Paul is speaking of a single covering that would be shameful for a man to wear and shameful for a woman not to wear.

(e) Verses 4-5 give no hint that there is a shift in the practice being contrasted. Rather, the parallel language focuses the contrast on the gender of those engaging in the practice. This impression is reinforced by the fact v. 7 begins with "For," meaning it functions as an explanation of why the man is an inappropriate candidate for *the female covering* described in v. 6. And the cultural analogy Paul draws in vv. 14-15 between long hair and the head covering depends solely on the effect of gender on the propriety of the condition. Paul's point there is that the head covering functions like long hair in that it too was culturally assigned as a female covering and is therefore inappropriate on a man. S. Donald Fortson III and Rollin G. Grams state:

> Paul is saying there is a natural distinction between men and women; if a man crosses this barrier and dons the appearance of a woman by growing his hair long, he is degrading himself. . . . Paul's point is not that long hair is impossible for a man to grow but that an effeminate appearance for a man is unnatural. In 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, Paul is saying that men should be men and women should be women, according to nature. While hairstyles are a matter of custom, in Paul's day long hair on men suggested effeminacy in Greek and Roman culture. For a man to have long hair, then, was like cross-dressing – purposefully appearing contrary to his nature.[138]

(f) As we will see in a moment, Paul says in 11:7-10 that a woman is to have a sign of authority on her head because she is the glory of man. However glorious man may be, he remains under the authority of God. The head covering, which as a culturally expected piece of female attire functions as a sign of authority over the wearer, symbolizes *man's* submission to God by way of the fact woman is the glory *of man*. Since man, on the other hand, is the glory *of God* in a distinctive sense, a sign of authority over him would not be appropriate because there is no authority over God. The female covering which functions as a sign of authority and therefore is proper on the woman who is the glory of man is the same covering Paul says is improper on the man who is the glory of God. Distinguishing the coverings plays havoc with Paul's argument.

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[138] S. Donald Fortson III and Rollin G. Grams, *Unchanging Witness* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016), 327.

2. Further reason why a man should not wear the covering but a woman should and a word on mutual dependence (11:7-12)

> **[7]For a man ought not to cover [his] head, being the image and glory of God; the woman, on the other hand, is the glory of man. [8]For man is not from woman but woman from man; [9]for neither was the man created on account of the woman but the woman on account of the man. [10]For this reason, the woman ought to have authority on [her] head, on account of the angels. [11]Nevertheless, neither is woman apart from man nor man apart from woman, in the Lord. [12]For just as the woman is from the man, so also the man is by the woman, and all things are from God.**

a. 11:7-10 – **[7]For a man ought not to cover [his] head, being the image and glory of God; the woman, on the other hand, is the glory of man. [8]For man is not from woman but woman from man; [9]for neither was the man created on account of the woman but the woman on account of the man. [10]For this reason, the woman ought to have authority on [her] head, on account of the angels.**

(1) Verses 7-10 provide a further reason why a man should not wear the cover *about which he is speaking* (v. 7 begins with "For") but a woman should. This kind of sex-inappropriate dressing contradicts or rebels against God's creation of mankind as two distinct sexes and therefore is contrary to the fact woman's existence glorifies man (in addition to God) whereas man's existence glorifies only God. In other words, this difference in the object of glorification has implications for who is a suitable candidate for wearing female clothing. This requires some unpacking.

(a) Woman's existence glorifies man because man "gave birth" to woman and because woman was made to help the man, to be a nonleading partner. According to Gen. 2:20-23, God made Eve from part of Adam's body, not independently from the ground, and he did so that she might be a helper for Adam. So woman's existence redounds to the glory of man, but man's existence does not redound to the glory of woman because he was not created from her nor created to be a helper for her.

(b) Given that woman is the *glory of man*, it is fitting that she be under a sign of authority, especially when publicly speaking to or on behalf of God, that is, when praying or prophesying. Paul does not explain why her being the glory of man means she needs "*authority* on her head," but I think the reason is that however glorious *man* may be, he remains under the authority of God. And as the glory of *man*, the woman needs to reflect that truth, the fact man is still under the authority of God. Since man, on the other hand, is the *glory of God*, a sign of authority over him would not be appropriate because there is no authority over God.

(c) Some insist the statement "the woman ought to have authority on [her] head" means that "covered women *have the right* to pray and prophesy in the assembly" independent of any notions of male headship. But that does not

fit with the fact Paul makes clear that the woman ought to wear a head covering because ("For this reason") she is the glory of man (as declared in v. 7 and explained in vv. 8-9). Her relationship to man is in some way the reason she must wear the covering. In addition, the statement is a duty ("ought"), something she is obligated to do, not a declaration of a freedom or authority she has.[139] It is the context that drives the vast majority of English versions to follow the traditional understanding by rendering the phrase "a sign/symbol of authority on her head" (ERV, ASV, RSV ["veil"], NAS, NJB, NEB, NKJV, NRSV, NASU, HCSB, NAB, NET, ESV, CSB).

(d) The head cover about which Paul is speaking functions as a sign of authority precisely because it was a distinctly female piece of attire. Notice Paul does not impose that significance on the cover; he assumes it. Given that women were assigned a subordinate or nonleading role by both culture and God, clothing that was distinctly female naturally symbolized being under the leadership (authority) of another. (Paul does not address how or why certain items of apparel came to be distinctly female; he simply accepts that some did.)

(2) The end of verse 10 gives yet *another reason*[140] that a woman should have a sign of authority on her head, meaning the female covering. She should do so "on account of the angels." Ciampa and Rosner state:

> By for this reason Paul could mean either the reason(s) just offered in the previous verses or the reason given at the end of the verse (because of the angels). The fact that Paul has clearly been providing reasons why a woman should have her head covered in the previous verses suggests that that is what he has in mind. The sentence structure itself reveals that the reason is because of the angels. It is probably best to understand Paul to have both in mind. In fact, given the fact that the significance of the angels is unclear, an interpretation that relates the reference to the angels to the preceding arguments should probably be preferred.[141]

(3) The best way to understand this is to recognize that angels observe the worship assembly and are concerned that the worshipers properly observe the fact that God created mankind as two distinct sexes and did so in a way that woman is the glory of man (in addition to God) and man is the glory of God (alone). Ciampa and Rosner state, "Paul may well be referring to the angels as divinely appointed auditors of the community's worship who, like God, would be offended by any shameful displays during the worship."[142] Larry Hurtado writes:

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[139] Schreiner identifies additional weaknesses of this view in "Head Coverings, Prophecy and the Trinity" in John Piper and Wayne Grudem, eds., *Recovering Biblical Womanhood & Manhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 135-136 (126-127 in linked version).
[140] See, e.g., Ciampa and Rosner (2010), 529.
[141] Ciampa and Rosner (2010), 529.
[142] Ciampa and Rosner (2010), 530.

> [Christians] experienced their assemblies as not merely human events but as having a transcendent dimension. They sensed God as directly and really present in their meetings through his Spirit. . . . In 1 Corinthians 11:10, the curious passing reference to the angels present in the worship assembly shows how familiar the idea was. Paul's Corinthian readers apparently needed no further explanation (though we could wish for one!). As the 'holy ones' (saints) of God, believers saw their worship gatherings as attended by heavenly 'holy ones', angels, whose presence signified the heavenly significance of their humble house-church assemblies.[143]

b. 11:11-12 – **[11]Nevertheless, neither is woman apart from man nor man apart from woman, in the Lord. [12]For just as the woman is from the man, so also the man is by the woman, and all things are from God.**

(1) Verses 11-12 make clear that the sex differences about which he has been speaking and which must continue to be honored in dress are not a matter of superiority/inferiority. Men and women in Christ are mutually dependent, each needing the other that mankind may be what God intended it to be (v. 11). Evidence of this mutual dependence is that, whereas womankind initially came from Adam, all subsequent men have come from women, and all things (men and women) come from the one God. As Schreiner puts it:

> Paul wants to avoid any thought that women are ontologically inferior; thus he emphasizes the interdependence of men and women in the Lord. Women came into existence through men, but men come into the world through women. The first woman was from the first man, but now all men come into the world through women, that is, through their birth mother. A difference in function between men and women does not negate the equality and value of the two sexes.[144]

(2) Regarding the final clause, "all things are from God," Schreiner states: "In saying everything comes from God, the Lord is acknowledged as the ultimate source of life and all that is good. At the same time, there is the recognition that the diversity and unity of the sexes come from him. He has sovereignly appointed, directed and blessed both sexes."[145]

3. Appeal to cultural analogy of long hair (11:13-16)

> **[13]Judge among yourselves: Is it proper that a woman pray to God uncovered? [14]Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair it is a dishonor to him [15]but if a woman wears long hair it is a glory to her? For long hair has been given [to her] as a covering. [16]But if**

[143] Larry Hurtado, *At the Origins of Christian Worship: The Context and Character of Earliest Christian Devotion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 50-51.
[144] Schreiner (2018), 235-236.
[145] Schreiner (2018), 236.

anyone is disposed to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor [do] the churches of God.

a. Paul appeals to what they already recognized about long hair to make his point that women should not pray uncovered. (The fact he mentions only prayer suggests that the two practices of praying and prophesying were in some way distinguished.)

b. "Nature itself" taught them that long hair was a dishonor to men but a glory to women in that the distinction of mankind into two sexes is a fundamental aspect of the creation order. People have a natural sense from creation that "gender bending," confusing or masking sexual differentiation, is wrong. Given that sense of sexual distinction that is rooted in creation, the Corinthians would agree that if a man wore long hair it dishonored him but if a woman wore long hair it honored or exalted her. They would do so because long hair had been *culturally assigned* as a kind of female covering; it was therefore inappropriate on a man (in that cultural context).

c. Paul is well aware that male hair has the same capacity to grow long as female hair and he knows from Scripture that Nazirites were forbidden from cutting their hair, so he certainly is not suggesting that long hair is universally or transculturally contrary to sex distinctions. David Garland remarks, "Long hair for men is unnatural for Paul because in his cultural context it conveys sexual ambiguity and hints of moral perversion."[146] Bruce Winter states, "The adult male inhabitants of Roman Corinth did not wear their hair long, for to do so indicated their denial of their masculinity – they were parading as homosexuals."[147] Fortson and Grams state:

> Paul is saying there is a natural distinction between men and women; if a man crosses this barrier and dons the appearance of a woman by growing his hair long, he is degrading himself. . . . Paul's point is not that long hair is impossible for a man to grow but that an effeminate appearance for a man is unnatural. In 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, Paul is saying that men should be men and women should be women, according to nature. While hairstyles are a matter of custom, in Paul's day long hair on men suggested effeminacy in Greek and Roman culture. For a man to have long hair, then, was like cross-dressing – purposefully appearing contrary to his nature.[148]

d. Paul's point is that the head covering in question functions like long hair. It too was culturally assigned as a female covering and is therefore inappropriate on a man. Regardless of whether some want to argue the point, Paul says that neither his group nor other churches of God engage in the practice of women praying or prophesying uncovered.

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[146] Garland (2003), 531.
[147] Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 132.
[148] Fortson and Grams (2016), 327.

e. As I have explained, Paul in 1 Cor. 11:2-16 was addressing a problem of certain women who were speaking (or claiming a right to speak) in the worship assembly without the culturally required female head covering. By indicating the speech would be acceptable if the women wore the covering, he implicitly approved that form of female speech in the assembly. Though many assume the speech in question was both praying and prophesying, Paul does not say that. Rather, when Paul in 11:13 identifies by a rhetorical question the specific issue at hand, he says simply, "Judge among yourselves: Is it proper that a woman *pray* to God uncovered?" Prophesying is not mentioned.

(1) Indeed, as we will see, Paul in 1 Cor. 14:33b-36 reminds the Corinthians that in all the churches women are prohibited from participating in the prophetic process in the assembly,[149] which is consistent with the prohibition on women teaching in the assembly that he gives in 1 Tim. 2:11-14. One may wonder why God would silence the women prophets in the assembly when prophesying edifies the community, but it is apparently more important to him that his sovereign right to bestow leadership responsibility on men be acknowledged and honored in the assembly in the manner specified. Women may exercise their prophetic gift in other contexts, so the community would not be deprived of their revelations, but "in the churches," meaning in the congregational assemblies, they are called to honor God by manifesting publicly through their silence their acceptance of his right to choose men as the leaders. It is part of the gathered community's testimony of its submission to him.

(2) This assembly-related restriction on female prophesying was recognized in the early church. After surveying the relevant evidence (Tertullian, Firmilian, Origen, Chrysostom, Gregory of Nazianzus), the renowned church historian Everett Ferguson concludes (emphasis supplied):

> From the standpoint of history, the evidence of Christian writings of the second to fourth centuries is in continuity with the New Testament. . . . Women were not appointed as elders, nor did they take public speaking roles in the assembly *as prophets*, teachers, or leaders in the assembly. Where women did take these roles in heretical and schismatic groups, the practice was a basis for objection to these groups.[150]

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[149] Paul regulates the exercise of the gift of tongues in the assembly in 1 Cor. 14:27-28 and then turns to the exercise of the gift of prophecy in v. 29. Verses 39-40 make clear that his command for female silence is part of his continuing regulation of tongues and prophesying, and since he concluded the discussion of tongues in v. 28 and gave no indication of a return to that topic, the context strongly indicates that the instructions about the women relate to the matter of prophesying. That is why many evangelical commentators recognize that the prohibited speech relates in some way to prophesying. E.g., James B. Hurley, "Did Paul Require Veils or the Silence of Women?" *Westminster Theological Journal* 35 (1973), 217-18; Wayne Grudem (1988), 220-224; D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 129-131; Thiselton (2000), 1158; Andreas J. Köstenberger, *1-2 Timothy & Titus*, BTCP (Nashville: Holman, 2017), 116; Gardner (2018), 637.

[150] Everett Ferguson, *Women in the Church: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, 2nd ed. (Abilene, TX: Desert Willow Publishing, 2015), Kindle edition (Location 964).

(3) The alleged female prophets of a movement known as "Montanists" or the "Phrygian heresy," which arose in the third quarter of the second century, justified their activities by appeal to the female prophets of the Bible. But the orthodox or mainstream writers challenged their claims by making "a distinction between prophetesses delivering the word of the Lord in church and doing so in other circumstances. They distinguished prophecy and other speaking roles in the assembly from those outside the assembly."[151]

(a) Tertullian at the beginning of the third century "told about a Christian sister [a Montanist] who received ecstatic visions during 'the sacred rites of the Lord's day in the church' but reported them only 'after the people are dismissed at the conclusion of the sacred services' (On the Soul 9)."[152]

(b) Origen (c. 185-254 A.D.), a Greek-speaking Christian theologian and biblical scholar, illustrates the approach in his *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* 14:34-35:

> If the daughters of Philip prophesied, they did not speak in church, for we do not find this in the Acts of the Apostles. Neither in the old [covenant]. [Deborah, Miriam, and Huldah] did not speak in the assembly…. [Anna] did not speak in church. Therefore, the prophetic sign might be given for a woman to be a prophetess, but it is not permitted to her to speak in church…. 'Their own men' refers not only to their spouses, but [virgins and widows have] … a brother, kinsman, or son.[153]

(c) Esther Yue L. Ng writes:

> In fact, in order to counter the female prophets and leaders in Montanism and Marcionism, a number of early Church Fathers (such as Origen, Hippolytus, Didymus the Blind, Epiphanius) appealed to Paul's words in 1 Cor 14:34–35 and/or 1 Tim 2:12 and stated that women never publicly taught men historically and should not do so at any time. Even the famous Church Father Tertullian who turned to Montanism stated that a female prophet who often saw visions in his church would only relate to the church leaders in private after the service concerning what she actually saw.[154]

(4) Given that the immediate problem Paul was addressing was women seeking *to pray* uncovered in the assembly, the question is why he says in 11:5 that "every woman who prays *or prophesies* uncovered as to the head disgraces her head." I think he mentions women prophesying, despite the fact that speech was permitted only outside the assembly, because the argument being made to justify women praying in the

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[151] Ferguson (2015), Location 912.
[152] Ferguson (2015), Location 912.
[153] Ferguson (2015), Location 912-922.
[154] Esther Yue L. Ng, "Was Junia(s) in Rom. 16:7 a Female Apostle? And So What?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 63:3 (Sept. 2020), 530.

assembly uncovered also would justify women prophesying outside the assembly uncovered. That is, if the right of Christian women to engage in the traditionally male activity of public speech justifies their doing so "as men," meaning without the culture's distinctive mark of femaleness, then it would justify doing so whether that public speech was in or out of the assembly. Any ruling on the assembly situation would by logic also be a ruling on the non-assembly situation, so for this purpose Paul addresses the two situations together.

(5) My contention is that the Corinthians would have known that both activities did not take place in the assembly. That is reasonable because Paul clearly had passed on to the Corinthians teaching about women speaking in worship because he praises them in 11:2 for having held to that teaching in resisting the practice of women praying uncovered. As indicated in 1 Cor. 14:33b-36, the prohibition of women prophesying in the assembly was a universal rule, something that applied in all the churches, so Paul would have so informed the Corinthians when he passed on to them teaching about women speaking in worship.

(6) This egalitarian rationale for jettisoning the covering in public speaking would not require the women to challenge simultaneously the gender-based restriction against prophesying in the assembly. It may have been thought that challenges to ongoing practice should be presented incrementally, proceeding one step at a time (the proverbial camel's nose in the tent). Advocates of the view that distinctions between men and women were passe in the age of Christ may have wanted to downplay the impact of that view on the assembly by seeking first only to discard the covering as a test case of the principle. If it were accepted that the covering was unnecessary because gender distinctions no longer pertained, the barrier to female prophesying in the assembly would fall in its wake. Or perhaps, less calculatingly, someone in the Corinthian church may have raised a question about head coverings in the context of assembly prayers, which put that specific issue front and center for Paul's response.

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

1. The problem of maintaining social divisions (11:17-22)

17But in giving this instruction, I do not praise [you] because you gather together not for the better but for the worse. 18For, in the first place, when you gather together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you, and in part I believe [it]. 19For [you say] it is indeed necessary for factions to be among you, in order that [also] the approved ones may become apparent among you. 20Therefore, when you gather together in the same place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper, 21for each one consumes his own supper when eating, and so one is hungry, but another is drunk. 22For it certainly cannot be that you do not have houses to eat and drink in, can it? Or do you have contempt for the

church of God, and so humiliate those who do not have? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this [matter], I do not praise [you].

a. In 11:2 Paul praised the leaders for resisting the practice of women praying uncovered based on the teaching he had previously passed on to them. Unfortunately, they had not similarly resisted the maintenance of divisions in their assemblies, which is why he now rebukes them rather than praises them.

(1) He is not referring here to "horizontal divisions" where understood equals divide over different practices or beliefs but to "vertical divisions" where the body is being stratified by the maintenance of social rankings. He is referring to socioeconomic or class segregation in the assembly.

(2) Paul says he believes the report "in part," to some extent, probably meaning that though he takes the report as credible he assumes that not all of the members of higher social rank were acting that way. It is a diplomatic way of giving some of them the benefit of doubt.

(3) Verse 19 is notoriously difficult, but I think Paul is saying he readily gives credence to what he heard about the segregation at their gatherings because (For) he is aware that at least some in Corinth were claiming that such factions were necessary in order that the approved ones, the higher-status people they presumed were the tried and true of God, might stand out in the gathering.

(a) Thiselton renders the verse, "For 'dissensions are unavoidable,' it is claimed among you, in order that those who are tried and true among you may be visibly revealed."[155]

(b) Others, like Garland and Ciampa and Rosner, agree that Paul is referring to a Corinthian sentiment, but they think Paul is doing so with bitter irony or sarcasm – mentioning their claim with a rebuking tone – rather than merely noting the sentiment as an explanation for why he readily gives credence to the report about the factions. I think the latter makes better sense, but both views share the important point of seeing the sentiment as the Corinthians' rather than Paul's. Ciampa and Rosner write:

> Paul most likely is referring to a view that was reported to him as being held by some Corinthians. They thought the differences among them were a reflection of those who had God's special approval. The following verses make it clear, however, that the divisions were provoked by the insensitive behavior of some of the social elites within the Corinthian church and that that behavior most certainly did not meet with God's approval. If anyone could be said to have God's approval in the Corinthian church, it would not be any of those wealthier and more socially advanced Christians who were snubbing their brothers and sisters![156]

[155] Thiselton (2000), 848.
[156] Ciampa and Rosner (2010), 544.

(c) If, on the other hand, this is a declaration by Paul and not a sentiment of the Corinthians, then Paul is saying factions were necessary in Corinth in order that the genuine believers may be set apart or distinguished from the imitators. In that case, Paul's view is that differences need to exist between genuine and imitation believers, that mixed congregations such as Corinth, should be "factious" in that sense.

b. The fact they maintained social divisions in their gatherings meant they had missed an essential aspect of the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper simply cannot be eaten in a segregated, class-conscious assembly; it denies the very oneness that the Supper symbolizes (1 Cor. 10:17). Our fellowship in Christ transcends social divisions, and maintaining them when assembling for the Supper contradicts that truth.

c. The social nature of the division is clear from vv. 21-22.

(1) The Corinthians, along with other first century Christians often, if not always, celebrated the Lord's Supper in conjunction with a larger meal of benevolence and fellowship. This is the "love feast" mentioned in Jude 12 (see also 2 Pet. 2:13). The Supper proper, meaning the bread and fruit of the vine, probably was eaten at the end of the meal. (The meal was an optional act of benevolence and fellowship that eventually was dropped, at least as a regular practice.) Ferguson states:

> The Lord's supper and the love feast were two distinct activities – the one a remembrance and proclamation of the death and resurrection of Jesus and the other an act of benevolence and fellowship. It took some time before a distinct and fixed terminology prevailed, even as some time passed before the functions were separated in time, but the activities had discreet meanings from the beginning.[157]

(2) When the Corinthians gathered, the wealthier Christians, who no doubt supplied most of the food for the meal, somehow were taking a disproportionate share of it, consuming their "own supper" (v. 21). Though many translations take the verb (*prolambanō*) in the sense of eating *first* or eating *before* others, I am with those who think that in this context it simply means to "take" or "eat" or has an intensified sense of "devour."[158] Schreiner states:

> The NIV understands the verb *prolambanei* as saying that some (i.e. the rich) go ahead and eat their meals before the poor arrive, and the verb could have this meaning. But this is not the most likely way of taking the Greek in this particular context. . . . The verb *prolambanō* does not invariably have a temporal force (cf. Gal. 6:1), and the construction of the Greek is such that every person at the meal is eating at the same time (*en tō phagein*, lit. 'while eating'). The problem was not the time of the eating, for everyone was eating

[157] Everett Ferguson, "Lord's Supper and Love Feast," *Christian Studies* 21 (2006), 35.
[158] For the sense "devoured," see, e.g., Gardner (2018), 507.

together. The problem was that some were eating and drinking sumptuously, while others were neglected and hungry.[159]

d. The haves had more than enough, as indicated by the excess of wine they consumed, but the have-nots were left hungry, treated as stepbrothers, and were humiliated in the process. In doing this, Paul suggests that the wealthy were showing contempt for the church of God and repeats that he has no praise for them in this matter.

2. Their keeping of the Supper was inconsistent with its original intent (11:23-26)

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

a. Paul cannot praise them for keeping the tradition of the Supper because (For) they did so in a manner that was inconsistent with the Supper's original intent. He points that out by reminding them of what he had previously taught them about the Supper.

b. As instituted by Christ himself, the Supper is a memorial of the salvation that he has effected through his death and resurrection. By the wealthy discriminating against the poor in the fellowship meal, they were negating the very point of Christ's death -- to create a new people for his name, a redeemed community in which the old distinctions of human fallenness no longer hold sway.

c. In a communion talk some months ago, I illustrated the point this way:

> During the Vietnam War, several hundred American officers and enlisted men were held captive for years and brutally treated in a prison camp dubbed the "Hanoi Hilton." Imagine that the commander of the American armed forces secured the release of those prisoners by substituting himself for them and was then immediately tortured to death. Imagine further that those freed soldiers, those former POWs, came together for a meal in honor of that commander and that the officers pulled rank on that occasion, insisted on eating first and leaving the enlisted men to eat the leftovers. Wouldn't maintaining rank at a meal in honor of one who died *for all of them* be

[159] Schreiner (2018), 242.

absurd, be contrary to the spirit of the commander's sacrifice? Of course it would.

3. The seriousness of their sin regarding the Supper (11:27-32)

[27]So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup in an unworthy manner shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. [28]But let a man test himself and in that way eat of the bread and drink of the cup. [29]For the one who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself. [30]For this reason, many among you are weak and sick and enough are sleeping. [31]But if we were discerning ourselves, we would not be coming under judgment. [32]But in being judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined, that we may not be condemned with the world.

a. Given the significance of the Lord's Supper, whoever participates in it in an unworthy manner, meaning those who eat it while maintaining socioeconomic divisions, "shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord."

(1) This probably means that by thus missing the point of the Supper, which is to honor and proclaim Christ's sacrificial work by which "one new man" (Eph. 2:15) is created from people of all different groups, they place themselves under the same liability as those responsible for that death.

(2) Garland states:

> Paul's logic is this: The Lord's Supper proclaims the Lord's death. Those whose behavior at the Lord's Supper does not conform to what that death entails effectively shift sides. They leave the Lord's side and align themselves with the rulers of this present age who crucified the Lord (1 Cor. 2:8; cf. Heb. 6:5). This explains how they make themselves so vulnerable to God's judgment.[160]

b. To avoid that guilt, each person needs to examine himself in terms of his attitude toward the members of the body before participating in the Supper. If he fails to do that, if he eats without recognizing the reality and oneness of the body of Christ, as some of them were doing, that person will incur God's judgment. Ciampa and Rosner write:

> To *examine oneself* and to *discern the body of Christ* do not merely mean, in this context, to solemnly recognize that the bread and cup represent Christ's body and blood rather than being mundane food and drink. To *examine oneself* means to examine one's compliance with the covenant as reflected in their ways of relating to other members of the community and to *discern the*

[160] Garland (2003), 550.

> *body of Christ* must include recognizing that those other members of the community represent Christ himself (since they have been united with him) and must be treated as people for whom Christ chose to give up his life and to shed his blood.[161]

c. My brother John tells of his experience at a small church in Georgia in 1980. He worked there one summer and was fired after rebuking the congregation for its racism. It pains me to say that one member of the congregation told John before he left that he had persuaded her it was wrong not to allow black men and women to be members of the congregation, but then she added, "But I don't want them sitting up front with us." Do you think the bread and juice they were taking every Sunday was the *Lord's* Supper? No way.

d. Because some in Corinth were participating in the Supper without appreciating the body, because they had not been examining (discerning) themselves in that regard, God had permitted sickness and death to come upon the community, but he had done so as a form of discipline. He was trying to bring them to repentance for their sin that they would not be condemned.

4. The solution (11:33-34)

> **[33]So then, my brothers, when gathering together to eat, receive one another. [34]If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you not gather together with the result of judgment. And the remaining matters I will set straight whenever I come.**

a. Paul here gives the solution to their problem: When gathering to eat they need to "receive" or "welcome" [*ekdechomai*] one another in the sense of demonstrating normal Christian hospitality. (This meaning is preferable to "wait for," especially if the verb in v. 21 [*prolambanō*] is translated "devours" or "consumes" rather than "eats beforehand.") Fee states:

> Paul's greater concern seems to be that, just as "the ground is level at the foot of the cross," so it must be level when it comes to sharing at the Lord's Table. If that be the case, then the verb here carries its primary meaning of "receive," which it often does in the context of hospitality (hence, "welcome" or "entertain"). Since Paul uses the stronger compound for the concept of "await" or "wait for," and since there is no sure evidence that the verb he used earlier [*prolambanō*] (v. 21) means to "eat beforehand," it seems most likely that Paul is here urging the wealthy to demonstrate normal Christian hospitality (cf. Rom. 12:13). They are to welcome/receive one another when they come together to eat, . . ."[162]

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[161] Ciampa and Rosner (2010), 555.
[162] Fee (2014), 628.

b. The haves cannot continue to discriminate against the have-nots in the distribution of the food. If one of the well-to-do is hungry, he should satisfy that hunger at home rather than seeking to satisfy it in the benevolence and fellowship meal at the expense of the have-nots. As Paul has already indicated, maintaining such a social division when assembling to eat the Lord's Supper will result in judgment.

C. Exercise of Spiritual Gifts (12:1 – 14:40)

1. The presence of the Spirit in one's life is a function of one's relationship with Christ (12:1-3)

Now about the spiritual things, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant. [2]You know that, when you were Gentiles, whenever you were led to speechless idols [you were] being led astray. [3]Therefore, I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is a cursed one," and no one is able to say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

a. Paul now turns his attention to the matter of spiritual manifestations or spiritual gifts, a subject about which the Corinthians were apparently showing some ignorance that Paul wants to dispel. He reminds them in v. 2 that they were no strangers to ignorance in spiritual matters because, as they now realize, when they were pagans, they had been led astray each time they had been led to the worship of speechless idols.

b. Because he does not want them to be ignorant about the spiritual things (Therefore), he tells them that the most basic or fundamental criterion for recognizing the work of the Spirit is whether one is a Christian.

(1) The statement that no one who curses or denounces Jesus *speaks by* the Spirit is a way of saying that no such person *has* the Spirit; the Spirit does not dwell in them. And the statement that everyone who confesses Jesus' lordship *speaks by* the Spirit (sincerity of the confession being assumed) is a way of saying that all such people *have* the Spirit; the Spirit dwells in them.

(2) Paul dichotomizes the world into opponents of Christ and disciples of Christ, which probably squared with their experience. The Jews may have literally cursed Christ, but no one was neutral about him. He does so to make the point that the presence of the Spirit in one's life is a function of one's relationship with Christ. As he says in Rom. 8:9, "And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ." So regarding the Spirit, it is non-Christian or Christian, or in Paul's rhetorical terminology, curser or confessor.

(3) Since "those who by the Holy Spirit confess Jesus is Lord" is Paul's way of referring to Christians, one can be sure that Paul assumes they had been baptized. Indeed, "Jesus is Lord" was the standard confession of faith made at baptism, and Paul links renewal by the Spirit with the washing of baptism in Titus 3:5.

c. His point flows right into what follows. In terms of the work of the Spirit, the dividing line falls between non-Christians and Christians not between fellow Christians, fellow confessors of Jesus' lordship, who happen have different spiritual gifts. All Christians have the Spirit; he simply works differently in each.

d. It appears there were some in Corinth who had made the possession of the gift of tongues (and possibly some other gifts) the acid test of one's spirituality, the essential evidence of the Spirit. In 12:1-3 Paul points out that the Spirit is the possession of all who are in Christ, and he reinforces this in 12:4-11 by making clear that the Spirit's gifts are too diverse to permit any one gift or group of gifts to serve as the exclusive sign of the Spirit's presence. Here is how a couple scholars express the idea:

(1) David Garland states:

> Causal readers who come to chapter 12 only to learn about spiritual gifts are tempted to skip over the difficult opening verses, but they are crucial for understanding Paul's intention for the entire passage. They introduce the topic and provide a thesis statement. The topic is the spiritual ones (gifts), and the thesis is that all Christians are spiritual. In this introduction, Paul contrasts the Corinthians' religious past with their spiritually transformed present as Christians and affirms that everyone who confesses that Jesus is Lord is directed by the Holy Spirit. This affirmation heads off any claim that some are more spiritual than others because they show evidence of having the more electrifying and exciting spiritual gifts.[163]

(2) Wolfgang Schrage states:

> Since Paul is concerned to refute those Corinthians who claim their gift of glossolalia is a special, perhaps unique, demonstration of spirit possession, he opens his response in vv 1-3 by presenting a radically different perspective. Noting the simple baptismal confession, Jesus is Lord, can only be uttered under the influence of the Holy Spirit (v 3b), Paul undermines any pneumatic elitism. All Christians make this confession, thus all Christians, not a tongue-speaking few, are *pneumatikoi* [spiritual ones].[164]

[163] Garland (2003), 561.
[164] From Garland (2003), 573.

2. The Spirit's gifts are too diverse to permit any one gift or group of gifts to serve as the exclusive sign of the Spirit's presence (12:4-11)

> **[4]Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; [5]and there are varieties of services, and the same Lord; [6]and there are varieties of workings, but the same God who works all things in all men. [7]But to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. [8]For to one is given through the Spirit a word of wisdom, and to another a word of knowledge according to the same Spirit, [9]to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healings by the one Spirit, [10]and to another workings of miracles, [and] to another prophecy, [and] to another discernments of spirits, to another kinds of tongues, and to another interpretation of tongues. [11]The one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing individually to each one as he wills.**

a. In vv. 4-6 Paul stresses that diversity within unity belongs to the character of God himself. The one Triune God manifests himself in a great variety of gifts, ministries, and workings, some of which are spectacular and some more ordinary. God is in no way a "one note song," a truth which also is testified to by the great diversity of his creation

b. To each one a particular manifestation of the Spirit is given, depending on what is needed for the common good. In other words, there is no universal gift of the Spirit. One person gets one kind of gift/ministry/working and another person gets another.

(1) Paul's comments raise for us the question of whether the Spirit is still choosing to give the same gifts he gave to the Corinthians, but Paul is not talking about that. He is seeking to correct problems with the Corinthians' understanding and exercise of the spiritual gifts they were given; he is not discussing whether and when some or all of those gifts would pass away.

(2) Now, I do not believe the Spirit is choosing today to give to the church all the same gifts he gave to her in the first century. Specifically, I do not believe the Spirit still is bestowing on Christians the ability to perform miraculous or supernatural feats. My understanding is that those particular gifts have ceased. That understanding, however, comes not from a direct discussion of that subject in Scripture but from putting together a number of things in different places in Scripture.

(3) Rather than take a lengthy detour from Paul's train of thought to explain why I believe certain gifts are no longer being given, there is posted on my website a paper titled "Some Thoughts on the Cessation of Miraculous Gifts." I there try to explain my view of this subject.

(a) Very briefly, my classification of views about miraculous gifts, which I distinguish from God’s response to prayer, is: (1) those who say

Scripture declares definitively they have ceased, (2) those who say Scripture declares definitively they have continued, and (3) those who say Scripture does not declare definitively either way but gives hints in support of one view or the other. I am in (3).

(b) Included in that paper is an explanation of why I think tongues were *human* languages, not gibberish or some non-human language, and an explanation of why I do not believe the Spirit's giving of miraculous gifts in the first century was restricted to those on whom the apostles laid their hands. Some would disagree with me on that last point, but we come out at pretty much the same place in terms of the cessation of miraculous gifts; we just get there in a different way.

(c) I point out in the paper that the Spirit has operated differently at different times in history. He is sovereign in his bestowal of gifts, and there are a number of clues in Scripture suggesting, at least to me, that we are in a time when he has chosen to cease giving miraculous gifts, understanding that the line between miraculous and non-miraculous gifts can get blurry. I think this understanding is confirmed by experience.

c. Paul lists in vv. 8-10 a variety of ways in which the Spirit was manifested in the church simply to illustrate the broad range of the one Spirit's activities.

(1) Word of wisdom and word of knowledge – An utterance characterized by Spirit-given wisdom or knowledge. It probably refers to theological insight, which could include insight given by the Spirit in conjunction with study and reflection. In other words, it need not be divorced from Spirit-guided human reason. Perhaps "wisdom" refers to more practical insight and "knowledge" to the more theoretical or doctrinal. David Garland writes, "The message of knowledge and of wisdom is closely related to the message delivered by apostles (2:6-7, 11-16; 2 Cor. 11:6), prophets (1 Cor. 13:2), and teachers (14:6, 26). It is the ministry of the word that most benefits the church and strengthens its mission to the world."[165]

(2) Faith – As Garland observes, "Since faith is not given to everyone, it must refer to a special endowment and not saving trust that is required of all Christians."[166] This probably refers to a Spirit-given conviction that God will act in a special way in a specific instance, a conviction that he will do something for which there is no objective revelation. D. A. Carson says that this special faith "enables a believer to trust God to bring about certain things for which he or she cannot claim some divine promise recorded in Scripture, or some state of affairs grounded in the very structure of the gospel."[167]

(a) James says in Jas. 5:15 that "the *prayer of faith will* save the one who is ill, and the Lord *will* raise him up." Yet, we know that Paul prayed three times for his "thorn in the flesh" to be removed but was not healed (2 Cor. 12:7-9). (Note that it was because of an illness that he first preached the gospel to the Galatians [Gal. 4:13-14].) And we know that he left Trophimus sick in Miletus (2 Tim. 4:20). Clearly it

[165] Garland (2003), 581.
[166] Garland (2003), 581.
[167] D. A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 39.

sometimes is *not* God's will to heal us physically. (The fact we all will die, unless the Lord returns before then, confirms the point.) So what is going on? How can James's apparently unconditional promise that God will heal one for whom the "prayer of faith" is offered be reconciled with the fact (from biblical testimony and personal experience) that God does not heal everyone for whom prayers are offered? One possible answer involves this gift of faith.

(b) Perhaps the "prayer of faith" to which James is referring is not the usual prayer of faith – a prayer offered with confidence in God's existence, love, and supremacy – but a prayer offered with *divinely given* assurance that what one is asking is in fact within the will of the Lord (and thus will be granted -- 1 Jn. 5:14-15). In other words, James may be referring to a prayer of God-given confidence that the specific request will be granted rather than a prayer of confidence in God's general goodness and supremacy.[168]

(3) Gifts of healings – This refers to the power to supernaturally heal someone. The plural suggests that there was either a variety of healing gifts or that each instance of healing was a separate gift.

(4) Workings of miracles (lit. powers) – This refers to various displays of divine power. The plural probably suggests the same type of options as in the preceding paragraph. Carson notes, "Presumably all healings are demonstrations of miraculous powers, but not all miraculous powers are healings: they may include exorcisms, nature miracles, or other displays of divine energy."[169]

(5) Prophecy – This refers to the oral delivery of a Spirit-inspired message from God. The prophet was God's mouthpiece. This is clear in such Old Testament texts as Ex. 7:1-2 and Deut. 18:20-22, and from 1 Cor. 14:29-31 where prophesying is described clearly as the giving of a revelation received from God. I am aware that some seek to distinguish NT prophecy from that of the OT, claiming that NT prophecy was or could be mixed with error, but I think that is a mistake. I agree with Thomas Schreiner when he says, "To sum up, there is no compelling evidence that New Testament prophets spoke both truth and error. Like the Old Testament prophets, they spoke the word of the Lord accurately."[170] Indeed, Paul says in Eph. 2:20 that the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, which suggests that the attempt to distinguish apostles from prophets in term of infallibility is off course.

(6) Discernments of spirits – This is the Spirit-given ability to distinguish the work of demonic forces from the work of the Holy Spirit, including distinguishing false prophets from true. Schreiner states, "Those who had the gift of distinguishing spirits were able to discern whether the prophecies and interpreted tongues

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[168] See, Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter of James*, Pillar New Testament Commentary, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021), 311-312; J. Alec Motyer, *The Message of James*, BST, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 185-189.
[169] Carson (1987), 40.
[170] Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul Apostle of God's Glory in Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 363.

were truly from God. Such a gift was practical for the community indeed, since many false prophets threatened the young churches."[171]

(7) Kinds of tongues – This is the Spirit-inspired ability to speak in a language one did not know. An example is given in Acts 2:5-11. As you can see from the online article I mentioned, I do not subscribe to the view that it was gibberish or some kind of non-human language.

(8) Interpretation of tongues – This is the Spirit-inspired ability to translate into one's own language the foreign language uttered by the tongue speaker. Note that tongues and interpretation of tongues occurs last in Paul's list. He probably did this because his readers were far too prone to exalt this one gift.

d. Verse 11 sums up the point thus far: The one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing individually to each one as he wills.

(1) The Spirit is sovereign in this matter; he gives the gifts as he chooses. So just because someone does not possess a certain gift does not mean he is any less spiritual.

(2) The point is the same for us. Even though the Spirit is no longer choosing to give miraculous gifts, as I understand it, he still gives different gifts to different Christians as he sees fit. So no one gift or group of gifts can be made the acid test of spirituality or the basis for looking down one's nose at those who do not possess it.

3. Body of Christ analogized to human body (12:12-30)

a. Just as a human body is a unity made up of many diverse members, so it is with the body of Christ (12:12-14)

> **[12]For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though being many, are one body, so also is Christ. [13]For indeed in one Spirit we all were baptized so as to become one body – whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free men – and one Spirit all were caused to drink. [14]For indeed the body is not one member but many.**

(1) To press the point about the diversity that exists within the church, Paul adopts a common analogy from antiquity and applies it to the Corinthian situation. Paul says in v. 12 that just as the human body is a unity made up of many diverse members, so it is with the body of Christ. Verses 13 and 14 then elaborate on the two

[171] Schreiner (2001), 364.

elements of unity and diversity. This is evident from the fact both verses begin with the identical and rather unusual phrase "For indeed."

(2) Verse 13 explains the basis of their unity, how they, though many, are in fact one body. The answer is that they all have received the Spirit. He says, "For indeed, in one Spirit we all were baptized so as to become (*eis* taken as purposive) one body." He then repeats that concept in a piece of Semitic parallelism, "and one Spirit *all* were caused to drink (or all were watered or drenched)." (A similar understanding would result from taking *kai* in the last clause of the verse epexegetically.)

(a) His point is that *all* who are in Christ, whether Jew or Greek, slave or free, comprise a unity because they have all received the one Spirit. That is how they became a body. *All* Christians have been baptized in/with the Holy Spirit. The preposition here (*en*) is the same preposition used in the other six references to baptism in/with the Spirit (Mat. 3:11; Mk. 1:8; Lk. 3:16; Jn. 1:33; Acts 1:5, 11:16). In none of those instances is it translated "by," so I do not believe it should be so translated here. Carson states:

> In the other six instances, related to the prophecy of John the Baptist, Christ as the agent does the baptizing, and the Holy Spirit is the medium or sphere *in* which we are baptized. Moreover, whenever the verb *baptize* is used in the New Testament, it is the *medium* of the baptism – water, fire, cloud, and so forth – that is expressed using this preposition ἐν (*en*), not the *agent*.[172]

(b) This sense of the preposition, taking it as "in/with" instead of "by," is supported by the parallel description in the final clause of the verse: "and one Spirit all were caused to drink (or all were watered or drenched)." In the imagery of that clause, the Spirit is *received* (drunk) by the Christian; he is not the agent of the baptizing.

(c) This reception of the Spirit, this being "baptized in/with the Spirit," takes place, of course, at the time one becomes a Christian. As Paul suggested in 12:3 and made clear in Rom. 8:9, there is no such thing as a Christian without the Spirit.

(d) Since water baptism is the time that a person becomes a Christian, it should not surprise us to find Peter in Acts 2:38 telling the crowd on the Day of Pentecost, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." When the penitent believer submits to water baptism he concurrently is "baptized in/with the Spirit," meaning he receives the Holy Spirit as a gift. This is what Jesus referred to in Jn. 3:5 as being "born of water and Spirit."

(3) Verse 14 elaborates on the main point, the diversity that exists within this spiritual body. He says, "For indeed, the body is not one member but

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[172] Carson (1987), 47.

many." The body is indeed a unified whole, but it is made up of many different parts. Those seeking to make uniformity the test of the Spirit were missing the mark.

Excursus on the Spirit's Coming and His Manifestations in Acts 2, 8, 10, and 19 and on the Spirit's Association with Water Baptism

Let me detour from Paul's train of thought to say a word about the Spirit's coming and his manifestations in Acts 2, 8, 10, and 19 and about the Spirit's association with water baptism. Do not turn me off before I've finished painting the picture. I have labored to make this digestible, but I think it will require your full attention. If you stick with me, I hope you will find that some pieces fit together in a more satisfying way. But you will have to judge that after you hear me out. I am going to assume you are familiar with the accounts in Acts.

The Spirit's Coming and His Manifestations in Acts 2, 8, 10, and 19

1. It is common, at least in our circles, to hear that "baptism in/with the Spirit" is *not* the gift of the Spirit that all Christians receive at conversion, the gift that accompanies and indicates salvation. Rather, it is said to be a work that is separate and distinct from salvation, a work done only in Acts 2 and 10, whereby the Spirit enabled certain individuals to speak in tongues. I think Paul's words here contradict that understanding. He says *all* Christians have indeed been baptized in/with the Spirit.

a. The notion that being baptized in/with the Spirit refers to some kind of unique endowment of the Spirit that causes one to speak in tongues, something that is separate and distinct from the common reception of the Spirit at conversion, comes from the fact the Jews who were baptized in/with the Spirit at Pentecost in Acts 2 and the Gentiles who were baptized in/with the Spirit at Cornelius's house in Acts 10 immediately spoke in tongues. Some have concluded from this that baptism in/with the Spirit *necessarily* results in tongue speaking, and since not all Christians, not all who received the gift of the Spirit, speak in tongues, they further concluded that baptism in/with the Spirit must be separate and distinct from the gift of the Spirit that accompanies and indicates salvation. So in their view, Paul in 1 Cor. 12:13 must be saying something other than what he quite clearly seems to be saying.

b. The problem is with the assertion that baptism in/with the Spirit *necessarily* results in tongue speaking. The fact those baptized in/with the Spirit in Acts 2 and 10 spoke in tongues need not mean that *all* who are baptized in/with the Spirit will speak in tongues. That's like seeing an artist create various paintings of flowers and then asserting that all of his paintings must be of flowers. It is logically invalid; it is the fallacy of unwarranted extrapolation. If, as Paul says, all Christians have been baptized in/with the Spirit, the correct conclusion is that the Spirit in/with whom all Christians are baptized does not always give the same gifts, does not always manifest his indwelling presence in the same way. Indeed, Paul makes that very point in 1 Cor. 12:4-11.

c. I think the people in Acts 2 and 10, who are said to have been baptized in/with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5, 11:16), received the same gift of the Holy Spirit that every Christian

receives. Paul says in 1 Cor. 12:13 that all Christians are baptized in the Spirit, and Peter says in Acts 10:45 that the Gentiles at Cornelius's house received "the gift of the Spirit," the very phrase he used in Acts 2:38 to speak of the gift that is bestowed in conjunction with salvation. But in those cases the Spirit immediately manifested his indwelling presence by enabling the new Christians to speak in tongues and prompting them to do so. Why is that? Stay tuned.

2. The reception of the Spirit by the Samaritans in Acts 8 and John's disciples in Acts 19 is not labeled the "gift of the Spirit" or their being "baptized in the Spirit," but the text states expressly that they received or had come upon them the *Holy Spirit himself* not simply *an ability* given by the Spirit. There is a difference between the Spirit, who is a divine person, and the gifts the Spirit gives, between the Spirit himself and how he manifests his presence, and receipt of the Spirit is throughout the New Testament an accompaniment and indication of salvation. His presence in a person is regeneration and spiritual life.

a. As in Acts 2 and 10, the Spirit in Act 8 and 19 immediately manifested his presence in the new Christians by enabling and prompting them to speak in tongues or do some other miraculous feat. Tongues and prophesying are identified in the case of John's disciples, and some unspecified miraculous manifestation seems implied in the case of the Samaritans.

b. And as with Acts 2 and 10, I think the believers in Acts 8 and 19 received the same gift of the Spirit or baptism in the Spirit that every Christian receives. In other words, it is not that they received some working of the Spirit unrelated to salvation but that in their cases the Spirit chose to mark his indwelling presence, the common experience of Christians, by miraculous manifestations. Indeed, Paul makes clear in 1 Corinthians 12 that tongues-speaking is a gift given to *Christians*, a manifestation of the one Spirit all Christians share, so why assume in these cases it is divorced from the indwelling of the Spirit that accompanies salvation?

3. If you are following me, the question on your mind is: If the believers in Acts 2, 8, 10, and 19 received the gift of the Spirit or baptism in the Spirit that all Christians normally receive at conversion, why in those four cases did the Spirit immediately signify by miraculous manifestation his having come to dwell in those new Christians? Why in those four cases but not in the countless others?

a. We are not told directly, but I think the answer is suggested by the texts. It is not that these people received some work of the Spirit that was unrelated to salvation, something separate and distinct from the indwelling Spirit common to all Christians, but that the Spirit on those particular occasions marked his indwelling presence with miraculous manifestations in order to send a message. And the message he was sending is tied to the fact each of these conversions marked the first extension of the gospel to a new, definable group.

b. Before going further, let me address briefly a possible objection to my assertion that each of these conversions marked the first extension of the gospel to a new, definable

group. Specifically, I want to address the claim that the conversion of John's disciples in Acts 19 did *not* represent the first extension of the gospel to the group "John's disciples" because Apollos was a disciple of John and was converted prior to those in Acts 19 (see Acts 18:24-28).

(1) It is by no means clear that Apollos was a disciple of John. He was a learned or eloquent Jew from Alexandria who had somewhere at some point, perhaps very recently, received accurate but limited instruction about Jesus, which information he conveyed to others enthusiastically (Acts 18:24-25). He had been informed about John's baptism, perhaps from the story of Jesus having been baptized by John,[173] but there is no indication he had received that baptism or thought it had ongoing applicability. He may have thought John's baptism, being one of repentance with a view to the coming Christ (Acts 19:4), was fulfilled with Christ's coming and taught about it simply as a witness to Jesus' identity, as a God-given ministry announcing Jesus' arrival. Brian Dennert states in *John the Baptist and the Jewish Setting of Matthew* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 63 (fn. 134), "There is no reason to see the expression ["knew only the baptism of John"] as indicating that Apollos was a disciple of John." Rick Strelan similarly states in *Paul, Artemis, and the Jews in Ephesus* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1996), 221:

> A number of scholars think Apollos belonged to John's community and was . . . "one of his ardent disciples" (McCasland 1958: 229). But this is not self-evident from the text. Nor does Apollos' knowledge only of John's baptism necessarily mean that he himself had been baptized with such a baptism. Luke is talking about Apollos' *knowledge*, not his experience or practice. The verb ἐπίστασθαι is used regularly in *Acts* (10:28; 15:7; 19:15, 25; 20:18; 22:19; 24:10; 26:26) in the sense of factual, practical knowledge. Apollos knows as fact the baptism of John, but he knows it as something outside of his *own* experience – he was not baptized with John's baptism.

(2) The point of the text is that the teaching Apollos received included knowledge of John's baptism, but he had not been taught about the Spirit-related baptism instituted by Christ. When Priscilla and Aquila heard Apollos and realized immediately the inadequacy of his knowledge, they privately instructed him in the additional things he needed to know, which no doubt included the baptism about which he was expressly ignorant. Luke does not say Apollos was thereafter baptized, but I think that is a reasonable inference. Throughout Acts Luke has made clear the significance of baptism. He often speaks of people "believing" without specifying they were baptized, but their baptism is rightly assumed from the larger narrative (e.g., 4:4, 9:42, 11:21, 13:12, 13:48, 14:1, 17:12, 17:34, 18:18a). So it is not a stretch to think Luke intended the reader to conclude Apollos had acted on his new knowledge about baptism. Indeed, before his instruction from Priscilla and Aquila, he spoke in the synagogue; after that instruction, the brothers encouraged him

[173] L. D. Hurst states in "Apollos" in David Noel Freedman, ed., *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:301 (emphasis supplied): "It is most likely that this knowledge [of John's baptism] came either from contact with some of John's disciples or *from a fragmentary report of the events in Palestine between A.D. 25-30*."

and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. Coleman A. Baker states in *Identity, Memory, and Narrative in Early Christianity* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 169:

> [Apollos'] only shortcoming, according to Luke, is that he "knew only the baptism of John" (18:25). The implication of Apollos' description, therefore, is that he believes that Jesus is the resurrected Messiah but he has not undergone the boundary crossing rituals of baptism in Jesus' name and being filled with the Spirit. Once when Apollos was speaking in the synagogue, Priscilla and Aquila heard him and "took him aside and explained the Way [of God] more accurately to him" (18:26). This reference implies that they had explained the boundary crossing rituals to Apollos and that he underwent the rituals to join the Christian group.

(3) There is no indication that the twelve "disciples" in Acts 19 had been taught by Apollos. It seems from 18:26 that Apollos's inadequate knowledge was corrected at the start of his time in Ephesus, and it is difficult to believe the church in Ephesus would allow John's baptism to be administered during Apollos's tenure there. Those in Acts 19 represent an ignorance similar to that of Apollos, but whereas he knew only about John's baptism, they assumed its continuing validity and had submitted to it. Apollos was unaware of Christian baptism, having only heard about John's; they were disciples of John, people who practiced an obsolete baptism in place of Christian baptism. Paul Trebilco states in *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 123, "We have no reason to think that Apollos had any strong connection with John the Baptist, and so no reason to suggest that Apollos and the 12 were connected historically."[174]

c. Notice that Acts 2, 8, 10, and 19 each involved multiple conversions of members of a group – Jews, Samaritans, Gentiles, and disciples of John – rather than conversions of single individuals. As *group* conversions, they readily serve as representatives of the group to which they belong. The giving of the Spirit to these *group representatives* signified or confirmed the availability of the gospel's blessings to all members of the respective groups (that significance is alluded to in Acts 11:18, 15:8), and for that reason the Spirit's indwelling presence was specially and objectively indicated by miraculous manifestations. That signaled unmistakably that each of those groups were indeed to be part of the harvest.

d. The availability of the gospel's blessings to these groups having been confirmed objectively, there is no hint that subsequent conversions within the groups were accompanied by such manifestations (see, e.g., Acts 2:41, 4:4, 5:14, 8:25 [conversions implied], 8:38-39, 9:17-18, 11:20-21, 13:12, 13:48, 14:1, 14:21, 16:15, 16:32-33, 17:12, 17:34, 18:8, 22:16). That is why Peter referred all the way back to the events of Pentecost when explaining his experience at Cornelius's house (Acts 11:15-17). It was obviously quite rare for speaking in tongues to accompany the initial giving of the Spirit, the receipt of the Spirit on conversion.

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[174] Trebilco thinks Apollos was baptized into John's baptism, but despite that he says, "Nothing suggests he was John's disciple."

e. This does not mean that later converts within a group were permanently deprived of such spiritual gifts. On the contrary, Paul and some of the Corinthians clearly exercised the gift of tongues. It simply means that those later converts did not receive such gifts (or were not moved to exercise them) at the time they initially received the Spirit. So in their case, the gift and its exercise did not function as a marker of the Spirit's arrival. It did not serve as a sign that the blessings of the gospel were available for that group; that had already occurred.

The Spirit's Association with Water Baptism

1. As for the Spirit's association with water baptism, on two occasions after Pentecost the gift of the Spirit was separated from water baptism. Both times it was done for a specific reason.

a. In Acts 8, the Samaritans *accepted* Philip's message about Christ and were *baptized*, but God temporarily withheld the gift of the Spirit from them to teach them an important lesson.

(1) Contrary to what you may have heard, what was withheld from the Samaritans was the same gift of the Spirit normally received at baptism. This is clear from the fact the text speaks repeatedly of them receiving or being given "the Holy Spirit" himself (not a Spirit-given ability) and the fact Luke signals in 8:16 that the gift withheld was the gift normally associated with baptism. He says the Spirit had "not yet" come upon the Samaritans (contrary to what one would normally expect regarding baptized believers) and that they had "only" been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus (contrary to what normally happens in baptism).

(2) The Spirit was withheld (meaning the normal timing of baptism and receipt of the Spirit was altered) until Jewish apostles from the Jerusalem church came to Samaria. That was done, I am convinced, to teach the Samaritans that the Jews were the true Messianic community, the ones through whom the Messiah came and to whom he was first preached. (Philip, being a Hellenistic Jew, a "Greekified" Jew, would not send a clear message in that regard.) Despite the longstanding claim by the Samaritans that they and not the Jews were the true people of God (see, e.g., Jn. 4:22), they were shown through this episode to be no different than the Gentiles in terms of salvation history. The believing Jews were God's olive tree and the Samaritans, like the Gentiles (Rom. 11:11-24), were wild shoots that were grafted into that tree.

(3) This lesson was intended to prevent the Samaritans from starting a competing Samaritan church, as they had done with Judaism. Once the point about Jewish priority in salvation history had been made, Samaritan conversions followed the normal pattern (i.e., the Spirit was received upon baptism).

b. The Gentiles at Cornelius's house in Acts 10, on the other hand, received the Spirit *after* they came to faith but *before* being baptized.

(1) That it was after they came to faith is clear from Acts 15:8-9 where Peter tells the Jerusalem Council that God gave those Gentiles the Holy Spirit, *having cleansed* (καθαρίσας) their hearts *by faith*. The gift followed the cleansing by faith. When speaking to the church in Jerusalem Peter in Acts 11:17 equated the gift of the Spirit given to the Gentiles on that occasion with the gift the Jews had received *when they believed* in the Lord Jesus Christ. I. Howard Marshall rightly notes in *The Acts of the Apostles*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 193-194, "Since elsewhere the gift of the Spirit comes to people who repent and believe (*cf.* 11:17f.), the implication is twofold: first, that the Gentiles present responded to the message with faith; and, secondly, that God accepted them and sealed their faith with the gift of the Spirit."

(2) The giving of the Spirit prior to baptism was done to show the Jewish Christians present that under the new covenant there was no place for a Jewish nationalism that would withhold baptism from believing Gentiles until they submitted to circumcision. To break through Jewish resistance to administering baptism to the uncircumcised, God *demonstrably saved* the Gentiles (meaning the Spirit flagged his presence in them by miraculous manifestations) prior to baptism. In doing so, he indicated clearly that it was his will for Gentiles to be saved *as Gentiles*. And since baptism is the rite in association with which salvation normally is granted, his will that Gentiles be saved as Gentiles was rightly understood to mean that baptism must not be withheld from believing Gentiles. As Peter concluded in Acts 10:47-48, and repeated in Acts 11:17, to do so would be to oppose God.

(3) Now I know some reject any possibility of salvation prior to baptism because they believe the norm of salvation occurring at the time of baptism is absolute. If God ever were to grant salvation prior to baptism he would, in their view, contradict his revelation about the nature and purpose of baptism. So whatever the text in Acts 10 means it cannot mean that these Gentiles were saved prior to baptism, despite the strong indications to the contrary. (I flesh out those indications in my online paper "Cornelius and Rebaptism.")

(4) To that I say the granting of salvation prior to baptism in the case of the Gentiles at Cornelius's house is consistent with a strong baptismal theology if one recognizes that God has nowhere bound himself never to alter the timing of salvation in relation to baptism. In other words, he nowhere declared that he would never make an exception to that timing. The *norm* of salvation at the time of baptism is clearly set forth in Peter's programmatic statement in Acts 2:38 and confirmed throughout Scripture and church history, but it is an over-reading to conclude that God left himself no room to vary the order of things in fulfillment of his purposes in salvation history. I think Acts 10 is a case of his doing just that. He on that occasion varied the order in a special circumstance to make a point to the Jewish Christians. (In Acts 8 he made a point by delaying the Spirit's reception.) Making an exception to the norm for a specific theological purpose does not do away with the norm. If an ambulance racing to an emergency were excepted from the requirement to stop at a red light, it would not mean there was no requirement to stop at a red light.

2. I do not consider the receipt of the Spirit by John's disciples in Acts 19 to be an occasion when the gift of the Spirit was separated from water baptism. Rather, the laying on of Paul's hands that Luke mentions in 19:6 should be understood as part of the baptism rite of 19:5.

a. In Heb. 6:1-2 the writer lists three pairs of teachings that he includes among the basic things, six items that "span the journey of faith from initial repentance to final judgment" (Koester, 311). In the middle pairing, he speaks of "instruction about immersions and [the] laying on of hands," thus associating baptism and the laying on of hands.

b. I think James Dunn is correct in stating in *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1970), 87, "baptism and the laying on of hands [in Acts 19:5ff.] are the *one* ceremony." Frederick Dale Bruner states in *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 211, "The laying on of hands was no doubt an integral part of the baptismal service, with prayer, and should not be separated from baptism as an independent rite granting the Spirit." Gerhard Krodel states in *Acts*, Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing, 1986), 358, "The imposition of hands in connection with Baptism reflects the liturgical practice of Luke's church. Baptism mediates the gift of the Holy Spirit . . ." Joseph Fitzmyer states in *The Acts of the Apostles*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 642, "The episode emphasizes Christian baptism as a baptism in the Spirit, which has superseded the preliminary baptism conferred by John in Judea." Eckhard Schnabel states in *Acts*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 789, "When Paul baptizes these disciples of John, he lays his hands on them (which may have been his practice) and they receive the Holy Spirit."

c. Indeed, the relevant text could be rendered: "On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus and, Paul having laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them." Dunn writes (p. 87), "The laying on of hands is almost parenthetical; the sequence of events is 'baptism (resulting in) . . . Spirit.'" I suspect Luke highlighted the laying-on-of-hands aspect of the baptisms in Acts 19 to parallel Paul's role with that of Peter and John in Acts 8.

d. Unlike Jewish proselyte baptism (which probably was practiced at this time) in which the person immersed *himself*, Christian baptism is done to someone by someone else. The person being baptized is laid hold of by a saint, buried in the water, and then raised; it is a rite of human contact. (Beyond that, we hug the baptized person and then pray for him while holding his hand or shoulder.) So though we may not pay much attention today to the human-contact aspect of baptism, I think we nevertheless practice it; it is inherent in the way we understand baptism to be conducted.

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b. The body consists of different *parts (12:15-20)*

15If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," it is not for this reason not of the body. 16And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," it is not for this

reason not of the body. [17]If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole [body] were a hearing [organ], where would the sense of smell be? [18]But as it is, God placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as he wished. [19]Now if all were one member, where would the body be? [20]But as it is, there are many members but one body.

(1) The fact a foot is not a hand does not mean it is not a part of the body, and the fact an ear is not an eye does not mean that it is not a part of the body. Rather, the body consists of a multitude of *different* parts. That Paul has the foot and the ear expressing their alienation from the body probably reflects the alienation felt by those in Corinth without the "required" or status-giving gift (i.e., tongues).

(2) And each of these different parts of the body is arranged or fit together according to God's purpose and design. That is true of the physical body, and it is also true of the church. As Paul said in 12:7, "to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."

c. No part of the body is dispensable (12:21-26)

[21]And the eye is not able to say to the hand, "I do not have need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I do not have need of you." [22]Rather, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are much more necessary, [23]and what [members] of the body we consider to be less honorable, to these we grant more abundant honor, and our unpresentable [members] have more abundant presentability, [24]but our presentable members have no need. But God composed the body, giving more abundant honor to the lacking [members], [25]so that there not be division in the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. [26]And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with [it]; if [one] member is glorified, all the members rejoice with [it].

(1) No part of the body (eye/head) can say to any other part (hand/feet) that it is not needed. Each part has its own unique function, and no part is insignificant, unimportant, or inconsequential. As Garland notes, "The failure of one little valve can shut down the whole bodily system."[175]

(2) Again, this probably reflects the attitude of those in Corinth with the gift of tongues toward those who lacked it. They saw them as less spiritual, to the point of being unnecessary and unworthy members of the church.

(3) In the human body, the parts that seem weaker (probably internal organs) actually play a vital role; and to those parts that we, in one respect, consider

[175] Garland (2003), 594.

less honorable and unpresentable (i.e., sex organs), we give more honor and presentability by the way we protect and cover/clothe them.

(4) God composed the body in this fashion, compensating for parts that needed honor by giving it to them, so that no part would be despised. The body is not at war with itself; no part of the body thinks it would be better off without any other part. Instead, the body is a whole in which all parts have the same care for one another. There are no outcasts or second-class members. When any part suffers, the whole suffers; when any part is glorified, the whole is glorified.

d. As with the human body, God has assigned different roles to different parts in the body of Christ (12:27-30)

> **[27]Now you are the body of Christ and individually members [of it].**
> **[28]And God placed some in the church – first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helpful deeds, acts of guidance, [and] kinds of tongues. [29]Not all are apostles, are they? Not all are prophets, are they? Not all are teachers, are they? Not all are [workers of] miracles, are they? [30]Not all have gifts of healings, do they? Not all speak in tongues, do they? Not all interpret, do they?**

(1) As the body of Christ, the same principle of diversity in unity applies. Just as God composed the body of different functioning parts, so he has composed the church. The individual members of the church have different roles/gifts.

(2) God made some to be apostles, some prophets, and some teachers; some were enabled to work miracles, some to heal, some to perform special acts of service, some to provide special guidance (wise counselors), and some to speak in tongues. (It is noteworthy that Paul does not limit divine manifestation, the Spirit's gifts, to the overtly supernatural; he includes the gifts of "helps" and "guidances" in the list.)

(3) The emphasis is on the fact that only some, not all, are given certain roles/gifts. This is clear from vv. 29-30 where the rhetorical questions expect a negative answer, e.g., "Not all are apostles, are they?" Contrary to the Corinthian warped exaltation of tongues, all are to be appreciated for their contribution to the whole. No gift is any less a work of the Spirit, and no gift is unnecessary. All are blended into a harmonious whole.

(4) Now what does all this say about the attitude of so many in our culture that one can be right with Christ while having nothing to do with his church? You've heard it – "I love God; it's 'organized religion' I avoid." As Blomberg remarks:

> All of Paul's emphasis on unity within diversity calls into question the behavior of a growing numbers of Americans who claim to be religious, believe in God and even Christ, and yet drop out of organized church life or

at least fade to its periphery. In a land still heavily influenced by a heritage of rugged individualism, believers need to work ever harder to demonstrate that Christianity is not a merely personal religion but fundamentally corporate. Even evangelical language for conversion betrays this bias: a "*personal* relationship with Jesus Christ." That is the necessary starting point, but we dare not stop until that relationship leads to intimate *inter*personal relationships with other Christians.[176]

4. Exhortation to be enthusiastic regarding the "greater gifts" (12:31)

[31]But be enthusiastic about the greater gifts. And yet I show you a far better way.

a. The verb ζηλόω (ζηλοῦτε could be an indicative, but with most, I take it as an imperative) literally means "to be zealous." Though it often has the connotation of striving for its object, the thing for which one is zealous, I think the focus here is on the *attitude* Paul wants the church to have toward certain gifts. He is not telling them to strive to *obtain* or *acquire* certain gifts; after all, they are gifts given by the Spirit as he wills. Rather, he wants the *community* to be enthusiastic about, to appreciate and value, the gifts he labels "greater." It is like a father exhorting his family at Christmastime, "Be enthusiastic (or excited) about gifts that induce learning." He is trying to reorient the family's evaluation of gifts, not instructing individuals to strive for certain gifts.

b. There is a wide diversity of gifts given by the one Spirit, but Paul instructs the Corinthian church to be enthusiastic about the *greater* gifts, which he is going to explain are not the gifts (or gift) about which they currently are enthusiastic ("jazzed"). He is going to adjust their perception of what constitutes the greater gifts by painting for them in chapter 13 the surpassing value of love. That is why he says, "And yet . . ."

c. In light of the paramount nature of love for the Christian and its importance to spiritual gifts, the "greater gifts" are those that bestow the greatest benefit on one's brothers and sisters. The Corinthians only think the gifts for which they are zealous, the gifts they exalt or prize, are the "greater gifts" because they are not evaluating them by the criterion of love.

d. The gifts they need to prize are those that build up the church, which he will explain are those that are intelligible, those that communicate. Thomas Edgar states, "The normal meaning of *zeloo*, 'be zealous or enthusiastic,' fits perfectly in this verse and context as an exhortation to the entire assembly to be enthusiastic for the

[176] Blomberg (1994), 254.

edifying gift of prophecy rather than the more 'showy' gift of tongues."[177] In 14:1 he repeats the point from 12:31 that they are to be enthusiastic about spiritual things, but he prefaces it with the need to pursue love, the result of which combination is that they be enthusiastic about prophesying in particular.

e. This does not contradict what he said about no gift being less spiritual or unnecessary. All gifts are spiritual and necessary, but particularly in an assembly setting, some are more valuable in that they are more beneficial for building up the saints.

5. Discussion of love (13:1-13)

a. Love, not some spiritual gift, is the indispensable quality in a Christian's character (13:1-3)

> **If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or clanging cymbal. [2]And if I have prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but I do not have love, I am nothing. [3]And if I dole out all my possessions, and if I hand over my body that I might boast, but do not have love, I am in no way benefited.**

(1) The root issue regarding their spiritual gifts is whether love is radiated in their exercise. As Garland writes:

> Far from being a displaced hymn singing the praises of love as a virtue, chapter 13 is a call to a way of life that addresses real problems in the church. The purpose is to debunk "self-centered spirituality" (Thiselton 2000: 1028) and to exhort the Corinthians to pursue love (Spicq 1965: 141). . . . Godet (1887: 237) eloquently gets at the heart of the matter: "Experience proves that a man, after opening his heart with faith to the joy of salvation, may soon cease to walk in the way of sanctification, shrink from complete self-surrender, and, while making progress in mystical feeling, become more full of self and devoid of love for others than he ever was." Paul reminds the Corinthians that love, not spiritual gifts, is the marrow of their Christian existence.[178]

(2) The point of these three verses is that love, not some spiritual gift, is the indispensable quality in a Christian's character. No gift or deed, however spectacular or costly, is of any value in the eyes of God if performed by one devoid of love. As Paul indicates in the next section (vv. 4-7), love is not an emotion or a sentiment but is fundamentally a disposition toward another that produces an array of behavior, a whole way

[177] Thomas Edgar, *Satisfied by the Promise of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996), 43.
[178] Garland (2003), 608.

of relating to other people. Those who do not love are without spiritual status in the kingdom of God, regardless of what they may do.

(3) Paul pointedly opens with a reference to tongues because that is where the problem was. When he says "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels," he is not claiming that they spoke in anything other than human languages. He is speaking about himself, not them, and refers to "tongues of angels" simply to stress the point that being spiritually empowered to speak another language, even if it be the grandest of all languages, will not impress God if the one speaking it lacks love.

(a) In the sentence, "If I fight with the strength of men and of angels but cannot recognize my enemy, it profits me nothing," the reference to angels clearly is hyperbole to stress the importance of knowing the enemy. It need not mean that I actually fight with the strength of angels. Likewise, when Paul says, "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal," the reference to angels is hyperbole to stress the importance of love. It need not mean that he actually spoke in angel language. (Then again, it may be that "human language" is also the language of angels [e.g., Lk. 2:13-14; Rev. 5:11-12], and Paul characterizes the gift of tongues in this grand fashion to emphasize the importance of love.)

(b) The hypothetical nature of what Paul is saying is apparent from the fact he says "And if I have prophecy and know *all* mysteries and *all* knowledge . . ." As 13:9, 12 make clear, Paul is well aware that in this life we will not have complete knowledge. His point is that *even if* he were to be given this complete knowledge, that gift would not benefit him in the eyes of God if he lacked love. Schreiner states:

> The references to the language of angels should not be pressed, for what we have here is hyperbole. We see a clear example of hyperbole in the discussion of prophecy in v. 2, and the same is probably the case here. . . . [T]hus it seems likely that we should not read out of this that some of the Corinthians spoke in the language of angels. Whether Paul believed some believers actually spoke in the languages of angels cannot be determined from this verse. The main point of the verse is easy to grasp: even if the believers speak in the most exalted languages imaginable, if they do not have love they are like instruments that make an annoying and irritating sound. Their gifts are contradicted by their lives. Tongue-speaking without love is compared to a 'noisy gong' (NRSV) and a *clanging cymbal*. It is like a reverberation that will not stop or the shrillness of a cymbal that grates on the nerves.[179]

b. Practical description of the love he is talking about (13:4-7)

[179] Schreiner (2018), 273.

[4]Love is patient; love is kind; it does not envy; [love] does not boast; it is not puffed up; [5]it does not behave shamefully; it does not seek its own things; it is not provoked to anger; it does not take account of evil; [6]it does not rejoice over injustice but rejoices together in the truth; [7]it puts up with all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

(1) In these four verses Paul provides a practical description of the love he is talking about. As I said, it is not primarily an emotion or a sentiment but is fundamentally a disposition toward another that produces an array of behavior, a whole way of relating to other people. To quote Garland again, "Love is dynamic and active, not something static. He is not talking about some inner feeling or emotion. Love is not conveyed by words; it has to be shown. It can be defined only by what it does and does not do."[180] Their conduct with regard to gifts was apparently exposing a lack of such love, and a disregard for love characterized their evaluation of the gifts.

(2) Positively, Paul says that love is patient and kind.

(a) Patience includes the endurance of injuries without retaliation, "to bear up under provocation without complaint" (BDAG). For instance, Prov. 19:11 says, "A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is his glory to overlook an offense." This is a message the "inferior" undoubtedly needed to hear as they were made to feel alienated from the body.

(b) Kindness, of course, refers to actively doing good on behalf of another, responding to them with a tender heart. Those with feelings of superiority especially needed to internalize this.

(3) Negatively, Paul says that love:

(a) does not envy or brag – This was especially relevant to the "inferior" and the "superior," respectively. It would be easy for those looked down on to have negative feelings toward those seen as superior, to begrudge their standing. And it would be easy for the "spiritual elite" to brag about their great spirituality.

(b) is not puffed up – Thinking too highly of oneself, being obsessed with one's own importance, is at odds with respecting and caring about the welfare of others. If it is all about me, then it is not about you, but love means that it is about you.

(c) does not behave shamefully – Love does not dishonor or treat others rudely, as though their sensibilities and desire for respect are trivial in light of one's own wishes.

[180] Garland (2003), 616.

(d) does not seek its own things – Rather than self-satisfaction, love seeks the good of others. This is key in terms of evaluating the various gifts in the assembly.

(e) is not easily angered – There is not a hostility just below the surface that is waiting for an offense at which to take umbrage. Love is forbearing, or as we might say, cuts its object some slack.

(f) does not keep a record of evil – It does not nurture or cling to grievances but seeks to heal them as soon as possible; it seeks reconciliation, not to prolong estrangement.

(g) does not delight over injustice/wrongdoing but rejoices together in the truth – It does not delight when another is the victim of injustice, take pleasure in the perpetration of a wrong against another. Rather, it rejoices with that person when the truth comes out, when justice is done and he or she is vindicated. Alternatively, it does not delight when another succumbs to wrongdoing; rather, it rejoices with that person as he lives in the truth of the gospel.

(4) Again speaking positively, Paul says that love:

(a) puts up with and endures all things – It does so for the benefit of the other person (see 9:12). Love is stubborn in its commitment to bless its object; it will not be put off by difficulty or even wounds.

(b) believes and hopes in all things (i.e., always, in all circumstances) – It always believes that its object is not beyond help and hopes that its object will be blessed. Love does not write the other person off. Even "tough love," which can be misinterpreted as a lack of love, is done in the hope of blessing its object.

c. Love is superior to spiritual gifts (13:8-13)

> **[8]Love never falls. But if there are prophecies, they will be brought to an end; if there are tongues, they will stop; if there is knowledge, it will be brought to an end. [9]For we know in part and we prophesy in part, [10]but whenever the complete [state] comes, the partial will be brought to an end. [11]When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I thought as a child, I reasoned as a child; when I became a man, I brought the ways of a child to an end. [12]For we now see through a mirror, in a dim reflection, but then [we will see] face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, even as I was fully known. [13]And now faith, hope, and love remain, these three, and the greatest of these is love.**

(1) The point of this paragraph is that love is superior to the spiritual gifts because the gifts are only for now whereas love is for both now and forever,

for today and the eternal state. Love never ends, but prophecies, tongues, and miraculous knowledge, and presumably other gifts, will not proceed into the eternal state. That is the point beyond which they cannot go because they are superfluous in the full light of the eschaton.

(a) The vast majority of commentators recognize that the "perfect" or "complete" state mentioned in v. 10 refers to the eternal state, consummation of the kingdom at the return of Christ (e.g., Conzelmann, Carson, Mare, Fee, Schrage, Oster, Blomberg, Thiselton, Fitzmyer, Garland, Ciampa and Rosner, Taylor). Taylor states, "The coming of 'perfection,' literally, 'the perfect thing,' undoubtedly refers to the consummation of all things, which is clarified by the language of 13:12, seeing 'face to face' and 'knowing fully even as I am fully known.'"[181]

(b) Some claim the perfect or complete state of v. 10 is the completion of the New Testament (others claim it is acquisition of love or maturity by the church), but as Taylor indicates, that does not square with the description of the complete state given in v. 12 (or v. 10b for that matter that speaks of the partial being brought to an end). It fits comfortably, however, with Paul's declaration in 1 Cor. 4:5 that the Lord *at his coming* "will bring to light the hidden things of darkness and will display the motives of hearts." In contrast, there is no indication the Corinthians had been taught that a new canon of Scripture was in the process of being written, so there is no reason to think the Corinthians would have taken the coming of the "complete state" as a reference to completion of the canon.

(c) Some are driven to identify the complete state of v. 10 with completion of the New Testament because they think identifying it with the eschaton, the final state, means the verse is saying the miraculous gifts *will continue* until Jesus returns, which they are convinced contradicts what is revealed elsewhere. So they reject that meaning in favor of one that proves the gifts ceased long ago, thereby converting a liability into an asset. But it is a false dilemma to think one must *either* reject identifying the complete state of 13:10 with the consummation *or* accept that miraculous gifts continue until the return of Christ.

[1] Even if 13:10 refers to the consummation, as I believe it does, Paul does not say that the gifts mentioned in 13:8 necessarily will continue until that time. The point of 1 Cor. 13:8-13 is that love is superior to the spiritual gifts because the gifts are only for now, whereas love is both for now and forever. Paul's concern is to establish that the gifts will not be part of the eternal state, *not* to pinpoint when they will pass.

[2] He knows that the giving of the gifts is according to the will of the Spirit, so he is not saying that they must continue until the final state. Love never ends, but *even if* prophecies, tongues, miraculous knowledge, and presumably other gifts should exist at the consummation, they will at that time come to an end. (That Paul means *if* there are miraculous gifts *at the consummation* is apparent as it

[181] Taylor (2014), 316.

would make little sense to say *if* there are miraculous gifts in his day after spending all of chapter 12 discussing them.) In other words, that is the latest possible point for their existence, not necessarily how long they actually would exist.[182] For example, if one said, "*If* there are trees in Jerusalem they will be consumed at the Second Coming because they are ill suited for existence in the eternal state," that is not an assertion that trees will still be in Jerusalem at that time. If they disappeared prior to that time through war or disease, the statement would not be false.

(d) The gifts will not proceed into the eternal state because they are partial expressions of the end glory. They are only suited for the overlap of the ages, for this time of the now and the not yet. These gifts, about which the Corinthians were so proud, are fine for our childhood (ouch!), our time on this side of the consummation, but they will have no place in our adulthood, our experience of the final state. Then we will have full knowledge, full understanding, and ultimate communion. There will be no need for the lesser knowledge, understanding, and communion reflected in the gifts.

(2) In the present age, in the time before the consummation, the well-known triad of Christian virtues – faith, hope, and love – will necessarily remain, will continue to be present. But the greatest of these is love because it alone will continue in the eternal state.

(a) Paul mentions faith and hope in conjunction with love because these three constituted a stock formula in early Christian preaching. In other words, they were seen as a unit.

(b) In the sense in which they were used in the triad formula, faith and hope were restricted to the present age. In 2 Cor. 5:7 Paul contrasts *faith* with the final glory in the words "for we walk by faith not by sight" (see also, Heb. 11:1 where faith is "the conviction of things not seen"). In Rom. 8:24 Paul says that we were saved in the *hope* of the resurrection and then adds, "But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has?" When the complete state comes, faith becomes sight and hope is finally realized. Paul wants to clarify that the same is not true of love; it continues.

6. Command to be enthusiastic about the gift of prophecy (14:1-5)

Pursue love, and be enthusiastic about the spiritual things, but rather that you prophesy. [2]For the man who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands [him]; by the Spirit he

[182] As Daniel Wallace states in *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1996), 423, "This verse does not specifically address *when* tongues would cease, although it is giving a *terminus ad quem*: when the perfect comes."

speaks mysteries. [3]But the man who prophesies speaks to men [words of] upbuilding and encouragement and comfort. [4]The man who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the man who prophesies builds up the church. [5]Now I wish you all to speak in tongues, but more that you might prophesy. And greater is the one who prophesies than the one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets so that the church may receive upbuilding.

a. In v. 1 Paul essentially repeats the exhortation of 12:31 in light of his discussion of love. He commands them to follow the way of love and to be enthusiastic about the spiritual things, which command he immediately qualifies with the clause "but rather that you prophesy." This means something like "or more precisely, that you prophesy." In other words, contrary to the frequent rendering "*especially* that you prophesy," he is not urging them to be enthusiastic about gifts in general but, as in 12:31, to be enthusiastic about the *greater gifts*, which are here represented by the gift of prophecy. This is supported by the following:

(1) The exhortation in 12:31 was that they be enthusiastic about the *greater* gifts. 1 Corinthians 14:5 identifies prophecy as a greater gift than tongues (referring to an assembly setting).

(2) They already were "enthusiasts (zealots) of spirits" (14:12), which probably refers to their passion for the gift of tongues. So it would not make sense for Paul to urge them to be enthusiastic with regard to gifts in general.

b. Ciampa and Rosner state:

> The expression [μᾶλλον δὲ] translated *especially* means "*but rather, or rather*, or simply *rather*," and "introduces an expression or thought that supplements and thereby corrects what has preceded" [citing BDAG]. The correction is that they should not seek [be enthusiastic about] just any gifts, but the gift of prophecy in particular, for the reasons to be explained in the rest of the chapter. That is not to say that the other gifts are without value, but that the Corinthians have been wrong to focus their pursuit [enthusiasm] on the gift of tongues when the gift of prophecy provides more of what the church desperately needs (edification) and is more consistent with the concern for others that is the mark of love.[183]

c. The reason they are to be enthusiastic about the gift of prophecy instead of the gift of tongues is that the man who prophesies speaks understandable words of edification, comfort, and encouragement and therefore builds up the church. On the other hand, the man who speaks in a tongue is not understood and therefore builds up only himself, not the church. In an assembly setting, the emphasis is on building up the church.

[183] Ciampa and Rosner (2010), 669.

(1) Tongues is the miraculous ability to speak in a foreign language one previously did not speak. It is exemplified in Acts 2:4-11. Those that gathered in response to the sound like a violent wind were amazed because they heard the believers, a group of Galileans who had been given the gift of tongues, speaking in a variety of recognizable human languages.

(2) The reason tongues were not understood in the Corinthian worship assembly is not because they were gibberish but because the worshipers undoubtedly spoke Greek (possibly some Latin) and the tongue-speaker was miraculously uttering a language other than Greek. Worship assemblies tend to be monolingual because people do not go where they cannot understand the language.

(3) If the gift of tongues in Acts 2 was different from the gift of tongues in 1 Corinthians, as some claim, one certainly would have expected Luke to indicate a distinction. After all, Acts was composed after 1 Corinthians and Luke would have been aware of Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians from his extensive travels with him.

d. Some other observations about tongues

(1) The one speaking in tongues spoke *to God, not to men* (1 Cor. 14:2). It thus was a form of prayer or praise to God (see 14:14-17, consistent with Acts 2:11 and 10:46) in which God was addressed in a foreign language. Since much of what passes for tongues in today's charismatic movement is, after being "interpreted," directions to the church, it does not seem to square with the gift of tongues as revealed in the NT (in addition to being gibberish rather than human language).

(2) The one speaking in tongues spoke "mysteries by the Spirit" in the sense that neither he nor those assembled understood what he was saying. That is why the gift of interpretation was necessary (1 Cor. 14:13, 19, 27-28). The miracle was the fact the person spoke in a language he did *not* know. That is why Paul said in 1 Cor. 14:14 that when one prays/speaks in a tongue one's "mind is unfruitful." The tongues-speaker was not involved in cognitive articulation; rather than speaking words with his mind, the tongue-speaker was voluntarily uttering sounds by the Spirit (see, 14:18-19).

(3) The man speaking in tongues "builds up" *himself* (1 Cor. 14:4). Paul may here be using "builds up" in a negative way, saying that the one who speaks in a tongue in the assembly builds up his status in the group at the expense of the loss of benefit to others. Or he may mean that, despite not knowing the meaning of the words he was uttering, the individual experiences a personal peace or even euphoria through this Spirit-generated, subconscious praise and prayer to God.

e. Paul is not opposed to tongue speaking; on the contrary, he would like them all to have that gift (which he knows will not happen – see, 12:28-30), but his definite preference in the assembly is for prophecy. It is greater than tongues, unless tongues are interpreted, because it is intelligible and thus benefits its hearers.

7. Speaking in tongues does not benefit the hearers (14:6-13)

[6]But as it is, brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how shall I benefit you, unless I speak to you either in revelation or in knowledge or in prophecy or [in] teaching? [7]Likewise, when lifeless things give a sound, whether a flute or a harp, if they do not give a distinction to the sounds, how will what is being played on the flute or harp be known? [8]For indeed if the trumpet gives an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle? [9]So it is with you; unless you give a recognizable word by the tongue, how will what is being said be known? For you will be speaking into the air.

[10]There are however many kinds of languages in the world, and none is without meaning. [11]Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be a foreigner to the one speaking and the one speaking [will be] a foreigner in my [view]. [12]So it is with you; since you are enthusiasts of spirits, desire to abound for the upbuilding of the church. [13]So then, let the one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.

a. Paul says that if he comes to them speaking in tongues, thus conforming to their view of spirituality, he will not be of benefit to them. He will only benefit them if he prophesies or teaches them or if he reports to them a revelation or some knowledge.

b. Paul presses the point with an analogy involving musical instruments. Just as speaking in tongues prevents one from knowing what is being said, so making indistinct or unrecognizable sounds on an instrument prevents one from knowing what is being played. To illustrate the point, if one sounds a battle call by playing an indistinguishable tune on the trumpet, no one will prepare for battle. In other words, the message to prepare for battle will not have been communicated and the people will not have benefited.

c. The same holds for their speaking in tongues. Unless they speak in their own language, no one will know what they are saying. They will be speaking into the air, i.e. speaking but not communicating.

d. Given that there are many different kinds of languages in the world, if I do not know the meaning of a particular language, the speaker and I will be foreigners to each other. In other words, we will not communicate; we will not understand the *message* in each other's vocal sounds.

e. The same holds for the Corinthians. If they supernaturally speak in a language that the hearers do not know, they become foreigners to each other. They cannot convey the meaning behind their sounds.

f. Because they are so enthusiastic about spiritual gifts (the one in particular), they should direct that enthusiasm toward gifts that build up the church; they should desire to abound in *those* gifts. And in keeping with that focus, the one who has the gift of tongues is told to pray for the ability to interpret, as it is only interpreted tongues, understood speech, which can edify others.

(1) Judging from 12:10, 12:30, and 14:27-28, the norm is for the gift of tongues and the gift of interpretation to be given to *different* individuals. Yet, the one who has the gift of tongues is here most likely told to pray for the ability to interpret. (I say "most likely told" because, as Fitzmyer notes, it is possible an indefinite subject should be supplied, in which case the tongues-speaker is not told to pray that *he* may interpret only that *someone* may interpret.)[184] If the tongues-speaker is directed to pray that *he* be given the ability to interpret, he presumably would do so in case others with the gift of interpretation (14:27-28) were unable to join the assembly or unwilling to exercise their gift. Otherwise, their interpretation would provide the edification necessary for this miraculous gift to be exercised in the assembly. Notice this is a prayer that acknowledges the importance of edification in the assembly and the fact edification requires intelligible speech.

(2) I do not believe Paul is thereby commanding all Christians to pray to receive various spiritual gifts. The command was addressed to those who had already received the gift of tongues. It was a command for them to pray for the complementary gift or ability that was needed to make their existing gift beneficial to the assembly. One cannot assume Paul's instruction applies to gifts generally, especially given that he nowhere instructs praying for other gifts. I do not believe the Spirit is still giving the gift of tongues, and I am not aware of any other gift that requires an additional gift in order to be exercised in the assembly, so I would not insist that Christians pray for specific spiritual gifts based on this verse.

(3) I would, however, encourage Christians to seek to optimize their gifts for the blessing of the body. Their gifts are to be diligently exercised rather than neglected. Recall that Paul told the Thessalonians not to "quench the Spirit" (1 Thess. 5:19) and commanded Timothy not to *neglect* the gift that was in him (1 Tim. 4:14). He later told him to *rekindle* the gift of God that was within him (2 Tim. 1:6).

(4) The fact our assemblies are to build up the saints does not mean they are not about worshiping God. It simply means that God desires to be worshiped in a way that edifies the community of faith (see, e.g., 1 Cor. 14:16-17). The prayer, praise, and thanksgiving that are addressed and offered to him, as well as the instruction he gives to us, builds up the church as we express and hear that adoration and as we humbly submit to his word. That is why the Spirit through Paul insists that it all be done in intelligible speech.

8. Only words that edify are fitting for the assembly (14:14-19)

[184] Fitzmyer (2008), 515.

**[14] *If I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful.
[15]What then is [the way]? I will pray with the spirit, but I will also pray with the mind; I will sing with the spirit, but I will also sing with the mind. [16]Otherwise, if you are blessing [God] with the spirit, how shall the one occupying the place of the unlearned say the "Amen" at your thanksgiving, since he does not know what you are saying? [17]For you certainly are giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not built up. [18]I give thanks to God [that] I speak in tongues more than all of you, [19]but in church I want to speak five words with my mind, that I also may instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.**

a. I follow the NET in thinking "For" at the beginning of v. 14 was not part of the original text. It is missing in the oldest manuscript of 1 Corinthians (P^{46}) and in some other significant manuscripts (but is present in other significant manuscripts). Without that conjunction, it makes better sense to connect v. 13 to the preceding paragraph and begin a new paragraph at v. 14.

b. Paul says that if he prays in a tongue his spirit prays but his mind is unfruitful. In other words, his spirit, his inner being, is uttering under the influence of the Holy Spirit a foreign language that his mind does not understand. As Ralph Martin puts it, "'words' . . . are formed by a spiritual upsurge requiring no mental effort."[185] It is noncognitive speech, something that operates outside of his normal mental processing. That is why interpretation is necessary.

c. What then is the way to go? Paul says he will pray and sing with his spirit, meaning in tongues, but he will *also* do so with his mind, meaning in intelligible speech. In other words, he will not elevate tongues-speaking to a superior way of praying and praising such that the one who has that gift is obligated to exercise it at all times, to pray and praise *only* in that manner. Rather, as one who has the gift of tongues, he will pray and praise with tongues and without tongues, depending on what is appropriate in the circumstance.

d. Otherwise, meaning if he insisted on praying and praising exclusively in tongues, he would be doing so in the assembly, and those who did not understand the language, which normally would be everyone, could not "Amen" the thanksgiving that had been uttered in the tongue. The tongues-speaker would indeed be giving thanks, but the others are not built up because they do not understand the words of thanksgiving he is offering. (Again, you see that our praise directed to God edifies others as they listen in on it.)

e. Paul's attitude on the matter is summed up in vv. 18-19. Though he speaks in tongues more than all of them do, in the assembly he would rather speak five intelligible words, to instruct others, than ten thousand words in an uninterpreted tongue!

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[185] Quoted in Garland (2003), 640.

9. As with believers, speaking in tongues will not benefit unbelievers but prophesying will (14:20-25)

> **[20]Brothers, do not be children in thinking; rather, in evil be infants, but in thinking be mature. [21]In the Law it is written, "By men of other tongues and by lips of foreigners I will speak to this people, and not even this way will they listen to me," says the Lord. [22]So then, tongues are meant as a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers, but prophecy is [a sign] not for unbelievers but for believers. [23]Therefore, if the whole church gathers together at the same place and all are speaking in tongues, and unlearned ones or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are insane? [24]But if all are prophesying, and some unbeliever or unlearned one comes in, he is convicted by all, is judged by all. [25]The secrets of his heart become apparent, and so, falling on [his] face, he will worship God, declaring, "God is really among you."**

a. In v. 20 Paul urges them to grow up in their thinking on this subject. The place to be immature or undeveloped is in the practice of evil, not in one's understanding.

b. Paul has already argued that uninterpreted tongues are of no benefit to the other *believers* in the assembly because they do not understand what is being said. On the other hand, intelligible speech, such as prophecy, builds up the gathered believers because it communicates truth to them.

c. The point of this paragraph is that the same distinction applies with regard to *unbelievers* who may visit the assembly. Speaking in tongues will not benefit them but prophesying will. That this is Paul's point is clear from the illustrations in vv. 23-25.

(1) In v. 23, Paul says that if the whole church is gathered together and everyone (perhaps meaning every tongues speaker) is speaking in uninterpreted tongues, the unbeliever who visits will not be benefited; instead, he will conclude that the believers are insane. Since, in most every case, he will not understand what is being said, the meeting will be chaos and nonsense to him. You see this very effect in Acts 2:13 where some who could not make sense of the languages being spoken accused the tongues speakers of being drunk.

(2) On the other hand, in vv. 24-25, Paul says that if an unbeliever enters a church where people are prophesying, the truths that are being communicated among the believers will (quite possibly) convict that person of his sins and bring him to acknowledge the presence of God in the Christian community.

d. So far, so good. The difficulty is how these illustrations in vv. 23-25 relate to what Paul says vv. 21-22 (notice “Therefore” at beginning of v. 23). I think the illustrations of vv. 23-25 follow from vv. 21-22 in the sense explained below.

(1) In v. 21 Paul paraphrases Isa. 28:11-12 where God said to Israel that since they refused to heed his intelligible prophecy he would deliver a message to them in the form of the unintelligible speech of their Assyrian captors, and even then they would ignore it. (Notice that Paul here uses "the Law" as encompassing the Prophets, so the phrase can refer to more than just the Pentateuch.)

(2) In v. 22 Paul infers from this Scripture that the presence of unintelligible speech, such as tongues, is a sign to unbelievers of their refusal to hear. In other words, it signifies or symbolizes that truth to them, the fact they have refused to hear, and in that way is intended to serve as a kind of rebuke. The presence of prophecy, on the other hand, is a sign to believers of God's abiding presence (ERV, ASV, NAS, and ESV make express that "sign" is implied in the reference to prophecy).

(a) Consistent with what tongues signifies, the unbeliever refuses to hear that he refuses to hear. In other words, he rejects the message inherent in the presence of tongues, the rebuke of his refusal to hear. Just as the unbelieving Jews rejected the message inherent in the Assyrian language that surrounded them in captivity (notice v. 21b – “and not even this way will they listen to me"), so the unbelievers in Corinth would reject as insane God's message inherent in tongues.

(b) Consistent with what prophecy signifies (God's presence), it will even bring the unbeliever to recognize that "God is really among you."

e. So, if I am understanding Paul correctly, uninterpreted tongues, if permitted, would function in an assembly as a rebuke of the unbelief of any *unbelievers* who were present, but it would be a rebuke they would ignore. Rather than draw from those tongues a conviction of their unbelief, they, analogously to the Jews in Assyrian captivity, would continue not to listen to God (i.e., they would declare the people insane rather than accept the foreign languages as a message of their unbelief). Because they will not listen, uninterpreted tongues will be of no value to them, just as they are of no value to the *believers*. And therefore, uninterpreted tongues in an assembly cannot be justified on the basis of their effect on unbelievers, despite the fact they serve as a sign of unbelief to the unbelievers. They are a sign that will not be heeded.

f. This is not inconsistent with the positive effect tongues had on some unbelievers in Acts 2. Remember that here Paul is speaking about the effect of *unintelligible* speech, languages that are *not understood* because of the monolingual nature of their assemblies. Unbelievers who visited a Corinthian worship assembly normally would be locals who shared the same language as the believers (i.e., Greek and possibly Latin). Therefore, they would fare no better than the believers in understanding the various languages spoken when the gift of tongues was exercised. At Pentecost, however, the crowd that had gathered for the Feast was very cosmopolitan, so many different languages were understood. As I already mentioned, the unbelievers at Pentecost who did not hear a language they understood accused the believers of being drunk.

g. You may be wondering *why* the Spirit would empower certain Christians to praise God in the assembly in a foreign language only to require that praise to be translated into their native language in order to be permitted in the assembly. Why not skip the gifts of tongues and interpretation and have the Christians pray and praise exclusively in their native tongue, which required no translation?

(1) I think the gifts of tongues and interpretation, like other miraculous gifts, were given to the early church to confirm or authenticate that the "Christian movement" was indeed of God. As put in Heb. 2:2-4: *For since the message spoken through angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, [3]how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. [4]God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.*

(2) This authenticating function of miracles also is evident in Ex. 4:1-9 (regarding Moses) and 1 Kings 17:19-24 (regarding Elijah). For additional New Testament texts, see Mat. 11:20-23; Jn. 2:11, 3:2, 6:14, 7:31, 10:37-38, 11:47-48, 14:11, 20:30-31; Acts 2:22, 43, 14:8-11, 27; Rom. 15:18-19; 2 Cor. 12:12. This is not to say God cannot have other reasons for performing miracles; it is to stress that authentication of his representatives is a significant reason.

(3) So tongues was one of the miraculous works that confirmed the Christian movement was of God, and when interpreted, it *also* built up the church. But notice that the confirming or authenticating function of tongues was, by God's will, subject to the necessity of edification in the assembly. Even miraculous gifts were not to be exercised in that setting unless they could be exercised so as to build up the church by communicating truth.

(4) I think the cessation of the miraculous gifts is related to this authenticating function. I mentioned previously my online paper titled "Some Thoughts on the Cessation of Miraculous Gifts," which discusses the matter in more detail than I want to go into here.

(a) Let me just say that it is important to recognize that God did not promise always to provide Christians the same spiritual gifts. So he has left himself room to cease giving gifts in fulfillment of his purposes. Regarding tongues specifically, given that what is claimed today to be the gift of tongues, speaking gibberish, is not the gift of tongues described in Scripture, it certainly seems that the Spirit is no longer giving that gift.

(b) And it is reasonable to conclude (but not inescapable) that the Spirit ceased giving miraculous gifts because, when the New Testament was written, the confirming or authenticating function of those gifts continued through the inspired record of their having been given in the early church. For example, when guys on Dude Perfect make a video of some astounding feat, they do not keep

repeating the feat to establish their ability to do it. They simply refer people to the video of their having done it. Once the Spirit's giving of miraculous gifts was recorded in Scripture, their confirming effect would continue through that absolutely trustworthy record of their occurrence. God may want us to look there rather than keep providing those gifts.

(c) It seems miraculous *revelatory* gifts like prophecy ceased with the completion and recognition of the New Testament for the additional reason that God intended his completed Scripture to be all sufficient for guidance and instruction. The fact the church is built *on the foundation* of the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20) indicates the gift of prophecy would not continue, as foundations are laid only at the beginning.

10. The principle of edification applied to prophecy and tongues (14:26-33a)

> **[26]What then is [the way], brothers? When you gather together, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation; let all things be for upbuilding. [27]If anyone speaks in a tongue, [let it be] by two or at most three and one at a time, and let someone interpret; [28]but if there is not an interpreter, let him be silent in church, and let him speak for himself and to God. [29]And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others discern. [30]And if [something] is revealed to another who is sitting, let the first be silent. [31]For you can all prophesy one by one so that all may learn and all may be encouraged. [32]And the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets, [33]for God is not [a God] of disorder but of peace.**

a. When Paul says "each one" has a song, a teaching, a revelation, etc., he does not mean that every individual worshiper has one of those things. Rather, he means that those things are distributed to different individuals – one has one thing to share with the congregation, another has another thing. As in 11:21, "each one" does not mean every single individual. Paul has been quite clear that not all in the congregation have speech gifts.

b. It is not clear what Paul means in saying that each one has a song or, more literally, a psalm. Since it is grouped with things that involve the exercise of spiritual gifts, it seems likely that he is referring to songs that some have composed or selected (e.g., from the Psalter) through the work of the Spirit. He does not say whether this was something for all to sing or for only one, but it confirms the importance of singing in the early church.

c. The upshot of all this is that at Corinth, where many people had spiritual gifts suited for expression in the assembly, they needed to take care that all things be done for upbuilding. That is the controlling principle for the exercise of all gifts in an

assembly setting. They must be employed in a way that serves that purpose of edification, the strengthening of the church.

(1) Christian assemblies are not about entertainment; they are about worshiping in ways that edify the saints. I could not agree more with the comments of Richard Foster, a scholar who has written extensively about spiritual life and growth:

> Let's stop using a marketing approach to church life. The Church is *not* a vendor of religious goods and services but the Community of Faith, living in faith and through faith and by faith alone. We do not need to mimic the entertainment industry of our culture. We win people to Christ not by entertainment but by the power of the Holy Spirit.[186]

(2) The fact corporate worship is to be *evaluated* in terms of its effect on those taking part does not mean that it is not worship. It simply means that God desires to be worshiped in a way that edifies the community of faith (see, e.g., 1 Cor. 14:16-17). Alastair Campbell expressed the point well:

> The lesson is plain; worship is offered to God, but it can be evaluated only by reference to men and women. Practices that do not help those assembled cannot be justified by reference to their supposed reverence nor excused by saying that they were offered to God and not to man. The one who does not bless the brother or sister whom he can see, will not bless God whom he cannot see![187]

(3) Christian worship assemblies are not geared to non-Christians. Certainly non-Christians can benefit from edifying worship, but that benefit is incidental. Non-Christians cannot become the target or focus of the edifying effect of our worship. Yet I fear that, as John MacArthur has said, "unbelievers have become the number one church consultants in our world today."

d. Paul specifies what this means with regard to exercising the two gifts he has been focusing on, tongues and prophecy.

(1) If anyone speaks in a tongue, only two or at most three may do so, those two or three must speak one at a time, and someone must interpret what they said. If no interpreter is present, the tongue-speaker must remain silent in the assembly. In that case, he must speak to God inaudibly for his own benefit.

(2) The regulations of prophecy raise several issues:

(a) The restriction to two or three prophets is probably not a limitation on how many can speak per assembly, as in the case of the tongue-speakers, but only a limitation on how many can speak before the others examine or weigh

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[186] Richard J. Foster, Heart to Heart November 1999 (accessed on 9/4/24).
[187] Alastair Campbell, "Once More: Is Worship 'Biblical'?" *Churchman* 110.2 (Summer 1996), 139.

their message. Paul does not say "or *at most* three" as he does in reference to tongue-speakers, and 14:31 suggests that all (the men – v. 33b-36) who have a prophecy will be given an opportunity to speak. Plus, the overall concern of the chapter is that tongues not dominate the assembly.

(b) The prophecies are examined or weighed to determine whether they truly are from God. This parallels what Paul wrote in 1 Thess. 5:19-21: *Do not quench the Spirit, [20]do not despise prophecies [21] but test everything, hold firmly to what is good*. See also, 1 Jn. 4:1. We are not told how or by whom this is done. It may well be that the community, aided by the gift of discerning spirits (12:10), evaluates how the message conforms to the Spirit of God within them. In that kind of process, you can see how those who delivered prophecies would occasionally be quizzed or challenged. This is relevant to understanding the discussion in vv. 33b-36 regarding the role of women.

(c) If a revelation is received by a prophet while another is delivering a prophecy, the one speaking is required to yield the floor. As explained in v. 31, this procedure allows all to prophesy in turn so that all may learn and be encouraged. Verse 32 indicates that such etiquette is possible because the spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. And v. 33a makes clear that such prophetic discipline is not unspiritual, as some in Corinth no doubt thought, but is in keeping with the very nature of God; he is not a God of disorder but of peace (harmony and smooth working).

11. Women are not to participate in the prophetic process in the assembly (14:33b-36)

> **As in all the churches of the saints, [34]let the women be silent in the churches, for it is not permitted for them to speak, but let them be in submission as even the Law says. [35]And if they want to learn something, let them question their own husbands at home, for it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. [36]Or did the word of God go out from you or reach only to you?**

a. As a preliminary matter, some contend that 14:33b ("As in all the *ekklēsiais* of the saints") should be connected with v. 33a ("for God is not [a God] of disorder but of peace") instead of with v. 34 ("let the women be silent in the *ekklēsiais*"). But many commentators (e.g., Grosheide, Conzelmann, Orr and Walther, Carson, Kistemaker, Blomberg, Collins, Soards, Thiselton, Garland, Verbrugge, Gardner, and Schreiner)[188] and most standard English versions (ASV, RSV, NJB, NEB, NRSV, REB,

[188] F. W. Grosheide, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 341; Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 246; Orr and Walther (1976), 311-312; Carson (1987), 122; Simon J. Kistemaker, *1 Corinthians*, NTC (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 511; Blomberg (1994), 279; Collins (1999), 520; Marion L. Soards, *1 Corinthians*, NIBC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 304-305; Thiselton (2000), 1131, 1148; Garland (2003), 655, 664; Verlyn D. Verbrugge, "1 Corinthians" in Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, eds., *The Expositor's Bible*

NAB, HCSB, ESV, CSB, NET) connect v. 33b with v. 34 rather than with v. 33a. D. A. Carson says about the issue:

> Do we read, "For God is not a God of disorder but of peace, as in all the congregations of the saints"; or "As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches"? The latter is stylistically inelegant, in that in Greek the words rendered "congregations" and "churches" by the New International Version are the same word: that is, "As in all the churches of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches." On the other hand, what some see as stylistic inelegance, others see as powerful emphasis. Moreover, if verse 33b is linked with what precedes, it is difficult to see what the line of thought is. The sentence "For God is not a God of disorder but of peace, as in all the congregations of the saints" is either trite (Of course God will be the same God everywhere!) or meaningless (Exactly what is being compared? God and the congregations of the saints? God's peaceful order with what is in all the congregations of the saints?). On the whole, it seems best to take verse 33b with what follows. But even if someone prefers the other option, little is changed in the interpretation of verses 34-36, since the phrase in the churches (in the plural) is found in verse 34.[189]

b. The Greek word *ekklēsia* is used in v. 33b and 34a, so I translated it "churches" in both places to indicate that, but the word carries a different sense in these two uses. In v. 33b, it is "churches" in the sense of local congregations, local communities of believers, and thus is rendered "congregations" in the NEB, REB, and NIV. In v. 34a, it has the sense of assemblies or meetings, and thus is rendered "assemblies" in the NJB and "meeting" in the NEB and REB. The meaning is that in all the local churches, the multitude of congregations of saints, women are to be "silent" (see below) in the assemblies.

c. Some also claim that the command of v. 34 is directed only to *wives* because v. 35a says of those addressed in v. 34 that if they want to learn something they are to question their own *husbands* at home rather than do so in the assembly.

(1) It is true, of course, that *gunē* can mean "woman" or "wife," depending on the context, but it is also true that *anēr* can mean "man" or "husband." If *andras* in v. 35 is rendered "men" instead of "husbands," there is no arguable implication the women in question were married. According to Claire Smith, "γυναῖκες is probably best translated 'women' not 'wives', given the further command 'let them ask their own men at home' can refer to the male head of a household and not just husbands (cf. 14:35 ἐν οἴκῳ τοὺς ἰδίους ἄνδρας ἐπερωτάτωσαν)."[190]

Commentary, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 11:387; Gardner (2018), 629-631; Schreiner (2018), 296.

[189] Carson (1987), 122.

[190] See, e.g., Claire S. Smith, *Pauline Communities as 'Scholastic Communities'* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 89 (fn. 37).

(2) All the standard English versions opt for "husbands" in v. 35, and I think that is probably correct, but that does not mean Paul is only addressing wives in v. 34. That is why all the standard English versions have "women" in v. 34 despite the reference to "husbands" in v. 35 (KJV, ERV, ASV, RSV, NAS, NJB, NEB, NKJV, NRSV, REB, NASU, HCSB, NAB, NIV, ESV, CSB, NET). Paul simply assumes in v. 35 what would be the normal situation in that culture – that the women (and men) would be married.[191] The fact he does not address separately the atypical case of unmarried women does not imply that those women were not subject to the rule. If a principal instructed teachers to disallow questions on a controversial topic and to tell the students, "If you want to know more, ask your parents at home," no one would think the principal was suggesting that questions were permissible from students who were orphans. It would be understood that his instruction simply was expressed in terms of the normal case of children who have living parents.

d. The context of this passage is Paul's discussion of how the gifts of tongues and prophecy are to be exercised in the assembly.

(1) The exercise of tongues is regulated in vv. 27-28. Only two or three individuals are permitted to speak in tongues, and they are required to do so one at a time. If there is no one present to interpret the tongues for the congregation, the tongue-speaker is obliged to remain silent.

(2) Paul begins to regulate the exercise of prophecy in v. 29. Two or three prophets are permitted to speak, and the others are instructed to weigh carefully their message. As I previously mentioned, the purpose of this weighing was to test whether the message was in fact from God (see, 1 Thess. 5:19-21; 1 Jn. 4:1), and it probably included some kind of oral examination of the prophets.

(3) If a revelation is received by a prophet while another is delivering a prophecy, the one speaking is required to yield the floor. As explained in v. 31, this procedure allows all to prophesy in turn so that all may learn and be encouraged. Verse 32 indicates that such etiquette is possible because the spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. In other words, even though a prophet is in the process of delivering a message from the Spirit, it is not necessary that he continue delivering that message. Even prophets being given revelations rightfully can control when they speak, which leads right into the restriction of vv. 33b-36.

(4) Verses 39-40 are crucial to a proper understanding of Paul's instructions about women because they reveal that he has not changed subjects: "So then, [my] brothers, be enthusiastic about the prophesying, and do not forbid the speaking in tongues, [40] but let all things be done properly and according to order." He is still discussing the exercise of tongues and prophecy in the assembly, so his instructions about women speaking must be understood as part of that discussion, not as a new and unrelated topic.

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[191] As Gordon Fee notes in *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 789 (fn. 28), "Gk. αἱ γυναῖκες; probably all women, although the author assumes a culture in which most women are married."

e. Since the discussion of tongues concluded at v. 28, no reader or hearer would think Paul had returned to that subject without some clear indication of an intent to do so. Therefore, the context strongly indicates that the silence Paul demands relates to the matter of prophesying. Right in the midst of explaining how prophesying is to be done in the assembly, a process that includes a sifting of the delivered messages, he declares pointedly, "As in all the churches of the saints, let the women be silent in the assemblies, for it is not permitted for them to speak, but let them be in submission as even the Law says." The women are not allowed to participate in the prophetic process – they are to be silent *in that regard* – because, like teaching (1 Tim. 2:11-12), prophesying and challenging the prophets involve directing and correcting men, which is contrary to the submission God calls women to manifest in the assembly in honor of his sovereign choice to put the leadership responsibility on males.

f. That understanding explains the universality of the command ("all the churches"), the statement that women are obligated to be in submission, the reference to the Mosaic Law,[192] and the strong tone of moral condemnation. (As explained in the discussion of chapter 11, I believe the female speech that took place in the community worship assembly was prayer, which is a non-instructive expression of praise and devotion directed to God, though probably not the leading of prayers on behalf of the assembly. See, "Women Praying Vocally in Worship Assemblies.")

g. That understanding is consistent with how the verb "to be silent" (*sigaō*) is used. It need not mean absolute silence. Rather, it can refer contextually to refraining from (being silent with regard to) a *specific kind of speech*. For example, when Paul in 14:28 commands the tongues-speaker to be silent, the context indicates that he means he is to refrain from *speaking in tongues* when no interpreter is present. Paul is not forbidding that person from engaging in other kinds of speech.[193] (See also, 14:30.) The context here indicates that Paul is forbidding women from participating in the prophetic process, being silent in that regard, not prohibiting all speaking. We recognize, for example, that Paul is not forbidding women from singing, saying "Amen," confessing their faith at baptism, greeting people, and when "going forward," confessing their sins and expressing their desire for prayers.

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[192] Paul does not identify a specific text from the Old Testament (note that his use of "Law" can be broader than the Pentateuch – e.g., 1 Cor. 14:21) that expresses the principle of male leadership, but he probably has in mind a text like Gen. 2:21-23 in which Eve is shown to have been created after Adam and out of Adam and to have been named by Adam. In 1 Tim. 2:13 Paul cites the fact Adam was created first as a basis for male leadership in the church (see also, 1 Cor. 11:8-9). This is consistent with the Old Testament pattern of "primogeniture," the idea that the firstborn in any generation in a human family has leadership in the family. Other texts certainly could have factored into Paul's reference to the Law. For example, in Gen. 3:16 God tells Eve that as part of the curse her desire will be for her husband, probably meaning that woman in her fallen nature will desire to dominate her husband (see the use of "desire" in Gen. 4:7), contrary to God's created order, and that this desire generally will go unsatisfied because the husband has the leadership role. In Gen. 18:12 Sarah referred to Abraham as "her lord," and for that reason Peter cites her in 1 Pet. 3:6 as a paragon of wifely submission.

[193] See Wayne A. Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1982), 242-244.

h. The way to understand v. 35, where Paul says, "And if they (the women) want to learn something, let them question their own husbands (or men) at home, for it is shameful for a woman to speak in church," is that the women were not remaining silent during the time of prophesying as required by the duty of submission but were participating in the process by publicly interrogating the prophets as a way of challenging or judging their messages. Questions were a common way for teaching and challenging in the ancient world.[194] If objections to this practice were raised, as they would have been if the understanding I am presenting is correct, it would not be surprising for the practice to be defended by the claim the women were only seeking to learn which, after all, was the purpose of prophecy (14:31). Paul in v. 35 exposes that claim as a pretext, a cover story for their wrong behavior, by making clear that if the women truly were interested in learning rather than teaching, they could accomplish that outside the assembly by questioning their husbands (or men) at home.[195] He puts the lie to that claim.

i. Paul's instructions in 1 Tim. 2:11 on *how* women are to learn (in quietness with full submission) appear to address a similar concern. The word "quietness" (*hēsuchia*) refers not to complete silence but "to a quiet demeanor and spirit that is peaceable instead of argumentative."[196] The Corinthian women were not humbly and innocently asking for clarification of a prophecy; they were "weighing the prophecies," seeking to teach by challenging and correcting through the use of questions.

j. Given the immediate context of 14:33b-36, it is not surprising that "a growing consensus" of evangelical commentators connects the commanded silence to the prophetic process.[197] That is the immediate subject under discussion. Though these scholars limit the prohibition to weighing or orally challenging the prophecies delivered by others because they believe Paul in 1 Cor. 11:2-16 acknowledges implicitly that women are permitted to prophesy in the assembly as long as they wear the appropriate covering when doing so,[198] *they all recognize that the context indicates the speech relates to prophesying*.[199]

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[194] William Loader refers in *The New Testament on Sexuality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 385, to Okland's observation "that the question-answer technique was widespread as a teaching device."

[195] Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1988), 222.

[196] Thomas R. Schreiner, "An Interpretation of 1 Tim. 2:9-15" in Andreas Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner, eds., *Women in the Church*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 186.

[197] This assessment of the evangelical landscape is shared by Mark Taylor, *1 Corinthians*, NAC (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2014), 360 and Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 721 ("conservative evangelical commentators").

[198] Ciampa and Rosner (p. 721) express succinctly the motive for excluding prophesying from the scope of the prohibition: "Despite the fact that the most recent reference to 'speaking' had to do with prophesying, it does not seem possible that prophecy is the specific form of speech from which Paul is prohibiting female participation, given his discussion of it in chapter 11 (which indicates that women may prophesy as long as they do so with their heads covered)."

[199] E.g., James B. Hurley, "Did Paul Require Veils or the Silence of Women?," *Westminster Theological Journal* 35 (1973), 217-18; Wayne Grudem (1988), 220-224; Carson (1987), 129-131; Thiselton (2000), 1158; Andreas J. Köstenberger, *1-2 Timothy & Titus*, BTCP (Nashville: Holman, 2017), 116; Gardner, 637.

k. Because they recognize the context indicates the speech referred to in v. 34 relates to prophesying but mistakenly believe 11:2-16 authorizes women prophesying in the assembly, these scholars are forced into the odd claim that Paul allows women to *prophesy* in the assembly but forbids them from *challenging* the prophecies of others. In other words, they assert that prophesying is a lesser exercise of authority than the weighing of prophecies delivered by others and thus is not contrary to the divinely ordered submission, whereas weighing prophecies (and teaching – 1 Tim. 2:11-14) is contrary to it. As James Greenbury observes:

> One of the tenets of the interpretation we are considering is that women may not evaluate prophecy or teach but may prophesy. However, as Chrysostom observes, because prophecy was entirely from the Spirit, and teaching only partly so, prophecy was invested with a greater authority than teaching. For the same reason prophecy possesses superior authority to evaluation. Therefore it is unlikely that Paul would allow women to voice prophecies in church but forbid them from evaluating prophecy or teaching when the former is a more authoritative ministry.[200]

l. The claim that prophesying is less authoritative than weighing the prophecies of others (and teaching) leads these scholars to claim that New Testament prophesying differs from Old Testament prophesying in that the former is fallible whereas the latter was not. (This fallible/infallible distinction is also used by those who claim the gift of prophecy has continued. It allows them not to take alleged prophecies as authoritative.) With numerous scholars, I do not believe that distinction is valid. Schreiner states, "To sum up, there is no compelling evidence that New Testament prophets spoke both truth and error. Like the Old Testament prophets, they spoke the word of the Lord accurately."[201] Indeed, Paul says in Eph. 2:20 that the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, which suggests that the attempt to distinguish apostles from prophets in terms of infallibility is off base.

m. As I have stated repeatedly, I do not think Paul authorized women prophesying in the assembly in 11:2-16. I think that part of what he previously passed on to them regarding female speech in the assembly (11:2) was that they were not permitted to prophesy in that setting, which he here confirms and reinforces. In 11:2-16 he acknowledged only that women are permitted to *pray* in the assembly; that was the issue precipitating the discussion (11:13). He included the reference to women *prophesying* because, though that was authorized only outside of the assembly, his ruling about the covering when praying in the assembly would by logic also be a ruling about the covering when prophesying outside the assembly. That is why I labored to make that point.

n. The placement of vv. 33b-36 is best explained as a pointed reminder that nothing he has been saying in regulating exercise of the gifts changes or

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[200] James Greenbury, "1 Corinthians 14:34-35: Evaluation of Prophecy Revisited," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 51 (Dec. 2008), 726.

[201] Thomas Schreiner, *Paul Apostle of God's Glory in Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 363. For a fuller discussion, see Thomas R. Schreiner, *Spiritual Gifts: What They Are and Why They Matter* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2018), 101-122.

contradicts the practice in all the churches, the practice he previously delivered to them, that women are prohibited from participating in the prophetic process in the assembly. He is heading off a potential misunderstanding or abuse of his remarks, including the statement they can "all" prophesy. It means all for whom such prophesying is permissible in keeping with the known and uniform rule in the churches.

o. If there is any resistance to that truth, as there may have been given the over-realized eschatology of the Corinthians,[202] he declares in the next verse (v. 37), "If anyone thinks he is a prophet or is spiritual, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord." In acknowledging that Paul's words are a command of the Lord, the women who think they are prophets are thus bound to control the exercise of their gift, as v. 32 shows may be required and proper, by refraining from using it in the assembly.[203]

p. It might be useful to state my understanding by way of a paraphrase of 14:33b-36:

> As in all the congregations of the saints, the women must refrain from participating in the prophetic process in the assemblies, for they are not permitted to speak authoritatively but must be in submission as even the Law says. And if they want to learn something, they should question their own husbands [or men] at home rather than use that as a pretext for correcting the prophets, for it is shameful for a woman to speak authoritatively in the assembly. Did the word of God originate with you, or reach only to you?

q. If God gave women prophets revelations *during assemblies* that they were allowed to deliver only *outside* the assembly, I suspect he wanted them to have a something they could choose not to deliver as a way of honoring him. It provided them an opportunity to express their devotion by controlling the spirit of prophecy within them to God's glory. If they had no revelation, then they had nothing to refrain from delivering. But regardless of when a revelation was given to a prophetess, she was not to deliver that word in the assembly.

r. As I said before, one may wonder why God would silence the women prophets in the assembly when prophesying edifies the community, but it is apparently more important to him that his sovereign right to bestow leadership responsibility on men be acknowledged and honored in the assembly in the manner specified. Women were to exercise their prophetic gift in other contexts, so the community would not be deprived of their revelations, but "in the churches," meaning in the congregational assemblies, they are called to honor God by manifesting publicly through their silence their

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[202] See, e.g., C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Black, 1968), 109; Anthony C. Thiselton, "Realized Eschatology at Corinth," *New Testament Studies* 24 (1978), 510-26; Philip H. Towner, "Gnosis and Realized Eschatology in Ephesus (of the Pastoral Epistles) and the Corinthian Enthusiasm," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 31 (1987), 98-101.

[203] So having a revelation from God does not mean it cannot be insubordinate to deliver it in the assembly. There is a distinction between revelation and delivery, and the spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets.

acceptance of his right to choose men as the leaders. It is part of the gathered community's testimony of its submission to him.

s. Whatever difficulties there may be in defining what gatherings qualify as "an assembly" for purpose of the prohibition, they are thrust upon us by the fact Paul ties the prohibition to "the *ekklēsia*" (14:28, 35b). The fact he distinguishes that assembly from the home (14:35; cf. 14:19) and refers to the "whole church" coming together (14:23; cf. 11:18) indicates it has a formal or official sense, that there is a public and congregational dimension to the gathering in contrast to private and personal meetings of individual Christians, however significant and valuable those meetings may be. Difficulties of application do not negate the teaching to be applied. That is true with questions about disfellowshipping and divorce and remarriage, and it is true here. One starts with the indisputable locus of application, the church's gathering for worship on the Lord's Day, and moves out by analogy to other gatherings, increasing the room for disagreement as the distance widens.

t. That women may present the word of God to men outside Christian assemblies follows from the fact that some were given the gift of prophecy (Lk. 2:36; Acts 2:16-17, 21:9; 1 Cor. 12:10) and God spoke to men in a non-assembly setting through the prophetess Huldah (2 Ki. 22:14-20; 2 Chron. 34:22-28). Note also the prophetess Anna in Lk. 2:36-38, who on the grounds of the temple spoke of Jesus to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem, referring to the coming kingdom of God. In Acts 18:26, we see that Priscilla and Aquila took Apollos aside and they explained (plural) to him the way of God more accurately.

u. As I noted previously, the mainstream post-apostolic church distinguished between assembly and non-assembly settings with regard to women prophesying (and teaching). Everett Ferguson states, "Women were not appointed as elders, nor did they take public speaking roles in the assembly *as prophets, teachers, or leaders* in the assembly. Where women did take these roles in heretical and schismatic groups, the practice was a basis for objection to these groups."[204] Tertullian at the beginning of the third century wrote about an alleged prophetess of a movement known as "Montanists" or the "Phrygian heresy," who purportedly "received ecstatic visions during 'the sacred rites of the Lord's day in the church' but reported them only 'after the people are dismissed at the conclusion of the sacred services' (On the Soul 9)."[205] Origen (c. 185-254 A.D.), a Greek-speaking Christian theologian and biblical scholar, illustrates the approach in his *Commentary on 1 Corinthians* 14:34-35:

> If the daughters of Philip prophesied, they did not speak in church, for we do not find this in the Acts of the Apostles. Neither in the old [covenant]. [Deborah, Miriam, and Huldah] did not speak in the assembly…. [Anna] did not speak in church. Therefore, the prophetic sign might be given for a woman to be a prophetess, but it is not permitted to her to speak in church.[206]

[204] Ferguson (2015), Location 964.
[205] Ferguson (2015), Location 912.
[206] Ferguson (2015), Location 912-922.

v. Regarding prayer, however, Justin Martyr says of a worship assembly in the mid-second century (*First Apology*, 67):

> And on the day called *Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place*, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then *we all rise together and pray*, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, *saying Amen*; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons.

The *Apostolic Constitutions* (Book III, Ch. VI), a collection of earlier materials on church order that was compiled in the fourth century, states, "We do not permit 'our women to *teach in the church*,' but only *to pray* and hear those that teach."

w. You should be aware that some modern scholars dismiss 14:33b-36 with the claim it was not originally written by Paul but was inserted into the text at a later date.

(1) Some later, chiefly Western manuscripts, have vv. 34-35 after v. 40, but all manuscripts have the verses in one location or the other. The earliest manuscript (p^{46}, around AD 200), the great fourth-century manuscripts Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, the fifth-century manuscript Alexandrinus, the Vulgate, Old Syriac, and most other manuscripts "read these verses in their normal, accepted place."[207] The UBS 4th ed. *Greek New Testament* classifies vv. 34-35 as "B," which reflects the editors' judgment that "the text is almost certain." The verses also are included in their normal location in *The Greek New Testament* produced at Tyndale House. It is far more likely that the dislocation of the verses in some later manuscripts was due to a scribe who mistakenly thought they did not fit after v. 33b. If the original letter did not have the text, one certainly would expect some manuscript evidence of that fact (compare, for example, the manuscripts evidence regarding Jn. 7:53-8:11).

(2) Curt Niccum concludes in his detailed and meticulous study: "No extant MS offers evidence for an original omission of 1 Cor 14:34-35. . . . No other reading has claim to being 'original' other than that of preserving the traditional sequence of verses."[208] Thiselton comments, "Niccum's pages are packed with powerful and

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[207] Thiselton (2000), 1148.

[208] Curt Niccum, "The Voice of the Manuscripts on the Silence of Women: The External Evidence for 1 Cor 14.34-5," *New Testament Studies* 43 (April 1997), 254-255. See also, Thomas R. Schreiner, "Philip Payne on Familiar Ground," *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* 15 (Spring 2010), 38-40.

succinct arguments which prove convincing."[209] In a footnote, he labels the article "overwhelmingly convincing."

(3) It seems the dismissal of this text is driven in significant part by our culture's distaste for Paul's words and by supposed difficulty in fitting it with 11:2-16. Carson comments:

> I confess I am always surprised by the amount of energy and ingenuity expended to rescue Paul from himself and conform him to our image. In any case, from a purely text-critical point of view, the evidence that these verses are original, and in their original location (and not, as in some manuscripts, with verses 34-35 placed after 14:40), is substantial.[210]

x. Verse 36 is a rebuke. The word of God did not go out from them, meaning they are in no position to act as though they have some special or inside knowledge of God's will. Neither were they the only ones to whom the word of God came, meaning the uniform practice of the other churches testifies against whatever irregularities they are entertaining.

12. Conclusion of regulation of prophecy and tongues (14:37-40)

> **[37]If anyone thinks he is a prophet or is spiritual, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord; [38]but if anyone does not recognize [this], he is not recognized.**
>
> **[39]So then, [my] brothers, be enthusiastic about the prophesying, and do not forbid the speaking in tongues, [40]but let all things be done properly and according to order.**

a. Verses 37-40 form the conclusion to the section begun in 14:26. In vv. 37-38 Paul admonishes those who consider themselves to be prophets or to be spiritual, those to whom his corrective measures specifically apply, to recognize what he has written as the command of the Lord and to act accordingly. Those who refuse to do so, who choose to rebel against the Lord's command, will not be recognized by the Lord.

b. In vv. 39-40 he sums up his discussion of prophecy and tongues by reducing it to a simple principle: be enthusiastic about prophecy and accept tongue-speaking, but as with all things in the assembly, do them in a fitting and orderly way.

VI. Correcting a Mistaken View of the Resurrection 15:1-58

[209] Thiselton (2000), 1149.
[210] Carson (1987), 124.

Excursus on Resurrection and Materialistic Eschatology

This entire chapter is devoted to correcting the view of some in the Corinthian church that the dead will not be *resurrected*. That this is the issue is clear from v. 12: *But if Christ is preached, that he has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is not a resurrection of the dead?*

In denying there is a resurrection of the dead, the Corinthians were not denying that the soul or spirit of people continued to exist after death; they were denying that the dead would return to *bodily* life. That is what "resurrection" meant in the ancient world. The renowned scholar N. T. Wright describes the ancient understanding of the term:

> Within this world, the word *resurrection* in its Greek, Latin, or other equivalents was never used to mean life after death. *Resurrection* was used to denote new bodily life *after* whatever sort of life after death there might be. When the ancients spoke of resurrection, whether to deny it (as all pagans did) or to affirm it (as some Jews did), they were referring to a two-step narrative in which resurrection, meaning new bodily life, would be preceded by an interim period of bodily death. *Resurrection* wasn't, then, a dramatic or vivid way of talking about the state people went into immediately after death. It denoted something that might happen (though almost everyone thought it wouldn't) sometime *after* that. This meaning is constant throughout the ancient world until the post-Christian coinages of second-century Gnosticism. Most of the ancients believed in life after death; some of them developed complex and fascinating beliefs about it, which we have just touched on; but outside Judaism and Christianity (and perhaps Zoroastrianism, though the dating of that is controversial), they did not believe in resurrection.
>
> In content, *resurrection* referred specifically to something that happened to the body; hence the later debates about how God would do this – whether he would start with the existing bones or make new ones or whatever. One would have debates like that only if it was quite clear that what you ended up with was something tangible and physical. Everybody knew about ghosts, spirits, visions, hallucinations, and so on. Most people in the ancient world believed in some such things. They were quite clear that that wasn't what they meant by *resurrection*. . . . Resurrection meant bodies. We cannot emphasize this too strongly, not least because much modern writing continues, most misleadingly, to use the word *resurrection* as a virtual synonym for *life after death* in the popular sense.[211]

So if an ancient writer intended to use "resurrection" as a metaphor for something other than restoration of bodily life, he would need to signal or indicate that intention.

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[211] N. T. Wright, *Surprised By Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection and the Mission of the Church* (New York: Harper, 2008), 36.

Otherwise, he would be understood to be using the word normally, non-metaphorically, which is clearly how Paul is using it in 1 Corinthians 15.

It is helpful to recognize that in denying there is a resurrection of the dead, the Corinthians were not denying expressly that *Jesus* had been raised from the dead. Paul makes clear in 15:1-4, 11 that they accepted the truth of Jesus' resurrection when he preached the gospel to them. Rather, they were denying that *others*, mere humans, those who were not God incarnate, would likewise be resurrected. Some were saying there is not a resurrection of *the dead ones*, plural; they were denying a general resurrection. Paul tells them, as we will see, that the two go together; to deny the one is to deny the other implicitly.

As indicated in the quote from Wright, some in the ancient pagan world denied there was any kind of life after death, but *most* pagans believed that a person's spirit or soul continued to exist after death. Those pagans who believed in a continuing spiritual existence did not believe in *resurrection*, in the restoration of bodily life after death. For them, death was a one-way journey to a disembodied existence. That is why when Paul preached about Jesus and *the* resurrection in Athens (Acts 17:18), another Greek city about 65 miles from Corinth, some who heard mocked him (Acts 17:32). A similar sense of incredulity existed among some Corinthian Christians, as is evident in the two questions of 1 Cor. 15:35. These questions express the crux of the problem resurrection posed for the Greek mindset: How are the dead raised? With what sort of body do they come?

Some Jews, like the Sadducees, denied there was any kind of life after death, and others, like Philo, believed that one would continue to exist after death as a disembodied soul or spirit. But *most* ancient Jews believed that God would raise his people bodily from the dead at the last day, the day on which he judged and remade the world. As James Ware states, "To be sure, it is beyond controversy that belief in the restoration to life of the flesh-and-bones body was the general or dominant view held by most first-century Jews."[212]

That belief is behind Martha's statement in Jn. 11:24 that she knows her dead brother Lazarus "will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." You see it in the Sadducees' reference to "the resurrection" in the hypothetical they posed to Jesus in Mat. 22:23-28 (v. 28; also Mk. 12:18-23 and Lk. 20:27-33). It also is evident in Paul's play to the Pharisees in Acts 23:6 that he was on trial with respect to the hope of the resurrection of the dead and in his statement in Acts 24:15 that his accusers from Jerusalem accept the hope that there will be a resurrection of both the just and unjust.

I regret to say that many in the church today continue this Corinthian denial of the resurrection. They continue to insist that Christians will spend eternity as disembodied spirits (souls), as nonphysical beings, in a nonphysical realm known as heaven. But that is not the biblical picture. For now, we do exist after death as disembodied spirits in heaven, but that is only a temporary or intermediate state, not how we will spend eternity. Our *eternal* existence will be in resurrected bodies in a transformed physical creation, a "heavenized" creation, what is called the new heavens and new earth, which will come

[212] James Ware, "The Resurrection of Jesus in the Pre-Pauline Formula of 1 Cor 15.3–5," *New Testament Studies* 60 (2014), 491.

about at Christ's return. As Paul says in Rom. 8:18-25, creation itself will be freed from decay, redeemed from the consequences of human sin to which it was subjected at the Fall. God's good creation will be reaffirmed, not abandoned.

This may strike some of you as novel and eccentric, something that is doctrinally suspect, but I assure you it is not. The belief that Christians will be raised bodily, physically, from the dead is without question the historic, orthodox Christian view. It has been part of the Christian faith from the beginning. In his monumental work, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, N. T. Wright analyzes dozens of noncanonical Christian texts from the late first century through the early third century and concludes:

> Christianity affirmed in great detail the belief that resurrection involved going through death and into a non-corruptible body the other side; that it involved one person, the Messiah, being raised from the dead ahead of everybody else; and that it allowed for an intermediate state which might best be described in terms of the departed person being with the Lord until the resurrection.[213]

He writes in *Surprised By Hope*: "But from the start within early Christianity it was built in as part of the belief in resurrection that the new body, though it will certainly be a body in the sense of a physical object occupying space and time, will be a *transformed* body, a body whose material, created from the old material, will have new properties."[214] Wright notes that this was the view of the leading theologians of the medieval period, citing Gregory the Great (540-604), Anselm (1033-1109), Hugh of St. Victor (d. 1142), Bernard (1090-1153), and Thomas (1225-1274). He writes: "Mainstream medieval theologians like Thomas and Bernard insisted on the bodily resurrection. They, like the New Testament and the early church fathers, held a strong view of God's good creation. They knew it must be reaffirmed, not abandoned."[215]

Roger Olson, a scholar who specializes in historical theology, states:

> The bodily resurrection of all people at some time after death has played a prominent role in Christian teaching throughout history. In spite of a pronounced tendency among untutored lay Christians to focus attention on immortality of souls and neglect bodily resurrection, the fathers of the church, medieval Christian thinkers, all the Protestant Reformers and faithful modern biblical scholars and theologians have emphasized the bodily resurrection as the blessed hope of believers in Christ. . . .
>
> It would be impossible to discover any single point of greater agreement in the history of Christian thought than this one: *the future bodily resurrection of the dead is the blessed hope of all who are in Christ Jesus by faith*. Over two millennia the church's leaders and faithful theologians have

[213] N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 551.
[214] Wright (2008), 43.
[215] Wright (2008), 158.

> unanimously taught this above the immortality of souls and as more important than some ethereal intermediate state between bodily death and bodily resurrection when Christ returns. And yet, as we lamented earlier, it seems that the vast majority of Christians do not know this and neglect belief in bodily resurrection in favor of belief in immediate post-mortem heavenly, spiritual existence as ghost-like beings (or even angels!) "forever with the Lord in heaven."[216]

It was the Gnostics, that notorious group of heretics of the second century and beyond, who insisted on a nonphysical eternity because of their conviction that creation and matter were evil, the product of a lesser god. Physical creation in their view was a prison from which the spirit needed to escape. George MacRae writes:

> What is of course most distinctive of the apocalyptic eschatology of Gnosticism is the total absence of any new creation. Given its radically dualistic perspective, expressed in the concept of creation as error, Gnosticism can see the end time only as the dissolution of the created world. . . . Ultimate destiny is the reintegration of the divine particles into God, the dissolution of multiplicity in the restored unity. And with that the whole cosmos disappears.[217]

Church historian Michael Svigel states:

> Rather than a carefully harvested selective reading of the patristic period, these voices from the second through fifth centuries actually represent a unified chorus of fathers who shared the view that this created universe would not cease to exist in a final conflagration. Instead, the fires of judgment would purge and purify the present material world, renewing and readying it for eternal life. Indeed, to find contrary voices during the patristic period, one has to peer across the boundary line of catholic Christianity and look to the Gnostic heretics, who delighted in an eschatology that anticipated the total annihilation of the physical universe.[218]

The paradise that was lost in Genesis is regained in Revelation and regained to a transcendent degree, regained in even greater form. Revelation pictures the restoration of all things promised by God through the prophets, the restoration mentioned by Peter in Acts 3:21. The curse that followed sin in Genesis is removed in Revelation (22:3), the creation that was defiled by sin in Genesis is transformed into the new heaven and new earth in Revelation (21:1-4; see also 2 Pet. 3:13), and the tree of life from which mankind

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[216] Roger Olson, *The Mosaic of Christian Belief: Twenty Centuries of Unity and Diversity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 311, 314.
[217] George MacRae, "Apocalyptic Eschatology in Gnosticism" in David Hellholm, editor, *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1983), 323.
[218] Michael Svigel, "Extreme Makeover: Heaven and Earth Edition – Will God Annihilate the World and Re-Create It Ex Nihilo?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 171 (2014), 402-403.

was banished in Genesis because of sin is part of the eternal home of the redeemed in Revelation (22:2, 14, 19). The continuity is hard to miss.

The crucial point is that the problem with creation is *not its materiality*; again, that is a Gnostic perspective. After all, God is the one who made humans and the earth of material substance and then pronounced his physical creation "very good." Rather, the problem with creation is the corrupting, ruinous effect of sin that was introduced into the human realm, the physical world, by Satan through Adam and Eve. Eliminating creation rather than rescuing it would mean Satan had succeeded in damaging God's good creation beyond remedy. As theologian Michael Goheen observes:

> In the temptation in the garden Satan sought to thwart God's plan. Sin and its consequences now touch all of creation. If the presence of sin in the creation leads God to destroy his creation saving only some human souls, Satan will have gained a tremendous victory. Satan's work will have been quite successful. J. A. Seiss puts it this way: '. . . if redemption does not go as far as the consequences of sin, it is a misnomer, and fails to be redemption. . . . The salvation of any number of individuals . . . is not the redemption of what fell but the gathering up of a few splinters. . . . Satan's mischief goes further than Christ's restoration.' [J. A. Seiss, *The Apocalypse*, (London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, n.d.), 483].The story of the Bible moves toward that time when God's restorative work will go as far as Satan's mischief.[219]

He illustrates the point this way:

> Imagine a child who is healthy in every way contracts some disease that begins to have a devastating effect on her body. The doctor diagnoses the disease and seeks to prescribe a remedy that will remove the disease and its debilitating effects from her body. The doctor that destroys the patient and proclaims victory over the disease would be a poor doctor indeed! We can speak here of the healing of the creation. God's redemptive remedy has the goal of destroying sin and its effects so that the creation can be healthy again, the way it was supposed to be. Salvation is the healing *of* the creation not an escape *out of* the creation.[220]

Many notable figures in the history of churches of Christ subscribed to a materialistic eschatology. This includes Robert Haldane, Alexander Campbell, Moses Lard, David Lipscomb, J. W. McGarvey, and James Harding.[221] Indeed, "it was the dominant perspective among churches of Christ in the late nineteenth century, particularly as articulated by David Lipscomb and James A. Harding, co-founders of the Nashville Bible

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[219] Michael Goheen, "(Re)New(ed) Creation: The End of the Story," 5.
[220] Goheen, 4.
[221] John Mark Hicks, "Heaven on Earth" – A Stone-Campbell Tradition"; see also, Bobby Valentine, "Alexander Campbell & the Regeneration of Creation."

School (now Lipscomb University)."[222] It seems, however, that this eschatological view was a casualty of the war over premillennialism that was waged in the church in the 1930s and 40s. Though materialistic eschatology does not entail premillennialism, as often happens in theological battles, relevant distinctions were cast aside and the new-earth baby was thrown out with the premillennial bathwater, presumably because both involve a material state.[223]

To this day, many in churches of Christ have a reflexive aversion to materialistic eschatology which pushes them toward unlikely readings of the relevant texts and to speak as though materialistic eschatology is beyond the theological and exegetical pale. Some simply dismiss the idea out of hand with the charge, "That's Jehovah's Witness doctrine." So if what I am saying is new to you, it is not because it has not been known and accepted from the beginning; it is because it became disfavored in our heritage as collateral damage of a twentieth-century theological battle.

I will say more about resurrection as we work our way through chapter 15, and in the course of doing so will address some questions you may have. But let me here just cite you to some things I have written that lay out and develop the biblical and historical basis for a bodily resurrection and a materialistic eschatology generally. If you are interested, take a look at: (1) the subsection "Views of Death and Afterlife at Time of Christ" (pp. 5-7) of The Historical Case for the Resurrection of Christ, (2) The Resurrection of the Body, (3) On the Materiality of the Eternal State, (4) A Brief Study of Eschatology, and (5) Some Thoughts on the Intermediate State of the Dead. If you read those, you at least will have a fuller understanding of why I believe as I do.

I will end this excursus with another quote from Wright, this one from his November 2016 lecture titled "Jesus and the Future":

> [Israel's] story always was about creation and new creation, about God dealing with the corruption that followed from human idolatry and relaunching his project of creation. Now it had happened; new creation had arrived, close-up and personal [in Jesus Christ]. . . . And all this makes it more important than ever that we grasp the reality of bodily resurrection. The word "resurrection" was never in the first century a generalized word for life after death. That is to say, the word resurrection presupposes a two-stage post-mortem reality, and the word resurrection refers to the second stage in that sequence. God the Creator will make new heavens and new earth, a new

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[222] John Mark Hicks, "What Will Become of the Earth: A Nashville Bible School Perspective." It was during this same era that the Presbyterian theologian Charles Hodge wrote: "The Bible concerns man. The earth was cursed for his transgression. That curse is to be removed when man's redemption is completed. The κτισις that was made subject to futility for man's sin, is our earth; and our earth is the κτισις which is to be delivered from the bondage to corruption. The change to be effected is in the dwelling place of man." Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1946 [reprint 1873]), 3:854.
[223] John Mark Hicks, "From Lipscomb to Wallace on 'New Creation' Theology." One can see this concern over premillennialism in Burton Coffman's comment on Rom. 8:19. After acknowledging that Charles Hodge's logic in arguing that the verse refers to nature, to the subhuman creation, "is persuasive and difficult of refutation," he adds, "but Hodge himself admitted that 'In the early Christian church, this opinion was prevalent, and was the germ whence the extravagance of the Millenarians arose.'"

world that will be *more* physical, *more* full of pulsating life than the present one. God loves bodies, God loves stuff, he loves the creation; he made this world full of life and power and beauty. And if we look at the world with the jaundiced eyes of a world-weary Platonist – we think that it is all rotten, full of change and decay, and must be done away with – we are missing the point. The Jewish hope of resurrection was always for renewed creation, not the abolition of creation and the establishment of a different sort of thing, as though the Creator decided that the first creation was actually a failed experiment and he better do a nonphysical one the next time around. . . . So when we're talking about the resurrection we're talking about bodies, about new creation, about a world, and about human beings being *more* alive than at present. . . . Do you know how when you meet somebody you know who has been very sick and you see them for the first time after they've been sick, you say, "Poor old so and so, he's just a shadow of his former self"? If you are a part of Jesus' family, "in the Messiah" as Paul puts it, if you are indwelt by the Spirit, you are just a shadow of your *future* self.

A. The gospel includes the bodily resurrection of Christ (15:1-11)

Now I make known to you, brothers, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, [2]through which also you are being saved, if you hold firm to what word I preached to you – unless you believed in vain. [3]For I delivered to you, among the first things, what also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures [4]and that he was buried and that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures [5]and that he was seen by Cephas, then by the Twelve; [6]afterward he was seen by over five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some fell asleep; [7]afterward he was seen by James, then by all the apostles, [8]and last of all, as to one untimely born, he was seen by me also. [9]For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. [10]But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not in vain. Rather, I labored more abundantly than all of them, yet not I but the grace of God that was with me. [11]Therefore, whether I or they, thus we preach and thus you believed.

1. As I noted in the excursus, some Corinthians apparently believed the eternal state would be nonphysical, that Christians who died in Christ would not receive a resurrection body but rather would spend eternity as disembodied spirits. Their Greek worldview made them incredulous about an eternal physical existence, which is expressed in the questions of 15:35: How are the dead raised? With what sort of body do they come?

2. Paul reminds them in this section that the gospel they heard from him and accepted, the gospel that is saving them, includes the bodily resurrection of *Jesus* from the grave.

a. Paul notes that this gospel saves them "if [they] hold firm." This is a warning that the truth of that message cannot be abandoned without consequences. They must continue to believe what God has said about his work in Christ.

b. Paul adds that holding firm to the gospel message will save them "unless [they] believed in vain." If the gospel message was false, as their denial that *Christians* will be resurrected implied, then belief in that gospel would profit nothing. In that case, they would have believed in vain.

c. The reason their denial that Christians will be resurrected implied the gospel was false is that, as Paul makes clear in 15:13, it implied that *Christ* was not resurrected, and *Christ's* resurrection is a fundamental aspect of the gospel. As Paul would later write in 2 Tim. 2:8, "Remember Jesus Christ, *raised from the dead*, a descendant of David, *according to my gospel*." The apostles' preaching in Acts confirms the link between the gospel and the Lord's resurrection (e.g., Acts 2:22-24, 3:13-15, 10:36-41, 13:26-39, and 17:30-32). Paul states in Rom. 10:9, "Because if you confess with your mouth 'Jesus is Lord' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

3. In vv. 3-5 Paul reminds them of the most important tenets of the gospel that he had received and passed on to them. For a number of reasons, Paul's statement in 1 Cor. 15:3-5 is generally recognized to be an early creedal formula. (A creed is a set way of expressing certain important truths that usually facilitates memorization.)

a. Paul says in 1 Cor. 15:3 that he previously had "passed on" to the Corinthians the elements of this creed, which is a reference to his visit some four years earlier, and he also says that he had "received" this creedal formula even earlier than that. So we know that within twenty years of Christ's death, and most likely within six or seven years (when Paul first met with the leaders of the church in Jerusalem - Acts 9:26-29), a set statement was circulating that included not only belief in Christ's resurrection but the assertion that he had been seen by Peter and the Twelve.

b. Paul having received this tradition from men is not inconsistent with his statement in Gal. 1:11-12 that he did not receive his gospel from human beings but through a revelation of Jesus Christ. In Galatians he is referring to the gospel itself, the truth of Christ's atoning sacrifice and resurrection and its meaning for Gentiles, not to a creedal formula, a specific shorthand way of expressing of those truths. The tradition, the creedal formula, he received from men was consistent with the gospel he already had received from the Lord. As Fitzmyer notes, "in Galatians he is referring not to the formulation, but to the content of the gospel as a whole. In using *tíni logō* ['what word' in 1 Cor. 15:2], he insists on the very formulation, which he has inherited from tradition . . ."[224]

[224] Fitzmyer (2008), 545-546.

c. Vv. 6-7 do not appear to be part of the familiar creed and probably do not belong to "the gospel which [Paul] preached to [them]." Paul probably adds the information about these additional appearances, which he no doubt had taught in Corinth, to bolster the case for the reality of Christ's bodily resurrection and to remind them of his own place in the tradition.

d. The first item in the creed is "that Christ died for our sins."

(1) Paul says in Gal. 1:4, Jesus "gave himself for our sins." Elsewhere in 1 Corinthians he says "our Passover lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed" (5:7) and "you were bought with a price" (6:20, 7:23), and he refers to the weak brother as "the brother for whom Christ died" (8:11).

(2) This presupposes alienation between God and humans because of sin, and it means that Jesus who is the Christ, God's anointed one, died to pay the just penalty for our sins and to overcome that alienation. The cross is where God's justice and mercy, his holiness and love, are expressed simultaneously. Because in his love God desires to forgive us of our sin, he sent Jesus, his Son, to take upon himself the punishment for that sin. So in the cross God is able to satisfy both his holiness and his love; his justice and his mercy. In other words, through the cross God is able to forgive *justly*, to forgive *righteously*.

(3) This was "according to the Scriptures" in that the deliverance through sacrifice is a regular feature of the OT. More specifically, Isaiah 53 describes the one who "as a lamb led to slaughter" took away the sins of the people.

e. The second item in the creed is "that he was buried." In the creed this functions to verify the reality of Christ's death. In this context, it emphasizes the fact that what was resurrected is what had previously been buried, i.e., his body. What was buried is what was raised. Christ's resurrection was not merely some spiritual phenomenon; the tomb was empty!

f. The third item in the creed is "that he was raised on the third day." It may be that "according to the Scriptures" relates only to his being raised and not also to "on the third day." According to Acts 2:25-36 and 13:35-37, Ps. 16:8-11 and 110:1 bear witness to the Messiah's resurrection (see also, Isa. 53:10b-11, 54:7). If Paul means that "on the third day" also is according to the Scriptures, there are several OT passages that refer to divine deliverance occurring on the third day (Hos. 6:1-2; Jonah 1:17 [see, Mat. 12:40]; 2 Ki. 20:5). Also, the day on which Jesus was raised, the third day, was Sunday, which according to Lev. 23:10-11, 15 is the day the firstfruits of the harvest (see, 1 Cor. 15:20, 23) are offered to the Lord.

g. The fourth item in the creed is "that he was seen by Cephas and then by the Twelve." This is so important to Paul's argument that he appends four more appearances to these first two. Jesus' resurrection was not a form of spiritual existence; he was raised from the dead *bodily* and seen by many witnesses on a variety of occasions.

4. In vv. 6-8 Paul recounts other appearances of the resurrected Christ, ending with the Lord's appearance to him on the Damascus Road. In referring to himself as "one untimely born," Paul is probably picking up a derogatory label that some Corinthians had applied to him with regard to his supposedly undeveloped spirituality. The word he uses referred to a birth after an abnormal gestation period, including abortions and miscarriages, and carried a sense of deficiency.

5. In vv. 9-10 Paul digresses about his apostleship. He does not disown "the untimely born" as a term of his relative worthlessness but uses it to once again exalt the grace of God in his life. Whatever his weakness in relation to the other apostles, God graciously called him to be an apostle, and that grace both motivated and empowered him so that he labored more abundantly than all of the other apostles.

6. In v. 11 Paul returns to the point of the paragraph, namely that the gospel which is preached by all the apostles and which they believed includes the bodily resurrection of Christ. That is fundamental.

B. Logical conclusion of denying resurrection of the dead (15:12-19)

> **12But if Christ is preached, that he has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is not a resurrection of the dead? 13Now if there is not a resurrection of the dead, neither has Christ been raised. 14And if Christ has not been raised, then empty [indeed] is our preaching, empty also is your faith. 15And also, we are found to be false witnesses of God because we testified against God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if in fact the dead are not raised. 16For if the dead are not raised, neither has Christ been raised; 17and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is useless; you are still in your sins. 18Then also, those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19If only for this life we have hoped in Christ, we are more pitiable than all men.**

1. Given that the gospel includes the resurrection of the dead-and-buried Christ, Paul wants to know how some can claim that there is no resurrection of the dead. In his view, the future resurrection of Christians is so inextricably linked to the resurrection of Christ – they are part of one harvest as he will specify in the next paragraph – that to deny the one is to deny the other (v. 13, 16).

a. J. C. Beker rightly observed, "Indeed, according to Paul, the gospel is integrally connected with his apocalyptic worldview: he cannot conceive of the resurrection of Christ – which the Corinthians affirm (1 Cor 15:1, 2, 11) – apart from the apocalyptic resurrection of the dead. Both stand or fall together."[225]

[225] J. C. Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 171.

b. Oster states:

> Paul turns the argument to demonstrate the logical consequences of the position of these Corinthians if they, rather than Paul, are correct. Since the Apostle's argument rests upon the premise of an inextricable link between the believers' and Jesus' resurrection, he reasons that disbelief in the general resurrection of believers logically leads to disbelief in Christ's resurrection.[226]

c. Taylor likewise observes, "Paul's premise, 'If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised,' indicates that the deniers of resurrection in Corinth did not contest the resurrection of Christ. . . . Yet the major premise of Paul's logic is that to deny the resurrection of the dead generally excludes even the resurrection of Jesus."[227]

d. This thinking also is evident in 1 Thess. 4:14: "For *if we believe* that Jesus died and *rose again, in the same way God also will,* through Jesus, *bring with him* the ones who have fallen asleep."

2. And if it is true that Christ has not been raised, then:

a. neither the apostles' preaching nor the Corinthians' faith has any basis in reality, and thus neither has any significance or value.

b. the apostles are liars because they testify that God did indeed resurrect Jesus from the grave. Notice again that the resurrection of Christ is part of the gospel message (e.g., 2 Tim. 2:8; Rom. 10:9).

c. the Corinthians' faith is useless. As such, they are still in their sins and therefore alienated from God and under his just wrath.

d. those who have died believing in Christ have perished. They are lost, having no hope for any future blessing.

3. If the Christian's hope in Christ is limited to this life, if there is no resurrection of the dead as some Corinthians claim, then Christianity is a lie and those who have given their hearts and souls to it are due the utmost pity. They have spent their lives as fools, people who have been duped into ordering their lives around a fable.

C. But Christ has been raised and is the firstfruits of Christian's who have died (15:20-28)

> **[20]But as it is, Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. [21]For since death [came] through a man,**

[226] Oster (1995), 375.
[227] Taylor (2014), 380.

also the resurrection of the dead [came] through a man. [22]For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. [23]But each in his own order: the firstfruits, Christ; then those who are of Christ, at his coming; [24]then the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God, the Father, when he brings to an end every ruler and every authority and power. [25]For he must reign until he has put all the enemies under his feet. [26]The last enemy is brought to an end, namely death. [27]For "he has subjected all things under his feet." Now when it says that all things have been subjected, it is clear that it is with the exception of the one who subjected all things to him. [28]And when all things are subjected to him, then [even] the Son himself will be subjected to the one who subjected all things to him, so that God may be all in all.

1. But the fact of matter is that Christ has been raised from the dead and is the "firstfruits" of the end-time resurrection. His resurrection serves as a pledge or guarantee on God's part of the final end-time harvest.

a. As Garland explains:

> The term "firstfruits" does not simply signify Christ's chronological precedence as the first one raised from the dead, however. It conveys that his resurrection is the "first of a kind, involving the rest in its character or destiny" (Parry 1926:223). That is why Paul says that Christ is "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep," not "of the resurrected." His resurrection was not simply God's miraculous intervention that rescued him from death, but was "the beginning of God's renewal of all things" (Perkins 1984: 318; cf. Schrage 2001: 160). The concept of firstfruits expects that "the rest *must* follow" (Weiss 1910: 356). Holleman (1996:204) contends that by choosing this term, "Paul presents Jesus' resurrection as the beginning of the eschatological resurrection." As the firstfruits, Christ's resurrection is a pledge of the full harvest of resurrection to come: "The resurrection bodies . . . of the redeemed . . . are to correspond to and flow from Christ's in the same way that the harvest corresponds to and flows from its first fruits" (Kreitzer, DPL 11).[228]

b. Murray Harris states:

> The firstfruits are related to the harvest as the part is to the whole (compare the use of *aparchē* in Rom. 11:16). As the first part of the harvest, the firstfruits were representative of the whole harvest, that is, the total harvest was representatively and potentially present in the firstfruits. So it is that the whole, of which the resurrection of Christ is the first part, is the resurrection of 'those who belong to Christ' (1 Cor. 15:23). The resurrection of all believers is the necessary aftermath of the resurrection of Christ since

[228] Garland (2003), 705-706.

> the two are intrinsically connected, belonging as they do to a single harvest.[229]

c. Stephen Wellum states, "Just as the firstfruits of the harvest are a foretaste of the full harvest (Lev. 23:9-14), so Christ's resurrection anticipates and ensures the believer's resurrection. It is God's 'down payment' (*arrabōn*), a pledge that the final eschatological end is surely coming."[230]

2. Our resurrection is tied to his, so much so that in 2 Cor. 4:14 Paul says "we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also *with Jesus*." We are all the same harvest. He is the "*firstborn* from the dead" (Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5). And we, as part of the Lord's resurrection harvest, likewise will receive glorified and immortal *bodies* in our resurrection (Rom. 8:11, 23, 29; 1 Cor. 15:35-49; Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Jn. 3:2). His resurrection body is the prototype or model after which our resurrection bodies will be patterned. Jack Cottrell writes:

> The second phase of the new creation will be the day of the second coming of Jesus, when all the redeemed will receive new, glorified bodies. Most will receive them at the moment of resurrection itself, but living believers will receive them in an instantaneous change: "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet . . . the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed" (1 Cor 15:52). This event is called "the redemption of our body," and Paul says this is what we are "waiting eagerly for" (Rom 8:23). See 2 Cor 5:1-5.
>
> The glorified resurrection body of Jesus is the prototype or model after which our own glorified bodies will be patterned. Jesus "will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that he has even to subject all things to Himself" (Phil 3:21). This is what Paul means when he says that foreknown believers are "predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom 8:29). That is, our own new bodies will be of the same nature as the glorified human body of Jesus. "We will be like Him, because we will see Him as he is" (1 John 3:2); i.e., we shall be like him in his human bodily nature, not in his divine nature.[231]

3. That is why Jesus said in Jn. 5:28-29 that "an hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear his voice and will come out, those who have done good to a resurrection of life, but those who have done evil to a resurrection of judgment." Though Lazarus was raised to the same life he had known before his death, that event leaves no doubt as to the meaning of "coming out" in Jn. 5:28-29. It refers to a bodily exit from the grave (Jn. 11:43-44). This is the raising up that will occur on the last day (Jn. 6:39-40, 44, 54).

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[229] Murray J. Harris, *Raised Immortal: Resurrection and Immortality in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 110.
[230] Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 228.
[231] Jack Cottrell, *The Faith Once for All: Bible Doctrine for Today* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2002), 281.

4. Paul explains this consequence of Christ's resurrection in terms of the Adam-Christ parallel. Just as death is the inevitable consequence of our connection to Adam, so resurrection is the inevitable consequence of our connection to Christ. Here, of course, Paul is referring to the *resurrection of life* Jesus mentioned in Jn. 5:29, the resurrection of those who because of Christ will have true life in the presence of God. He is not concerned with the *resurrection of judgment* also mentioned in Jn. 5:29, the resurrection of those who will experience eternal sorrow. Paul recognizes this distinction in Acts 24:15, where he speaks of "a resurrection of both the just and the unjust," but as in 1 Thess. 4:13-18, he focuses only on the resurrection of the saints.

5. But the resurrection secured by Christ occurs in a certain order, according to God's plan. First Christ is resurrected and then, at the time of his Second Coming, those who are in him are resurrected. This is essentially what he told the Thessalonians in 1 Thess. 4:13-18.

6. At his return, the Lord Jesus consummates or finalizes the kingdom he inaugurated or initiated at his first coming.

a. In other words, he completes his rescue of fallen creation, brings to fulfillment the victory he achieved through the cross, by purging from creation all agents and effects of sin, all that is contrary to God's eternal vision, the last of which is death itself. Jesus is the faithful and obedient Son who, having paid the price to reconcile all things, was exalted by God the Father, being given authority over all things (e.g., Eph. 1:20-22; Phil. 2:9; Heb. 1:3b-4). And in that power and authority he will return to deal with all remaining disruptions produced by sin and all who refused to be reconciled.

b. This is the mighty return in which all foes are destroyed, the majestic return pictured in 1 Thess. 4:13-18, 2 Thess. 1:5-10, and Revelation 19:11-21. It is the time when, in the words of Phil. 2:10-11, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Some will do so in heartfelt joy; others only in submission to a power they cannot resist.

c. Creation will at that time be transformed into the new heaven and new earth spoken of by Isaiah, Peter, and John. It will be "heavenized," transformed into a realm of perfect love and fellowship with God and each other, an eternal state in which there will be no death or mourning or crying or pain. This is the merger of heaven and earth that is pictured so beautifully in Rev. 21:1-5; it is the time, in the words of Rom. 8:21, when creation itself will *also* be freed from the slavery of decay to which it was subjected at the Fall and will enter into the end-time glory to be enjoyed by God's children. We and it both are getting the "ultimate makeover."

d. Christ will put all the enemies under his feet (v. 25) because God the Father has ordained it, has subjected all things under Christ's feet (v. 27a). Indeed, he exalted Jesus as Lord, gave him authority over all things, for that end. Paul hastens to add

that in subjecting all things under Christ's feet God the Father is not included in "all things." He is not and will not be subject to Christ; rather, Christ is subject to him.

e. The God-man Jesus, the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity, is the perfectly faithful Son, the one who prayed, "Not my will but yours be done" (Mat. 26:10; Mk. 14:36). This does not mean that in his divinity Jesus lacks anything of "Godness." He serves as the Son without diminishing in the least the truth that his divine nature is the same essence or being as the Father and the Spirit.

f. And having fully accomplished his mission, the Son presents or delivers to the Father this restored or rescued kingdom, this realm from which all discord has been eliminated and in which there is nothing but grateful and loving loyalty. He then, as God the Son, shares with the Father in the rule of that eternal kingdom. As we see in Rev. 22:1, 3, God and the Lamb share a throne in the new heaven and new earth (see also, Rev. 11:15-19). Schreiner comments:

> Of course, the victory over sin and death can only be accomplished by one who is fully God and fully man (1 Cor. 15:1-11), but the subjection of the Son in 1 Corinthians 15:27-28 should be read not as an ontological subjection but as a functional subordination. As the Davidic king and the Messiah he hands over the kingdom to God and submits himself to him. Still, the reality is complex. By virtue of his equality with God, he also reigns equally for ever with the Father (Rev. 11:15-19).[232]

g. The end result is that God is over all, meaning all things have been brought into proper relationship with him. The creation that was fractured and sickened in Genesis 3 has been fully, finally, and completely healed. The scope and breadth of Christ's healing work is also seen in Col. 1:19-20 where Paul speaks of Jesus as the one through whom God the Father reconciled *all things* to himself, making peace by the blood of his cross. And it is seen in Eph. 1:9-10 where Paul says the mystery of God's will for the administration of the fullness of the times is to bring *all things* together in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth. "For all the promises of God find their Yes in him" (2 Cor. 1:20, ESV).

D. Additional argument for truth of the resurrection (15:29-34)

> **[29]Otherwise, what will they do, those who are being baptized because of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why indeed are they being baptized because of them? [30]Why indeed do we ourselves face danger every hour? [31]Daily I face death; I swear by [my] boast in you, brothers, which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord. [32]If as a [mere] man I fought wild beasts in Ephesus, what is the benefit to me? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." [33]Do not be deceived, "Evil associations ruin good habits." [34]Sober up, as is right,**

[232] Schreiner (2018), 316.

and stop sinning, for some have an ignorance of God. I say [this] to your shame.

1. Paul continues his attack on their denial of the resurrection. He says "otherwise," meaning that if Christians are *not* destined for resurrection in Christ, then why are some of them being baptized because of the dead?

a. The prepositional phrase that I have rendered "*because of* the dead" (*huper tōn nekrōn*) and "*because of* them" (*huper autōn*) could be rendered "*in place of* the dead" and "*in place of* them." In that case, the sense would be that some Corinthians were undergoing baptism vicariously for dead people, were being baptized to benefit those who had already died. This is how the Mormons understand the verse, and they further claim that Paul was tacitly approving of the practice.

b. The sense of the phrases as I have rendered them is that some Corinthians were motivated, at least in part, to be baptized by those who had passed on before them. They were not baptized to procure some benefit for the dead but rather were influenced to be baptized by a desire to share in the future of those dead saints, to share in the resurrection.

(1) The dead who influenced them in that direction could have been deceased family members who were Christians or beloved brothers or sisters in the Lord. It is clear that a good number of Corinthian Christians had died (see, 11:30, 15:18, 20). That is how Anthony Thiselton understands the text. He summarizes the matter this way:

> We may return to G. G. Findlay's succinct and careful comments. After exposing the fallacy of some competing views, he observes, "Paul is referring rather to a much commoner, indeed a normal experience, that death of Christians leads to the conversion of survivors, who in the first instance 'for the sake of the dead' (their beloved dead) and in the hope of reunion, turn to Christ -- e.g., when a dying mother wins her son by the appeal 'Meet me in heaven!' Such appeals, and their frequent salutary effect, give strong and touching evidence of faith in the resurrection."[233]

(2) Gardner states:

> One of the more persuasive suggestions, followed by a number of commentators, is that the purpose is to be reunited at the time of the resurrection with relatives who have died. Perhaps for some at Corinth, the death of those of faith had become a motivation for their relatives to be baptized. To see their relatives again, people take up the Christian faith that alone teaches of one who has risen from the dead. If there is no resurrection of the dead, then this whole exercise is pointless. . . . [T]here are various motivations to faith in Scripture, and being faced with death among friends

[233] Thiselton (2000), 1248.

> or family is surely a reminder of one's own mortality that can be used by God as he calls people to himself. . . . People have come to faith because of their appreciation of the wonder of the resurrection and the possibility of seeing their relatives again. This would be all to no avail if there is no resurrection of the dead.[234]

(3) It is also possible, however, that the dead who influenced some of the Corinthians to be baptized were all the Christians who had died, whom they had heard would be resurrected. Ciampa and Rosner paraphrase that meaning this way: "Now, if there is no resurrection, what will be accomplished by those who get baptized because of what they have heard about how our dead will be raised? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people undergoing baptism on account of them?"[235]

(4) In either of those cases, Paul's point is that those who have been baptized in this hope are dupes if the dead are not in fact raised. If there is no resurrection of dead saints, then they will not be reunited with their departed loved ones as anticipated or share in the assumed destiny of the dead saints. (At best, they will join them in some disembodied state where people are mere shadows of themselves.)

c. It is extremely unlikely that Paul was referring to Christians who were being baptized in place of dead people, being baptized to affect the spiritual destiny of non-Christians who had already died. The NT knows nothing of salvation apart from a personal faith, repentance, confession, and baptism, and vicarious baptism was unheard of in any orthodox Christian church in the first or following centuries. The earliest historical mention of vicarious baptism is in the mid-second century,[236] and all the references involve heretical sects (Marcionites, Cerinthians, and Montanists). As Gordon Fee asks regarding the Mormon interpretation, "How can such a practice be so *completely* unknown if in fact it had had any authorization within the churches of the first century?"[237] Michael Hull states in the conclusion of his study published in 2005:

> [W]e made a concerted effort to find some semblance of a custom to ground a reading of vicarious baptism. We closely examined the pre-Christian and Christian Paul, we searched Greco-Roman Corinth and its ancient religions, and we analyzed Corinthian Christianity through the lens of the crises discussed by Paul in 1 Corinthians. But something like vicarious baptism was nowhere to be found. We concluded that without any historical foundation whatsoever, vicarious baptism was not a viable interpretation of 15:29 . . .[238]

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[234] Gardner (2018), 693.
[235] Ciampa and Rosner (2010), 784-785.
[236] The occasional Mormon claim that in the *Shepherd* (*Similitudes* 9.16.1-6) Hermas refers to Christians being baptized in the place of dead people is incorrect. See, Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 217-218.
[237] Fee (2014), 846 (fn. 221).
[238] Michael F. Hull, *Baptism on Account of the Dead (1 Cor 15:29): An Act of Faith in the Resurrection* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2005), 256.

2. Next Paul asks rhetorically why, if the resurrection is not true, he and his companions constantly risk death for the sake of a message that declares it *is* true. His point is that they would not do that unless they were certain the message was true. If the gospel is a lie, all the clarity it brought about the fate of the dead, both the blessing of being with the Lord in the intermediate state and the blessing of resurrection life after that, is gone.

a. One is left with the vagueness and uncertainty about death that haunted mankind from the Fall (e.g., Eccles. 9:3-5). What Jesus did to free those held in slavery by fear of death, in the words of Heb. 2:15, is turned to nothing by denial of the resurrection. In that case, we have not heard from one who already passed through death and returned victorious, never to die again.

b. The reference to Jesus in Heb. 2:10 that is often translated "the *pioneer* of their salvation" takes on a new significance in light of the Lord's resurrection. As the note to the NET states, the word can carry "nuances of 'trailblazer,' one who breaks through to new ground for those who follow him." That certainly is an apt description of Jesus as the firstborn from the dead, the first one to pass through death into resurrection life.

3. In v. 32 Paul elaborates on his risking death with a specific instance. He says, "If as a [mere] man I fought wild beasts in Ephesus, what is the benefit to me?" Paul clearly had a fierce struggle with opponents in Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 1:8-11), for which fighting wild beasts is a metaphor, but we do not know much about it.

a. His point is that he would not have risked death in Ephesus as a mere human, as one without divine enlightenment about death, especially the enlightenment provided by Jesus' resurrection. He would not have done so because, from a merely human perspective, from such a limited, "under the sun" perspective, death is essentially a "black box," an unknown. So in that case he would have no reason to believe that any suffering or sacrifice ultimately mattered, was of any benefit; all lives seemingly would be leveled by death. In the refrain of the Teacher in Ecclesiastes (Qohelet), everything would appear meaningless and thus could not motivate the conduct Paul exhibited in Ephesus. That death-defying conduct was motivated by the certainty about death provided by the divine enlightenment given most clearly in the resurrection of Christ.

b. If there is no resurrection, as some Corinthians claim, then the gospel is a lie, and if the gospel is a lie, then Jesus cast no light on death. Death remains an unknown state that leaves one without any real hope. Thus, Paul says in v. 32b, "If the dead are not raised, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.'" Given the uncertainty about death without Jesus' light, one might as well live like this life is all there is, like "you only go around once." This statement ("Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die") is in Isa. 22:13 (LXX), but the sentiment was well known in the Greco-Roman world.[239]

4. Paul urges them not to be misled and quotes a proverbial saying: "Evil associations ruin good habits." He is referring to those who deny the resurrection (15:12) and making the point that their doctrine will have a corrupting effect on the Corinthians'

[239] Ciampa and Rosner (2010), 791.

character. As he just indicated, the resurrection hope has important ethical ramifications; it fortifies a life of sacrifice and discipline. They need to "sober up" or come to their senses about the resurrection and start living accordingly.

E. Dispensing with a foolish objection to a bodily resurrection (15:35-44)

> **35But someone will say, "How are the dead raised? With what sort of body do they come?" 36Foolish man! What you yourself sow is not made alive unless it dies. 37And what do you sow? You do not sow the body that is going to be but a naked seed, perhaps of wheat or one of the rest. 38But God gives a body to it as he has willed, and to each of the seeds [he gives] its own body. 39Not all flesh is the same flesh; rather, [there is] one flesh for men and another flesh for animals and another flesh for birds and another for fish. 40And [there are] heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly ones is one kind, and the glory of the earthly ones is another. 41The glory of the sun is one kind, and the glory of the moon is another, and the glory of the stars is another; indeed, star differs from star in glory. 42So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in a perishable state; it is raised in an imperishable state. 43It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. 44It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.**

1. The rejection of a bodily resurrection by some in Corinth was apparently supported by their inability to understand how this would be accomplished. After all, the body is decayed. Paul calls them foolish for raising such an objection.

a. They simply need to look at the way God has arranged the natural order of plant life. The seed they sow "dies" in the sense it does not continue to exist as a seed but rather is transformed into a plant that has a different kind of body, a body given to it by God. Its form of being or existence as a seed gives way to another as it is divinely transformed. The seed that "dies" thus continues to live in resurrected form.

b. And they simply need to consider that God has made all kinds of different bodies. Earthly bodies differ from one another in terms of substance. Man has one kind of flesh, beasts, birds, and fish all have another. Earthly bodies differ from heavenly bodies, and heavenly bodies differ from each other in terms of splendor. God has adapted the bodies he has made to fit a variety of kinds of existence.

2. The resurrection of the dead follows the same principles.

a. Our present, earthly body, the naked seed, is sown in a perishable state, in dishonor, and in weakness, but *it* will be raised in an imperishable state, in glory, and in power. What is sown is what is raised; there is both continuity and transformation. James Ware observes, "Paul does not describe resurrection as an event in which x (the

present body) is sown, but y (a body distinct from the present body) is raised, but in which a single x (the present body) is sown a perishable x, but raised an imperishable x."[240]

b. As Ware has shown, this continuity between the present body and the resurrection body is confirmed by the regular use of the word ἐγείρω in relation to resurrection, the word that is translated "raised." Unlike the English word "raised," which can refer to something ascending or elevating, like a spark "rising" from a flame or a balloon "rising" in the air, ἐγείρω means to get up or stand up, that is, to rise from a supine to a standing position. Ware declares in his study:

> In no instance within ancient Greek literature does ἐγείρω denote the concept of ascension, elevation or assumption. Rather, it denotes the action whereby one who is prone, sitting, prostrate or lying down is restored to a standing position. . . . In resurrection contexts the verb does not therefore denote that the dead ascend or are assumed somewhere; rather, the verb signifies that the corpse, lying supine in the grave, gets up or arises to stand from the tomb. When used with reference to the dead, therefore, the term refers unambiguously to the reanimation or revivification of the corpse.[241]

c. Just as the seed continues in a transformed body, so Christians will live forever in bodies of the resurrection. As Paul says in Phil. 3:20-21: "For our commonwealth is in heaven, from where we eagerly await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform the body of our humiliation to be conformed to the body of his glory in accordance with the power that also enables him to subject all things to himself."

3. Our "natural body" that is sown, this body that is subject to death and thus is buried, planted in the ground, Paul says will be raised a "spiritual body." The phrase "spiritual body" does not mean the raised body will no longer be physical, that it will consist only of spirit. That is a misconception that has led some away from a proper understanding of resurrection and eschatology.

a. First, Paul does not say our natural body will be raised a *spirit*, a nonphysical entity. He says it will be raised a "spiritual *body*," and physicality is an inherent aspect of *sōma* ("body") when Paul uses it in reference to a person. Robert Gundry states in his influential study *Sōma in Biblical Theology*: "Contrary to all this, however, runs Paul's exceptionless use of *sōma* for a physical body. Had Paul wanted to portray the resurrection in any other fashion than in terms of physical bodies, he would not have used *sōma*."[242]

b. Second, the adjective "spiritual" does not mean the noun it modifies lacks physicality, that it is something composed exclusively of an immaterial or noncorporeal spirit. In Greek, adjectives ending in *-ikos* (as opposed to those ending in *-inos*) "normally denote mode of existence rather than substance."[243] Thus, Wright explains,

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[240] Ware (2014), 486.
[241] Ware (2014), 494.
[242] Robert H. Gundry, *Sōma in Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1987), 168.
[243] Craig S. Keener, *1-2 Corinthians* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 132.

"The adjective [*pneumatikos*] describes, not what something is *composed of*, but what it is *animated by*. It is the difference between speaking of a ship made of steel or wood on the one hand and a ship driven by steam or wind on the other."[244] For example, when we speak of an "electric car," we do not mean a car *made of* electricity but a car *powered* by electricity.

(1) Otherwise, given the inherent physicality of "body," the phrase "spiritual body" would be incoherent. It would suggest that the physical body is composed entirely of something nonphysical.

(2) Paul's uses of the adjective "spiritual" elsewhere in 1 Corinthians shows it does not mean that the noun to which it applies lacks physicality, is composed of spirit. In 1 Cor. 2:14-15 Paul uses the same two adjectives (*psychikos*/natural and *pneumatikos*/spiritual) in contrasting the "natural man" from the "spiritual man," and he certainly does not mean the latter is nonphysical! When he says in 1 Cor. 3:1 that he could not speak to them as "spiritual men but as to fleshly ones," he was not referring to their physicality. When he refers in 1 Cor. 10:3-4 to the manna and water provided during the Exodus and wilderness wandering as "spiritual food" and "spiritual drink," he was not suggesting they were nonphysical. And when he asks in 14:37 if anyone thinks he is a prophet or is "spiritual," he is not asking about their physicality.

c. Third, the parallel phrase "natural body" shows that "spiritual body" is not intended to refer to a nonphysical entity composed only of spirit. The adjective *psychikos*, which is translated "natural," is a cognate of the noun *psychē*, just as the adjective *pneumatikos* is a cognate of the noun *pneuma*. *Psychē* means "soul," and yet the phrase a "*psychikos* body" obviously does not describe something nonphysical, something that consists only of soul; rather, it describes the present mortal body, the body before it is transformed in the resurrection.

(1) Ware makes the point this way:

> [If] σῶμα πνευματικόν in this context describes the composition of the future body, as a body composed solely of *pneuma*, its correlate σῶμα ψυχικόν would perforce describe the composition of the present body, as a body *composed only of soul*. Paul would assert the absence of flesh and bones, not only from the risen body, but also from the present mortal body as well! The impossibility that ψυχικός here refers to the body's composition rules out the notion that its correlated adjective πνευματικός refers to the body's composition. Contrasted with ψυχικός, the adjective πνευματικός must similarly refer to the source of the body's life and activity, describing the risen body as *given life by the Spirit*.[245]

(2) The contrast is not between *physical* bodies and spiritual bodies (contrary to RSV and NRSV), but between *natural* bodies and spiritual bodies. The

[244] Wright (2003), 352.
[245] Ware (2014), 488-489.

contrast is between natural bodies, those common to mankind, and bodies that have been transformed so as to be suitable for the eternal state. They are "spiritual" not in the sense of noncorporeal (made of spirit) but in the sense of supernatural, in the sense they are imperishable, glorious, and powerful. As Paul indicates in Rom. 8:11, God will raise our mortal bodies from the dead *through his Spirit*, and thus the transformed body of the resurrection is very much a work of the Spirit.

d. The fact "spiritual body" does not mean something nonphysical is recognized by a broad range of scholars. What I am telling you is not the least bit novel. Here are some examples.

(1) Taylor states, "The terms 'natural' and 'spiritual' in this context do not mean 'material' and 'immaterial' but rather describe the present earthly body and the future transformed, resurrection body shaped in the image of Christ."[246]

(2) Michael Gorman states, "the phrase 'spiritual body' does *not* mean non-physical but rather Spirit-enlivened."[247]

(3) Ben Witherington III states, "Spiritual body does not mean a body without substance, but a body animated and vivified by God's Spirit."[248]

(4) Fee says the adjectives "natural" (*psychikos*) and "spiritual" (*pneumatikos*):

> do not describe the "stuff" or composition of the body; . . . Rather, they describe the present body in terms of its essential characteristics as earthly, on the one hand, and therefore belonging to the life of the present age, and as heavenly, on the other, and therefore belonging to the life of the Spirit in the age to come. It is "spiritual," not in the sense of "immaterial" but of "supernatural," . . .[249]

(5) Alan Johnson states:

> The *-ikos* ending on the adjective signals an "ethical or dynamic relation, not a material one" (Harris, 1990:402). So the words denote "not substances but modes of being" (Thiselton 2000:1275). Therefore the proper distinction between the two types of embodiments is not material or physical versus immaterial or nonphysical but a body suited for the mere functioning of the *psychē*, the life principle, a body destined because of sin to die and to corrupt

[246] Taylor (2014), 406-407.
[247] Michael Gorman, *Reading Paul* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2008), 98 (fn. 6).
[248] Ben Witherington III, *Paul's Narrative Thought World: The Tapestry of Tragedy and Triumph* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 329.
[249] Fee (2014), 869.

(Gen 3:19), in contrast to a body suited for the full functioning of the Holy Spirit, the imperishable resurrection body.[250]

(6) Stephen Davis states:

Paul is not denying that resurrected bodies are physical, but is denying that they are frail and corruptible like natural bodies. So Paul's notion is that when God raises us, God will change our bodies into spiritual bodies, bodies controlled by the Holy Spirit, bodies fit for the kingdom of God. But they will still be bodies, and they will be continuous with (because they are the result of changes in) our old natural bodies.[251]

(7) Ware states:

Both contextual and lexical evidence thus indicate that the phrase σῶμα πνευματικόν in 1 Cor 15.44-6 does not refer to a body composed of material *pneuma*, but to the fleshly body endowed with imperishable life by the power of the Spirit. Although the expression σῶμα πνευματικόν is unique here in Paul, the concept of the Spirit as the agent of resurrection life is a major theme within Paul's theology (Rom 8.9-11, 23; 2 Cor 5.4-5; Gal 5.25; 6.7-8). Within this theology, the work of the Spirit in those who belong to Christ will culminate in the resurrection, when 'the one who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who indwells you' (Rom 8.11).[252]

(8) Schreiner states:

When new life in Christ comes for believers, they receive the Spirit, but they do not immediately receive a *spiritual body*. They will not be given a spiritual body until the end (cf. 15:20-28). A *spiritual body* does not mean an immaterial body; such a conclusion would contradict Paul's entire discussion up to this point. What alienated some Corinthians was the idea that the resurrection body is physical. The resurrection of Christ for Paul was certainly physical. What Paul means by *spiritual body* is a body empowered and animated by the Holy Spirit; the body is physical but, in contrast to one's earthly body, it lives in a whole new realm, for now it is a body enlivened by the Holy Spirit.[253]

4. The continuity between the present body and the resurrection body sometimes causes people to wonder if God will be able to resurrect those whose bodies have been incinerated or decayed to dust and scattered or consumed as nutrients by other living

[250] Alan F. Johnson, *1 Corinthians*, IVPNTC (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 304-305.
[251] Stephen Davis, "Eschatology and Resurrection" in Jerry L. Walls, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 390.
[252] Ware (2014), 489.
[253] Schreiner (2018), 322.

things. And to that I say that the God who spoke a universe into existence can handle the task. Indeed, Rev. 20:13 speaks of the sea giving up those who had died in it, so however disintegrated or dispersed human remains may be, they are not beyond the power of God to be taken up into the great transformation of the resurrection.

5. Also, the continuity between the present body and the resurrection body does not mean that bodily deformities or disabilities will carry over.

a. At his first coming, Jesus healed the blind, lame, sick, and deformed to illustrate the character of the consummated kingdom, to show how things will be in that final state. All those things are the work of Satan, either directly or indirectly, and Satan's work will have no place in the consummated kingdom of God.

b. When Jesus says in Mk. 9:43-47 (cf. Mat. 18:8-9) that it is better to enter the eternal life of the kingdom of God maimed or one-eyed than to go to hell, he seems to be implying, consistent with some rabbinic understandings, that the dead will initially be raised with whatever bodily defects they had at death. Joel Marcus comments, "These rabbinic traditions go on to affirm that immediately after their resurrection, the disabled will be healed of their disabilities, and the same assumption may underlie our passage: the lame or blind will *enter* eternal life maimed, but they will not *remain* in that condition."[254]

F. Support for claim of a spiritual body (15:45-49)

45So also it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living soul"; the last Adam [became] a life-giving spirit. 46But the spiritual [was] not first; rather, [there was] the natural, then the spiritual. 47The first man [is] of the earth, made of dust; the second man [is] of heaven. 48As [is] the man of dust, so also [are] those of dust; and as [is] the heavenly man, so also [are] the heavenly ones. 49And just as we bore the image of the man of dust, so we will also bear the image of the heavenly man.

1. In v. 44b Paul asserts that the existence of a natural body presupposes the existence of its counterpart, a spiritual body; if there is one there is also the other. He then makes a statement in v. 45 that supports or conforms to that assertion ("So also"), but to appreciate his point it helps to know the Greek words he uses and to be aware of the literary device known as a synecdoche, which is where part of something is used to represent the whole (e.g., all hands on deck, those are nice wheels).

2. Gen. 2:7 (LXX) says that Adam became a living *psychē*. That Greek word can refer to a person's "soul" in distinction from his body (e.g., Rev. 20:4), but it also can refer, as a synecdoche, to the entire person, the being that includes a soul. It clearly functions that way in Gen. 2:7, which is why most English translations render the word in 1 Cor. 15:45 as *person* or *being* instead of soul (I kept the more literal "soul"). *Psychē* is the noun cognate of the adjective *psychikos*, which is the adjective used in the phrase "*natural* body."

[254] Joel Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, AB (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 690.

So the implication of the word *psychē* as a synecdoche for person in the statement in Gen. 2:7 that the first man (Paul's interpretive addition), Adam, became a living person is that Adam provided a *natural* (*psychikos*) body for his people.

3. Paul declares that the last Adam, Jesus, became a life-giving *pneuma*. That Greek word can refer a person's "spirit" in distinction from his body (e.g., 1 Cor. 5:3; 2 Cor. 7:1; Jas. 2:26), but it also can refer, as a synecdoche, to the entire person (e.g., 2 Chron. 36:22; Lk. 1:47; 1 Cor. 5:5; Gal. 6:18; Phil. 4:23; 2 Tim. 4:22; Philem. 25).[255] It functions that way in v. 45b in parallel to how *psychē* functions in the preceding clause (v. 45a). *Pneuma* is the noun cognate of the adjective *pneumatikos*, which is the adjective in the phrase "*spiritual* body." So the implication of the word *pneuma* as a synecdoche for person in the statement the last Adam, Jesus, became a life-giving person is that Jesus provided a spiritual (*pneumatikos*) body for his people. Thus, the first Adam became a living person (*psychē*), implying natural bodies, and the last Adam became a life-giving person (*pneuma*), implying spiritual bodies.

4. Paul says there is an order to the appearance of the natural body and the spiritual body. The natural came first in the first man, Adam, who was made from the dust, and then came the spiritual in the second man, Christ, who came from heaven. Those of dust, those who descend from the man of dust, are like the man of dust; we share in his naturalness. And those of heaven, those who are born of the man from heaven, are like the man of heaven; we share in his supernaturalness. And this fact will play out in the same order: we first bore the image of Adam in the weakness of our natural bodies, but we will in the resurrection bear the image of Christ in the glory of our resurrection bodies.

G. Conclusion of argument about the resurrection body (15:50-57)

> **50Now I say this, brothers, that flesh and blood is not able to inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51Pay attention; I tell you a mystery: we will not all sleep, but we all will be changed, 52in an instant, in the blink of an eye, at the last trumpet; for a trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53For this perishable thing must put on imperishability, and this mortal thing must put on immortality. 54And when this perishable thing puts on imperishability and this mortal thing puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be [fulfilled]: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." 55Where, O death, is your victory?**

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[255] Eduard Schweizer states in *TDNT* 6:435, "it can denote man as a whole, with a stronger emphasis on his psychical than his physical nature." Anthony Hoekema concludes in *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 214, "*Pneuma*, it is clear, may often be used to designate the whole person; it, like *psyche*, describes an aspect of man in his totality." Darrell Bock states in *The Bible Knowledge Word Study: Acts – Ephesians* [2006], 419: "In this verse [Gal. 6:18] 'spirit' refers to the human spirit, a person's immaterial inner being, and by synecdoche (a part for the whole) denotes the whole person in terms of the mental and volitional aspects of one's personality (cf. Phil. 4:23; Philem. 25; 2 Tim. 4:22). It is comparable to the words 'with you' in Paul's benedictions elsewhere."

Where, O death, is your sting? [56]Now the sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; [57]but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Paul here concludes his argument about the resurrection body by stressing the necessity for transformation. The statement that "flesh and blood" cannot inherit the kingdom of God does not mean that no physical substance can enter the eternal state. Paul was speaking of "flesh and blood" *as presently constituted*, as subject to weakness, decay, and death. Our bodies cannot enter the eternal state, the consummated kingdom, without first being transformed into imperishable, glorious, powerful, and immortal bodies.

a. As Davis notes, "When Paul says, 'flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God,' he is not saying that a body (the very term Paul uses, *soma*, implies physicality) cannot enter the kingdom of God, but that a body that has not yet been transformed by God via resurrection cannot do so."[256]

b. Blomberg explains, "'Flesh and blood' in verse 50 was a stock idiom in Jewish circles for 'a mere mortal' and does not contradict what Paul has already stressed, that resurrection experience is a bodily one (cf. Jesus' reference to having 'flesh and bones' in Luke 24:39)."[257]

c. Taylor states, "The phrase 'flesh and blood' refers to the earthly human body, which is subject to sin and death."[258]

d. Garland states, "The first assertion, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, is explained by the second in ways that any Greek reader could understand. 'Flesh and blood' represents what is corruptible, and what is corruptible cannot stake a claim on what is incorruptible."[259]

e. Wright states:

> Paul declares that "flesh and blood cannot inherit God's kingdom." He doesn't mean that physicality will be abolished. "Flesh and blood" is a technical term for that which is corruptible, transient, heading for death. The contrast, again, is not between what we call physical and what we call nonphysical but between *corruptible physicality*, on the one hand, and *incorruptible physicality*, on the other.[260]

f. Schreiner states:

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[256] Davis (2008), 390.
[257] Blomberg (1994), 316.
[258] Taylor (2014), 411.
[259] Garland (2003), 741.
[260] Wright (2008), 156.

> When Paul says that *flesh and blood* will not enter the kingdom, he does not mean that physical bodies will not be in the kingdom. Such a notion would contradict the affirmation of the physical resurrection which permeates this chapter. Instead, as the next line of the verse demonstrates, and as the whole chapter certifies, corruptible flesh and blood will not enter the kingdom.[261]

2. This transformation is essential for everyone entering the eternal kingdom, not only for those who died before the Second Coming. *Not all* Christians will die – some will be alive when Christ returns – *but all* will be transformed. The body in its present form simply cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Instead, when Christ returns, the dead will be raised with glorified bodies, and the saints who are alive at the time will likewise be transformed (without experiencing death). This will all occur in an instant. The same idea is expressed in 1 Thess. 4:15-18.

3. Paul notes that when this occurs, death will have been swallowed up in victory, and then, using Hos. 13:14, he taunts death in v. 55 in light of that certain event: "Where, O death is your victory? Where, O death is your sting?" Death has been defeated and rendered impotent by the Lord Jesus Christ! The victory he gained over death at this first coming (e.g., 2 Tim. 1:10) is now realized in the fullest sense through the immortalization of his people.

4. Having mentioned death and sting, Paul interjects a theological note that the sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law. I think he means that physical death only really stings for those who are in sin, those who are under condemnation for rebellion against the law of God. For them, death is entrance into an eternal judgment. For the righteous, the forgiven, the victorious in Christ, death is stingless. It is a passage to a blessed intermediate state and then eternal resurrection glory.

H. Exhortation not to be moved from this conviction (15:58)

> **[58]So then, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.**

1. Given the resurrection hope that he has so staunchly defended, Paul now urges them not to be moved from this conviction and constantly to give themselves to the work of the Lord, knowing that they are not pursuing a mirage. Ciampa and Rosner state, "This whole chapter serves as a call to faithful Christian service in the assurance that comes from the resurrection – the assurance that sacrifices made for Christ and his kingdom are not made in vain, but will be richly rewarded in the fullness of that kingdom."[262]

2. And beyond any independent rewards our labor may receive, I think all effective Christian service, all Christian labor that changes things in the direction of the

[261] Schreiner (2018), 323-324.
[262] Ciampa and Rosner (2010), 839.

eternal state, the new heaven and new earth, carries over into eternity as a kind of advance transformation. For example, to the extent we bring others to faith and build their devotion to God, their love for each other, and their unity with each other – to the extent we make them more like Christ – we are, in Paul's terminology in 1 Cor. 3:12, building with gold, silver, and precious stones. That is labor that will pass through the judgment with us, unlike building with wood, hay, or straw. It is something that will not be stripped out as being of no eternal value, as being inconsistent with or irrelevant to God's eternal vision.

3. I love the image Wright employs when speaking about this in his interview by Ben Witherington regarding *Surprised by Hope*:

> We are not building the kingdom by our own efforts, no. The Kingdom remains God's gift, new creation, sheer grace. But, as part of that grace already poured out in Jesus Christ and by the Spirit, we are building FOR the kingdom. I use the image of the eleventh-century stonemason, probably illiterate, working away on one or two blocks of stone according to the orders given to him. He isn't building the Cathedral; he is building FOR the Cathedral. When the master mason/architect gathers up all the small pieces of stone at which people have been working away, he will put them into the great edifice which he's had in mind all along and which he alone can build – but FOR WHICH we can and must build in the present time. Note 1 Corinthians 3, the Temple-building picture, and the way it relates directly to 1 Cor 15.58: what you do in the Lord is NOT IN VAIN, because of the resurrection.[263]

VII. Closing 16:1-24

A. Mechanics of collection for poor saints in Jerusalem (16:1-4)

> **Now about the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also do. [2]Every first day of the week, let each of you by himself put [something] aside, storing up whatever he is prospered, so that when I come there are not then collections. [3]And when I arrive, whomever you approve, these I will send, by letters, to carry your gift to Jerusalem. [4]And if it is fitting of me to go also, they will go with me.**

1. Regarding the mechanics of the collection Paul was taking up for the poor saints in Jerusalem, he directs the Corinthians to do as he had told the Galatian churches to do. Each of them is to save up every first day of the week an amount that is in accordance with whatever prosperity may have come their way that week.

[263] "The Good Bishop Weighs In – Tom Wright on 'Surprised by Hope'" (March 13, 2009).

a. Christians are called to share their wealth in the name of Christ. We must be willing to put our money on the line for Christ-glorifying purposes. The collection that churches take up on Sundays provides an opportunity to contribute toward a Christ-glorifying goal. There certainly are other Christ-glorifying uses of one's money, but if you are spending all your money on yourself, you have got to ask, "Have I not prospered at all?" If you have, your refusal to give is sinful; you are refusing to allow Christ to exercise his lordship over your finances.

b. Since Sunday, the first day of the week, was the day on which Christians, whether in Galatia or Corinth, regularly assembled to share the Lord's Supper and engage in other acts of worship, and since Paul's instruction is intended *to avoid* taking up a collection when he comes (probably to keep it clear that the money was not for Paul's support), it seems he is directing the saints to set money aside each week by putting it in the church treasury, transferring it to the control of the church leaders. Ciampa and Rosner state:

> The first day of the week was, of course, the day on which Christ rose from the dead (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1). Christians began to gather together to celebrate on that day sometime soon after that (John 20:19; Acts 20:7). The mention of the first day of every week along with the purpose that when I come no collections will have to be made suggests that the setting aside of money would not be just the setting apart within one's own possessions but the setting aside of the money by presenting it to the leaders of the church (cf. Acts 4:34-5:2).[264]

2. When Paul arrives in Corinth, he will write letters of introduction for those the Corinthians approve to bring the gift to Jerusalem. If it is appropriate, he too will accompany them.

B. Travel plans (16:5-11)

5 And I will come to you when I pass through Macedonia (for I am
passing through Macedonia) 6 and may well stay awhile, or even spend
the winter, so that you may send me on my way, wherever I go. 7 For I
do not want to see you now in passing, for I hope to stay some time with
you, if the Lord permits. 8 But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, 9 for
a great and effective door has opened to me, and those opposing are
many.
10 Now whenever Timothy comes, see that he be without fear
among you, for he is working the work of the Lord, as [am] I also. 11 No
one, then, should treat him with contempt. But send him on his way in
peace, that he may come to me, for I am expecting him with the
brothers.

1. Paul informs them that he plans to stay in Ephesus until Pentecost and then to come to them by way of Macedonia. He had a great opportunity for evangelistic

[264] Ciampa and Rosner (2010), 843.

success in Ephesus, and not surprisingly, there were many who opposed him. This opposition culminated in the riot reported in Acts 19:23-41. The truth of Christ is opposed in this world, even when it is presented with the wisdom and tact of an apostle. It is the *message* that Satan seeks to silence.

2. As indicated in 1 Cor. 4:17, Paul had dispatched Timothy to Corinth. Paul wants to be sure that whenever Timothy arrives that he is properly received. There was tension between Paul and segments of the Corinthian church, and Paul is concerned that Timothy may be mistreated in some way.

3. Events that transpired after Paul sent 1 Corinthians led him to make an emergency visit to Corinth, which proved painful, to write the "severe letter" referred to in 2 Cor. 2:3-4, 7:8-12, and ultimately to write 2 Corinthians. But that is all for another study.

C. Apollos's return (16:12)

[12]Now about Apollos, the brother, I urged him a lot so that he would go to you with the brothers, and it was not at all [his] will that he should come now, but he will come when he has opportunity.

1. It seems that the Corinthians had requested that Apollos return to Corinth, and Paul was all for it. Despite how some had wrongly pitted them against each other, Paul joined their request and urged Apollos to return to Corinth.

2. Despite Paul's strong urging, Apollos was unwilling to return with the brothers from Corinth (Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus). Paul's advice was just that -- advice. It was not sinful for Apollos to refuse to heed it.

D. Concluding exhortations (16:13-18)

[13]Keep alert; stand firm in the faith; act like a man; be strong. [14]Let all your things be [done] in love.

[15]Now I urge you, brothers - you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia and they appointed themselves to service to the saints - [16]that you also submit yourselves to such men and to everyone who works with them and labors. [17]But I am rejoicing over the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus because they filled in your absence. [18]For they refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore, recognize such men.

1. In vv. 13-14 Paul commands them to be on their guard against corrosive influences and to stand firm in the truth of the gospel. They are to be courageous (act like a man) and strong and to let love characterize all that they do.

2. In vv. 15-16 Paul urges them to submit to the household of Stephanas and to all who labor with them. Stephanas and his household were the first converts in the area

and they gave themselves to ministry to the saints there. They were the ones presenting the Word to the people and for that reason were to be heeded. (Remember that much of Christian truth at that time was orally communicated. The Stephanas group were ministers in whom Paul had confidence.)

3. In vv. 17-18 Paul says that he rejoiced over the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus because they filled in the lack that he felt in being away from the church in Corinth. Their coming refreshed Paul's spirit, and he commends them to the church ("Therefore, recognize such men").

E. Final warning (16:19-24)

[19]The churches of Asia greet you. Priscilla and Aquila greet you heartily in the Lord, along with the church that is in their house. [20]All the brothers greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

[21]The greeting [is] in my hand, Paul's. [22]If anyone does not love the Lord, let him be a cursed one. Our Lord, come!

[23]The grace of the Lord Jesus [be] with you. [24]My love [be] with all of you in Christ Jesus.

1. The congregations in the region send their greetings to the Corinthian church, and Priscilla and Aquila add their personal hearty greeting, along with the church that gathered in their home. All the brothers in Paul's orbit in Ephesus include their greetings.

2. The command for the Christians to greet one another with a holy kiss is not a command to kiss per se. Rather, given that a kiss was a common form of greeting in the ancient world and in Judaism especially,[265] it is *assumed* they will greet by kissing.

a. The command is that the assumed kiss be a "*holy* kiss." In other words, Paul (also in Rom. 16:16; 2 Cor. 13:12; and 1 Thess. 5:26) is saying, "The kiss with which you greet one another is to be holy," meaning a kiss that is a genuine expression of Christian love (so also Peter who refers to a "kiss of love" in 1 Pet. 5:14). The greeting is not to be duplicitous, as was the kiss by Judas that betrayed our Lord. He is not addressing *whether* one must kiss as a greeting but is addressing *how*, assuming one will kiss, the greeting is to be done. This leaves room for different cultural forms of greetings, but all such greetings must comply with the command that they be holy or loving, that they be genuine.

b. It is as if a military commander wrote to his troops: "Greet President Biden (or Trump) with a *respectful* salute." His point would not be that they are to salute – that is the assumed form of military response – but that *when* they salute they do so with the respect that is due the office of President.

[265] See, e.g., Douglas J. Moo, *The Letter to the Romans*, NICNT, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 942.

3. Paul notes in v. 21 that the greeting is in his own hand. In other words, he took over from the one who was transcribing his dictation to personally write the end greeting. He often added that touch (Gal. 6:11; Col. 4:18; 2 Thess. 3:17; Phlm. 19).

4. In v. 22 Paul offers one last warning to those who persist in deviating from his gospel, those who might refuse to obey the injunctions of this letter. He puts such disobedience in terms of love for the Lord. He says that if anyone does not love the Lord, let him be one who is cursed. To this he adds, "Our Lord, come!" to reinforce the warning. Christ is indeed coming, and those who do not love him are under the curse and in danger of being rejected by him.

5. In his final words, he expresses his desire that the grace of the Lord Jesus be with them and declares his love for them.