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This Volume is dedicated to

Taylor Ann and Tiffany Lynn Thompson
and
Avery Grace Utley

our precious granddaughters,
because of the joy and delight
you bring to our lives
Here’s what the Lockman Foundation has to say about the New American Standard Bible 1995 Update:

Easier to read:
- Passages with Old English “thee’s” and “thou’s” etc. have been updated to modern English.
- Words and phrases that could be misunderstood due to changes in their meaning during the past 20 years have been updated to current English.
- Verses with difficult word order or vocabulary have been retranslated into smoother English.
- Sentences beginning with “And” have often been retranslated for better English, in recognition of differences in style between the ancient languages and modern English. The original Greek and Hebrew did not have punctuation as is found in English, and in many cases modern English punctuation serves as a substitute for “And” in the original. In some other cases, “and” is translated by a different word such as “then” or “but” as called for by the context, when the word in the original language allows such translation.

More accurate than ever:
- Recent research on the oldest and best Greek manuscripts of the New Testament has been reviewed, and some passages have been updated for even greater fidelity to the original manuscripts.
- Parallel passages have been compared and reviewed.
- Verbs that have a wide range of meaning have been retranslated in some passages to better account for their use in the context.

And still the NASB:
- The NASB update is not a change-for-the-sake-of-change translation. The original NASB stands the test of time, and change has been kept to a minimum in recognition of the standard that has been set by the New American Standard Bible.
- The NASB update continues the NASB’s tradition of literal translation of the original Greek and Hebrew without compromise. Changes in the text have been kept within the strict parameters set forth by the Lockman Foundation’s Fourfold Aim.
- The translators and consultants who have contributed to the NASB update are conservative Bible scholars who have doctorates in Biblical languages, theology, or other advanced degrees. They represent a variety of denominational backgrounds.

Continuing a tradition:
The original NASB has earned the reputation of being the most accurate English Bible translation. Other translations in recent years have sometimes made a claim to both accuracy and ease of reading, but any reader with an eye for detail eventually discovers that these translations are consistently inconsistent. While sometimes literal, they frequently resort to paraphrase of the original, often gaining little in readability and sacrificing much in terms of fidelity. Paraphrasing is not by nature a bad thing; it can and should clarify the meaning of a passage as the translators understand and interpret. In the end, however, a paraphrase is as much a commentary on the Bible as it is a translation. The NASB update carries on the NASB tradition of being a true Bible translation, revealing what the original manuscripts actually say—not merely what the translator believes they mean.

—The Lockman Foundation
A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR: HOW CAN THIS COMMENTARY HELP YOU?

Biblical interpretation is a rational and spiritual process that attempts to understand an ancient inspired writer in such a way that the message from God may be understood and applied in our day.

The spiritual process is crucial but difficult to define. It does involve a yieldedness and openness to God. There must be a hunger (1) for Him, (2) to know Him, and (3) to serve Him. This process involves prayer, confession and the willingness for lifestyle change. The Spirit is crucial in the interpretive process, but why sincere, godly Christians understand the Bible differently is a mystery.

The rational process is easier to describe. We must be consistent and fair to the text and not be influenced by our personal or denominational biases. We are all historically conditioned. None of us are objective, neutral interpreters. This commentary offers a careful rational process containing three interpretive principles structured to help us overcome our biases.

First Principle
The first principle is to note the historical setting in which a biblical book was written and the particular historical occasion for its authorship. The original author had a purpose, a message to communicate. The text cannot mean something to us that it never meant to the original, ancient, inspired author. His intent—not our historical, emotional, cultural, personal or denominational need—is the key. Application is an integral partner to interpretation, but proper interpretation must always precede application. It must be reiterated that every biblical text has one and only one meaning. This meaning is what the original biblical author intended through the Spirit's leadership to communicate to his day. This one meaning may have many possible applications to different cultures and situations. These applications must be linked to the central truth of the original author. For this reason, this study guide commentary is designed to provide an introduction to each book of the Bible.

Second Principle
The second principle is to identify the literary units. Every biblical book is a unified document. Interpreters have no right to isolate one aspect of truth by excluding others. Therefore, we must strive to understand the purpose of the whole biblical book before we interpret the individual literary units. The individual parts—chapters, paragraphs, or verses—cannot mean what the whole unit does not mean. Interpretation must move from a deductive approach of the whole to an inductive approach to the parts. Therefore, this study guide commentary is designed to help the student analyze the structure of each literary unit by paragraphs. Paragraph and chapter divisions are not inspired, but they do aid us in identifying thought units.

Interpreting at a paragraph level—not sentence, clause, phrase or word level—is the key in following the biblical author’s intended meaning. Paragraphs are based on a unified topic, often called the theme or topical sentence. Every word, phrase, clause, and sentence in the paragraph relates somehow to this unified theme. They limit it, expand it, explain it, and/or question it. A real key to proper interpretation is to follow the original author’s thought on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis through the individual literary units that make up the biblical book. This study guide commentary is designed to help the student do that by comparing modern English translations. These translations have been selected because they employ different translation theories:

1. The United Bible Society's Greek text is the revised fourth edition (UBS⁵). This text was paragraphed by modern textual scholars.
2. The New King James Version (NKJV) is a word-for-word literal translation based on the Greek manuscript tradition known as the Textus Receptus. Its paragraph divisions are longer than the other translations. These longer units help the student to see the unified topics.
3. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is a modified word-for-word translation. It forms a mid point between the following two modern versions. Its paragraph divisions are quite helpful in identifying subjects.
4. The Today's English Version (TEV) is a dynamic equivalent translation published by the United Bible Society. It attempts to translate the Bible in such a way that a modern English reader or speaker can understand the meaning of the Greek text. Often, especially in the Gospels, it divides paragraphs by speaker rather than by subject, in the same way as the NIV. For the interpreter's purposes, this is not helpful. It is interesting to note that both the UBS⁵ and TEV are published by the same entity, yet their paragraphing differs.
5. The Jerusalem Bible (JB) is a dynamic equivalent translation based on a French Catholic translation. It is very helpful in comparing the paragraphing from a European perspective.
6. The printed text is the 1995 Updated New American Standard Bible (NASB), which is a word for word translation. The verse by verse comments follow this paragraphing.

Third Principle
The third principle is to read the Bible in different translations in order to grasp the widest possible range of meaning (semantic field) that biblical words or phrases may have. Often a Greek phrase or word can be understood in several ways. These
different translations bring out these options and help to identify and explain the Greek manuscript variations. These do not affect doctrine, but they do help us to try to get back to the original text penned by an inspired ancient writer.

This commentary offers a quick way for the student to check his interpretations. It is not meant to be definitive, but rather informative and thought-provoking. Often, other possible interpretations help us not be so parochial, dogmatic, and denominational. Interpreters need to have a larger range of interpretive options to recognize how ambiguous the ancient text can be. It is shocking how little agreement there is among Christians who claim the Bible as their source of truth.

These principles have helped me to overcome much of my historical conditioning by forcing me to struggle with the ancient text. My hope is that it will be a blessing to you as well.

Bob Utley
East Texas Baptist University
June 27, 1996
A GUIDE TO GOOD BIBLE READING:
A PERSONAL SEARCH FOR VERIFIABLE TRUTH

Can we know truth? Where is it found? Can we logically verify it? Is there an ultimate authority? Are there absolutes which can guide our lives, our world? Is there meaning to life? Why are we here? Where are we going? These questions—questions that all rational people contemplate—have haunted the human intellect since the beginning of time (Eccl. 1:13-18; 3:9-11). I can remember my personal search for an integrating center for my life. I became a believer in Christ at a young age, based primarily on the witness of significant others in my family. As I grew to adulthood, questions about myself and my world also grew. Simple cultural and religious clichés did not bring meaning to the experiences I read about or encountered. It was a time of confusion, searching, longing, and often a feeling of hopelessness in the face of the insensitive, hard world in which I lived.

Many claimed to have answers to these ultimate questions, but after research and reflection I found that their answers were based upon (1) personal philosophies, (2) ancient myths, (3) personal experiences, or (4) psychological projections. I needed some degree of verification, some evidence, some rationality on which to base my world-view, my integrating center, my reason to live.

I found these in my study of the Bible. I began to search for evidence of its trustworthiness, which I found in (1) the historical reliability of the Bible as confirmed by archaeology, (2) the accuracy of the prophecies of the Old Testament, (3) the unity of the Bible message over the sixteen hundred years of its production, and (4) the personal testimonies of people whose lives had been permanently changed by contact with the Bible. Christianity, as a unified system of faith and belief, has the ability to deal with complex questions of human life. Not only did this provide a rational framework, but the experiential aspect of biblical faith brought me emotional joy and stability.

I thought that I had found the integrating center for my life—Christ, as understood through the Scriptures. It was a heady experience, an emotional release. However, I can still remember the shock and pain when it began to dawn on me how many different interpretations of this book were advocated, sometimes even within the same churches and schools of thought. Affirming the inspiration and trustworthiness of the Bible was not the end, but only the beginning. How do I verify or reject the varied and conflicting interpretations of the many difficult passages in Scripture by those who were claiming its authority and trustworthiness?

This task became my life’s goal and pilgrimage of faith. I knew that my faith in Christ had (1) brought me great peace and joy. My mind longed for some absolutes in the midst of the relativity of my culture (post-modernity); (2) the dogmatism of conflicting religious systems (world religions); and (3) denominational arrogance. In my search for valid approaches to the interpretation of ancient literature, I was surprised to discover my own historical, cultural, denominational and experiential biases. I had often read the Bible simply to reinforce my own views. I used it as a source of dogma to attack others while reaffirming my own insecurities and inadequacies. How painful this realization was to me!

Although I can never be totally objective, I can become a better reader of the Bible. I can limit my biases by identifying them and acknowledging their presence. I am not yet free of them, but I have confronted my own weaknesses. The interpreter is often the worst enemy of good Bible reading!

Let me list some of the presuppositions I bring to my study of the Bible so that you, the reader, may examine them along with me:

I. Presuppositions
A. I believe the Bible is the sole inspired self-revelation of the one true God. Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of the intent of the original divine author (the Spirit) through a human writer in a specific historical setting.

B. I believe the Bible was written for the common person—for all people! God accommodated Himself to speak to us clearly within a historical and cultural context. God does not hide truth—He wants us to understand! Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of its day, not ours. The Bible should not mean to us what it never meant to those who first read or heard it. It is understandable by the average human mind and uses normal human communication forms and techniques.

C. I believe the Bible has a unified message and purpose. It does not contradict itself, though it does contain difficult and paradoxical passages. Thus, the best interpreter of the Bible is the Bible itself.

D. I believe that every page (excluding prophecies) has one and only one meaning based on the intent of the original, inspired author. Although we can never be absolutely certain we know the original author’s intent, many indicators point in its direction:
1. the genre (literary type) chosen to express the message
2. the historical setting and/or specific occasion that elicited the writing
3. the literary context of the entire book as well as each literary unit
4. the textual design (outline) of the literary units as they relate to the whole message
5. the specific grammatical features employed to communicate the message
6. the words chosen to present the message
7. parallel passages

The study of each of these areas becomes the object of our study of a passage. Before I explain my methodology for good Bible reading, let me delineate some of the inappropriate methods being used today that have caused so much diversity of interpretation, and that consequently should be avoided:

II. Inappropriate Methods
A. Ignoring the literary context of the books of the Bible and using every sentence, clause, or even individual words as statements of truth unrelated to the author’s intent or the larger context. This is often called “proof-texting.”
B. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by substituting a supposed historical setting that has little or no support from the text itself.
C. Ignoring the historical setting of the books and reading it as the morning hometown newspaper written primarily to modern individual Christians.
D. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by allegorizing the text into a philosophical/theological message totally unrelated to the first hearers and the original author’s intent.
E. Ignoring the original message by substituting one’s own system of theology, pet doctrine, or contemporary issue unrelated to the original author’s purpose and stated message. This phenomenon often follows the initial reading of the Bible as a means of establishing a speaker’s authority. This is often referred to as “reader response” (“what-the-text-means-to-me” interpretation).

At least three related components may be found in all written human communication:

In the past, different reading techniques have focused on one of the three components. But to truly affirm the unique inspiration of the Bible, a modified diagram is more appropriate:

In truth all three components must be included in the interpretive process. For the purpose of verification, my interpretation focuses on the first two components: the original author and the text. I am probably reacting to the abuses I have observed (1) allegorizing or spiritualizing texts and (2) “reader response” interpretation (what-it-means-to-me). Abuse may occur at each stage. We must always check our motives, biases, techniques, and applications. But how do we check them if there are no boundaries to interpretations, no limits, no criteria? This is where authorial intent and textual structure provide me with some criteria for limiting the scope of possible valid interpretations.

In light of these inappropriate reading techniques, what are some possible approaches to good Bible reading and interpretation which offer a degree of verification and consistency?

III. Possible Approaches to Good Bible Reading
At this point I am not discussing the unique techniques of interpreting specific genres but general hermeneutical principles valid for all types of biblical texts. A good book for genre-specific approaches is How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, published by Zondervan.
My methodology focuses initially on the reader allowing the Holy Spirit to illumine the Bible through four personal reading cycles. This makes the Spirit, the text and the reader primary, not secondary. This also protects the reader from being unduly influenced by commentators. I have heard it said: “The Bible throws a lot of light on commentaries.” This is not meant to be a depreciating comment about study aids, but rather a plea for an appropriate timing for their use.

We must be able to support our interpretations from the text itself. Five areas provide at least limited verification:

1. the original author’s
   a. historical setting
   b. literary context
2. the original author’s choice of
   a. grammatical structures (syntax)
   b. contemporary work usage
   c. genre
3. our understanding of appropriate
   a. relevant parallel passages

We need to be able to provide the reasons and logic behind our interpretations. The Bible is our only source for faith and practice. Sadly, Christians often disagree about what it teaches or affirms. It is self-defeating to claim inspiration for the Bible and then for believers not to be able to agree on what it teaches and requires!

The four reading cycles are designed to provide the following interpretive insights:

A. The first reading cycle
   1. Read the book in a single sitting. Read it again in a different translation, hopefully from a different translation theory
      a. word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
      b. dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
      c. paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
   2. Look for the central purpose of the entire writing. Identify its theme.
   3. Isolate (if possible) a literary unit, a chapter, a paragraph or a sentence which clearly expresses this central purpose or theme.
   4. Identify the predominant literary genre
      a. Old Testament
         (1) Hebrew narrative
         (2) Hebrew poetry (wisdom literature, psalm)
         (3) Hebrew prophecy (prose, poetry)
         (4) Law codes
      b. New Testament
         (1) Narratives (Gospels, Acts)
         (2) Parables (Gospels)
         (3) Letters/epistles
         (4) Apocalyptic literature

B. The second reading cycle
   1. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify major topics or subjects.
   2. Outline the major topics and briefly state their contents in a simple statement.
   3. Check your purpose statement and broad outline with study aids.

C. The third reading cycle
   1. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify the historical setting and specific occasion for the writing from the Bible book itself.
   2. List the historical items that are mentioned in the Bible book
      a. the author
      b. the date
      c. the recipients
      d. the specific reason for writing
      e. aspects of the cultural setting that relate to the purpose of the writing
      f. references to historical people and events
   3. Expand your outline to paragraph level for that part of the biblical book you are interpreting. Always identify and outline the literary unit. This may be several chapters or paragraphs. This enables you to follow the original author’s logic and textual design.
   4. Check your historical setting by using study aids.
D. The fourth reading cycle
   1. Read the specific literary unit again in several translations
      a. word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
      b. dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
      c. paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
   2. Look for literary or grammatical structures
      a. repeated phrases, Eph. 1:6,12,13
      b. repeated grammatical structures, Rom. 8:31
      c. contrasting concepts
   3. List the following items
      a. significant terms
      b. unusual terms
      c. important grammatical structures
      d. particularly difficult words, clauses, and sentences
   4. Look for relevant parallel passages
      a. look for the clearest teaching passage on your subject using
         (1) “systematic theology” books
         (2) reference Bibles
         (3) concordances
      b. Look for a possible paradoxical pair within your subject. Many biblical truths are presented in
         dialectical pairs; many denominational conflicts come from proof-texting half of a biblical tension. All
         of the Bible is inspired, and we must seek out its complete message in order to provide a Scriptural
         balance to our interpretation.
      c. Look for parallels within the same book, same author or same genre; the Bible is its own best interpreter
         because it has one author, the Spirit.
   5. Use study aids to check your observations of historical setting and occasion
      a. study Bibles
      b. Bible encyclopedias, handbooks and dictionaries
      c. Bible introductions
      d. Bible commentaries (at this point in your study, allow the believing community, past and present, to aid
         and correct your personal study.)

IV. Application of Bible interpretation
   At this point we turn to application. You have taken the time to understand the text in its original setting; now you must
   apply it to your life, your culture. I define biblical authority as “understanding what the original biblical author was saying to
   his day and applying that truth to our day.”
   Application must follow interpretation of the original author’s intent both in time and logic. We cannot apply a Bible
   passage to our own day until we know what it was saying to its day! A Bible passage should not mean what it never meant!
   Your detailed outline, to paragraph level (reading cycle #3), will be your guide. Application should be made at
   paragraph level, not word level. Words have meaning only in context; clauses have meaning only in context; sentences have
   meaning only in context. The only inspired person involved in the interpretive process is the original author. We only follow
   his lead by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. But illumination is not inspiration. To say “thus saith the Lord,” we must
   abide by the original author’s intent. Application must relate specifically to the general intent of the whole writing, the
   specific literary unit and paragraph level thought development.
   Do not let the issues of our day interpret the Bible; let the Bible speak! This may require us to draw principles from the
   text. This is valid if the text supports a principle. Unfortunately, many times our principles are just that, “our” principles—not
   the text’s principles.
   In applying the Bible, it is important to remember that (except in prophecy) one and only one meaning is valid for a
   particular Bible text. That meaning is related to the intent of the original author as he addressed a crisis or need in his day.
   Many possible applications may be derived from this one meaning. The application will be based on the recipients’ needs but
   must be related to the original author’s meaning.

V. The Spiritual Aspect of Interpretation
   So far I have discussed the logical and textual process involved in interpretation and application. Now let me discuss
   briefly the spiritual aspect of interpretation. The following checklist has been helpful for me:
   B. Pray for personal forgiveness and cleansing from known sin (cf. I John 1:9).
C. Pray for a greater desire to know God (cf. Ps. 19:7-14; 42:1ff.; 119:1ff).
D. Apply any new insight immediately to your own life.
E. Remain humble and teachable.

It is so hard to keep the balance between the logical process and the spiritual leadership of the Holy Spirit. The following quotes have helped me balance the two:
A. from James W. Sire, Scripture Twisting, pp. 17-18:
   “The illumination comes to the minds of God’s people—not just to the spiritual elite. There is no guru class in biblical Christianity, no illuminati, no people through whom all proper interpretation must come. And so, while the Holy Spirit gives special gifts of wisdom, knowledge and spiritual discernment, He does not assign these gifted Christians to be the only authoritative interpreters of His Word. It is up to each of His people to learn, to judge and to discern by reference to the Bible which stands as the authority even to those to whom God has given special abilities. To summarize, the assumption I am making throughout the entire book is that the Bible is God’s true revelation to all humanity, that it is our ultimate authority on all matters about which it speaks, that it is not a total mystery but can be adequately understood by ordinary people in every culture.”
B. on Kierkegaard, found in Bernard Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation, p. 75:
   According to Kierkegaard the grammatical, lexical, and historical study of the Bible was necessary but preliminary to the true reading of the Bible. “To read the Bible as God’s word one must read it with his heart in his mouth, on tip-toe, with eager expectancy, in conversation with God. To read the Bible thoughtlessly or carelessly or academically or professionally is not to read the Bible as God’s Word. As one reads it as a love letter is read, then one reads it as the Word of God.”
C. H. H. Rowley in The Relevance of the Bible, p. 19:
   “No merely intellectual understanding of the Bible, however complete, can possess all its treasures. It does not despise such understanding, for it is essential to a complete understanding. But it must lead to a spiritual understanding of the spiritual treasures of this book if it is to be complete. And for that spiritual understanding something more than intellectual alertness is necessary. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and the Bible student needs an attitude of spiritual receptivity, an eagerness to find God that he may yield himself to Him, if he is to pass beyond his scientific study unto the richer inheritance of this greatest of all books.”

VI. This Commentary’s Method
The Study Guide Commentary is designed to aid your interpretive procedures in the following ways:
A. A brief historical outline introduces each book. After you have done “reading cycle #3” check this information.
B. Contextual insights are found at the beginning of each chapter. This will help you see how the literary unit is structured.
C. At the beginning of each chapter or major literary unit the paragraph divisions and their descriptive captions are provided from several modern translations:
   1. The United Bible Society Greek text, fourth edition revised(UBS4)
   2. The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update (NASB)
   3. The New King James Version (NKJV)
   4. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)
   5. Today’s English Version (TEV)
   6. The Jerusalem Bible (JB)
Paragraph divisions are not inspired. They must be ascertained from the context. By comparing several modern translations from differing translation theories and theological perspectives, we are able to analyze the supposed structure of the original author’s thought. Each paragraph has one major truth. This has been called “the topic sentence” or “the central idea of the text.” This unifying thought is the key to proper historical, grammatical interpretation. One should never interpret, preach or teach on less than a paragraph! Also remember that each paragraph is related to its surrounding paragraphs. This is why a paragraph level outline of the entire book is so important. We must be able to follow the logical flow of the subject being addressed by the original inspired author.
D. Bob’s notes follow a verse-by-verse approach to interpretation. This forces us to follow the original author’s thought. The notes provide information from several areas:
   1. literary context
   2. historical, cultural insights
   3. grammatical information
word studies
relevant parallel passages
E. At certain points in the commentary, the printed text of the New American Standard Version (1995 update) will be supplemented by the translations of several other modern versions:
1. The New King James Version (NKJV), which follows the textual manuscripts of the “Textus Receptus.”
2. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), which is a word-for-word revision from the National Council of Churches of the Revised Standard Version.
3. The Today’s English Version (TEV), which is a dynamic equivalent translation from the American Bible Society.
4. The Jerusalem Bible (JB), which is an English translation based on a French Catholic dynamic equivalent translation.
F. For those who do not read Greek, comparing English translations can help in identifying problems in the text:
1. manuscript variations
2. alternate word meanings
3. grammatically difficult texts and structure
4. ambiguous texts
Although the English translations cannot solve these problems, they do target them as places for deeper and more thorough study.
G. At the close of each chapter relevant discussion questions are provided which attempt to target the major interpretive issues of that chapter.
INTRODUCTION TO I CORINTHIANS
(PRACTICAL ADVICE TO A TROUBLED CHURCH)

I. THE UNIQUENESS OF I CORINTHIANS

A. It is quoted more often and earlier by the early church fathers than any other writing of Paul which shows its importance and usefulness.

B. In the Muratorian Fragment, which was a list of canonical books from Rome (A.D. 200), it is listed as the first of Paul’s writings which also shows its importance.

C. Paul makes a distinction in this practical letter between his personal opinion and the Lord’s commands. However, this is based on his knowledge of Jesus’ teachings on any given subject. If he could he would pass on Jesus’ words. He believed his opinions were also inspired and authoritative (cf. 7:25, 40).

D. Paul’s guiding principle for church fellowship is that the freedom of individual believers, but also their commensurate corporate responsibility, is based not on law, but on love. The health and growth of the whole church supercedes any personal preference or privilege (cf. 12:7).

E. This letter (along with II Corinthians) gives us an early look into the NT church, its structure, methods, and message. However, it must also be remembered that this church was a problematic, non-typical congregation.

II. THE CITY OF CORINTH

A. Winter shipping lanes around the southern most point of Greece (i.e. Cape Malea) were very dangerous. Therefore, a land route of the shortest possible length was crucial. The geographical location of Corinth on the four mile isthmus between the Gulf of Corinth (i.e. Adriatic Sea) and the Saronic Gulf (i.e. Aegean Sea) made the city a major commercial shipping, trading (specializing in types of pottery and a special type of brass), and military center. In Paul’s day this was literally where the cultures of the East and West met.

B. Corinth was also a major cultural center of the Greco-Roman world because it hosted the bi-annual Isthmian Games which began in 581 B.C. (at the Temple of Poseidon). Only the Olympic Games in Athens, every four years, rivaled them in size and importance (Thucydides, Hist. 1.13.5).

C. In 146 B.C. Corinth was involved in a revolt (i.e. the Achaean League) against Rome and was destroyed by the Roman General Lucius Mummius and the Greek population dispersed into slavery. Because of its economical and military importance it was rebuilt in either 46 or 48 B.C. by Julius Caesar. It became a Roman colony where Roman soldiers retired. It was a mimic of Rome in architecture and culture and was the administrative center of the Roman (i.e. Senatorial) province of Achaia in 27 B.C. It became an Imperial Province in A.D. 15.

D. The acropolis of Old Corinth, rising more than 1880 feet above the plain, was the site of the temple to Aphrodite. To this temple were attached 1,000 prostitutes (Strabo, Geography, 8.6.20-22). To be called “a Corinthian” (i.e. Korinthiazesthai, coined by Aristophanes [450-385 B.C.]) was synonymous to loose, riotous living. This temple, as most of the city, was destroyed in an earthquake about 150 years before Paul arrived, as it was again in A.D. 77. It is uncertain if the fertility cult continued in Paul’s day. Since the Romans, in 146 B.C., destroyed the city and killed or enslaved all of its citizens, the Greek flavor of the city was superseded by its Roman colonial status (Pausanias, II.3.7). This Roman cultural context instead of Greek culture, makes a significant difference in interpreting I Corinthians.
III. THE AUTHOR

A. It was to this city that Paul the Apostle came on his second missionary journey; the account is found in Acts 18:1-21. Through a vision the Lord revealed to Paul that many would believe and that there would be no successful opposition to his ministry (cf. Acts 18:9-10).

B. Paul’s missionary strategy was to plant a church in the major cities of his day, knowing that converted visitors, traveling salesmen, and sailors would spread the gospel as they went. It was up to the local church to take responsibility for the evangelism and discipleship of their area.

C. Paul found Aquila and Priscilla, also believing Jewish tent-makers or leather workers, in Corinth. They were forced out of Rome in A.D. 49 by Claudius’ edict (Orosius, Hist. 7:6:15-16) against any Jewish rites or rituals (cf. Acts 18:2). Paul had come to Corinth alone. Both Silas and Timothy were on assignments in Macedonia (cf. Acts 18:5). He was very discouraged (cf. Acts 18:9-19; I Cor. 2:3). However, he persevered and stayed in Corinth eighteen months (cf. Acts 18:11).

D. Paul’s authorship of this book is attested to by Clement of Rome, who wrote a letter to Corinth in A.D. 95/96 (I Clement 37:5; 47:1-3; 49:5). Pauline authorship of this letter has never been doubted, even by modern critical scholarship.

IV. THE DATE

A. The date of Paul’s visit to Corinth has been ascertained by an inscription of the Emperor Claudius found at Delphi, which dates the proconsulship of Gallio as beginning in July A.D. 51 through July, 52 (cf. Acts 18:12-17), which would make the date of Paul’s arrival about A.D. 49-50.

B. The date of Paul’s letter would then be sometime in the mid-50’s. He wrote it from Ephesus where he ministered between two years (cf. Acts 19:10) and three years (cf. Acts 20:34).

C. A possible chronology of Paul’s writings following F. F. Bruce and Murry Harris with minor adaptations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place of Writing</th>
<th>Relation to Acts</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. I Thessalonians</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Corinth</td>
<td>18:5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. II Thessalonians</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Corinth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I Corinthians</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Ephesus</td>
<td>19:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. II Corinthians</td>
<td>56/57</td>
<td>Macedonia</td>
<td>20:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Romans</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Corinth</td>
<td>20:3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.-10. Prison Letters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colossians</td>
<td>early 60's</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ephesians</td>
<td>early 60's</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philemon</td>
<td>early 60's</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippians</td>
<td>late 62-63</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.-13. Fourth Missionary Journey</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Timothy</td>
<td>63 (or later,</td>
<td>Macedonia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titus</td>
<td>63 but before</td>
<td>Ephesus (?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II Timothy</td>
<td>64 A.D. 68)</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Paul was probably executed in A.D. 65).
V. RECIPIENT OF THE LETTER

A. The recipient of the letter was the fledgling church made up mostly of Gentiles. The population of Corinth was racially and culturally mixed. We know from archaeology and Scripture (cf. Acts 18:4-8) that there was a synagogue in Corinth.

B. Roman soldiers were retired there after they completed twenty years of military service. Corinth was a free city, a Roman colony, and capital of the Roman province of Achaia.

C. The letter seems to reflect several groups in the church: (1) intellectual Greeks who were still very proud of their philosophical traditions and were trying to wed Christian revelation to these old customs and intellectual traditions; (2) Roman patrons and the socially elite; (3) a believing Jewish contingent made up mostly of “god-fearing” Gentiles, who attended the synagogue; and (4) a large number of converted slaves.

VI. THE PURPOSE OF THE LETTER

A. Paul heard of the problems that had developed at Corinth from three sources:
1. Chloe’s people, 1:11
2. a letter from the church asking questions, 7:1,25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1,12
3. a personal visit from Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, 16:17. It is possible that the letter (#2) was brought by these men (#3).

It is interesting that Murry Harris has outlined the book of I Corinthians based on Paul’s received information about the church.
1. oral report from members of Chloe’s household, resulting in Paul writing chapters 1-4
2. oral report from church representatives (i.e. Stephanus, Fortunatus, and Achaicus), resulting in chapters 5-6
3. written questions from the church, resulting in chapters 7-16

B. The church had become factious, advocating different leaders: Paul, Apollos, Peter, and possibly a Christ party (cf. 1:12). Not only was the church divided over leadership types, but also over several moral issues and the use of spiritual gifts. A main point of contention was Paul’s Apostolic authority (especially II Corinthians)!

VII. PAUL’S CONTACTS WITH THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH—A TENTATIVE PROPOSAL

A. How many letters did Paul write to Corinth?

1. just two, I and II Corinthians
2. three, with one letter being lost
3. four, with two letters being lost
4. some modern scholars find parts of the two lost letters in II Corinthians
   a. previous letter (I Cor. 5:9) in II Cor. 6:14-17:1
   b. severe letter (II Cor. 2:3-4,9; 7:8-12) in II Cor. 10-13
5. five, with II Cor. 10-13 being the fifth letter, sent after Titus’ report relating the further bad news

B. Theory #3 seems to fit best

1. previous letter, lost (I Cor. 5:9)
2. I Corinthians
3. severe letter, lost (possibly part of which is recorded in II Cor. 2:1-11; 7:8-12)
4. II Corinthians
C. A proposed reconstruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>VISIT</th>
<th>LETTER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.D. 52</td>
<td>Gallio was proconsul from a.d. 52 (cf. Acts 18:12-17)</td>
<td>a. I Cor. 5:9-11 seems to refer to a letter about an immoral situation in the church. This letter is unknown unless: (1) as some suppose, that II Cor. 6:14-7:1 is part of it or (2) that II Cor. 2:3,4,9 are epistolary aorists and refer to II Corinthians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.D. 56 (Spring)</td>
<td></td>
<td>b. Paul hears about problems in the church while he is in Ephesus from (1) Chloe’s people, I Cor. 1:11 and (2) Stephanas, Forluntatus, and Achaicus, I Cor. 16:17. They apparently brought a letter from the Corinthian house churches containing questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.D. 56 (Winter) or A.D. 57 (Winter)</td>
<td></td>
<td>b. Paul answers these questions (cf. I Cor. 7:1,25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1,2) by writing I Corinthians. Timothy (cf. I Cor. 4:17) takes the response from Ephesus (cf. I Cor. 16:8) to Corinth. Timothy was not able to solve the problems in the church.</td>
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<td>c. Paul made an emergency, painful visit to Corinth (not recorded in Acts, cf. II Cor. 2:1). It was not successful, but he vowed to return.</td>
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<td>c. Paul wrote a severe letter (cf. II Cor. 2:3-4,9; 7:8-12) to the Corinthian house churches which was delivered by Titus (cf. II Cor. 2:13; 7:13-15). This letter is unknown, unless, as some suppose, part of it is in II Cor. 10-13.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.D. 57-58 (Winter)</td>
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<td>d. Paul planned to meet Titus in Troas, but Titus did not come, so Paul went to Macedonia (cf. II Cor. 2:13; 7:5,13), possibly Philippi (cf. MSS B⁺, K, L, P).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>d. He found Titus and heard that the church had responded to his leadership and he then wrote II Corinthians in great thanksgiving (cf. 7:11-16). It was delivered by Titus</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>e. The marked mood change between chapters 1-9 and 10-13 is explained by some scholars as more bad news (possibly the revitalization of old opponents and the addition of new opponents) from the Corinthian house churches after chapters 1-9 had been written (F. F. Bruce).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VIII. CONCLUSION

A. In 1 Corinthians we see Paul, a pastor, dealing with a problem church. In this letter and in Galatians, we see him apply universal gospel truth in different ways, based on the need of the church: freedom for the Galatian churches/limits to the Corinthian church.

B. This book is either a series of “cultural dinosaurs” or a wealth of principled truth applied to a particular historical/cultural setting. We must be careful not to confuse truth and cultural applications of that truth. For a good discussion of this very important hermeneutical issue see Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart’s How To Read the Bible for All Its Worth, pp. 65-76.

C. This book will push you to the limit of your spiritual ability to interpret the Bible. It will force you to rethink aspects of your theology. It will open a window to God’s will for our day, practically speaking, as few other biblical writings.

IX. BRIEF OUTLINE OF 1 CORINTHIANS

A. Introduction 1:1-9
   2. Greeting, 1:1-3
   3. Thanksgiving, 1:4-9

B. Reported problems at Corinth, 1:10-6:20
   1. Factions within the church because of the misunderstanding of Christian leadership’s (i.e. Paul, Apollos, Peter) motives and message, 1:10-4:12
   2. Shocking immorality, 5:1-13
   3. Christian lawsuits, 6:1-11
   4. Christian freedom limited by responsibility, 6:12-20

C. A letter from Corinth asking the nagging questions, 7:1-1-16:4
   1. Human sexuality, 7:1-40
   2. Relationship to an idolatrous culture and Christian freedom, 8:1-11:1
   3. Christian worship and spirituality, 11:2-14:40
   4. Insights on eschatology, especially the resurrection, 15:1-58
   5. The contribution for the mother church in Jerusalem, 16:1-4

D. Concluding remarks
   1. Paul’s (and his fellow ministers) travel plans, 16:5-12
   2. Final exhortation and greetings, 16:13-24

X. SUGGESTED READINGS ON PAUL’S THOUGHT

B. Paul, Apostle of the Heart Set Free, F. F. Bruce, published by Eerdmans
C. The Origins of Paul’s Religion, J. Gresham Machen, published by Eerdmans
D. Paul, An Outline of His Theology, Herman Ridderbos (translated by John De Witt), published by Eerdmans
E. Epochs in the Life of Paul, A. T. Robertson, published by Baker
F. A Man In Christ, James S. Stewart, published by Harper & Row
G. Dictionary of Paul and His Letters, published by IVP
I. Philo and Paul Among the Sophists, Bruce W. Winter, published by Eerdmans
J. After Paul Left Corinth, Bruce W. Winter
READING CYCLE ONE (see p. vi)

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the entire biblical book at one sitting. State the central theme of the entire book in your own words.

1. Theme of entire book
2. Type of literature (genre)

READING CYCLE TWO (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” pp. vi-vii.)

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the entire biblical book a second time at one sitting. Outline the main subjects and express the subject in a single sentence.

1. Subject of first literary unit
2. Subject of second literary unit
3. Subject of third literary unit
4. Subject of fourth literary unit
5. Etc.
I CORINTHIANS 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS*</th>
<th>UBS⁴</th>
<th>NKJV</th>
<th>NRSV</th>
<th>TEV</th>
<th>NJB</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greetings and Thanksgiving</td>
<td>Greeting</td>
<td>Salutation</td>
<td>Greetings</td>
<td>Address and Greetings</td>
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<td>1:1-3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spiritual Gifts at Corinth</td>
<td></td>
<td>Thanksgiving</td>
<td>Blessings in Christ</td>
<td>Thanksgiving</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:4-9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Divisions in the Church</td>
<td>Sectarianism is Sin</td>
<td>Divisions at Corinth</td>
<td>Divisions in the Church</td>
<td>Dissensions Among the Faithful</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. vii)

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph

* Although they are not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraphs. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth, or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own distinct way. As you read the text, ask yourself which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions. In every chapter we must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs), then compare our understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation can we truly understand the Bible. Only the original author is inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility of applying the inspired truth to their day and their lives.

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in Appendices One, Two, and Three.
2. Second paragraph

3. Third paragraph

4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:1

1Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother.

1:1 “Paul” Most Jews of Paul’s day had two first names, one Jewish, one Roman (cf. Acts 13:9). Paul’s Jewish name was Saul. He, like the ancient King of Israel, was of the tribe of Benjamin (cf. Rom. 11:1; Phil. 3:5). His Roman or Greek name, Paul, meant “little.” This referred either (1) to his physical stature, which was alluded to in a second century non-canonical book, The Acts of Paul, in a chapter related to Thessalonika called “Paul and Thekla”; (2) to his personal sense of being the least of the saints because he originally persecuted the Church (cf. I Cor. 15:9; Eph. 3:8; I Tim. 1:15); or most probably (3) simply to the name given by his parents at birth.

[ ] “called” See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: CALLED

God always takes the initiative in calling, electing, and wooing believers to Himself (cf. John 6:44, 65; 15:16; I Cor. 1:12; Eph. 1:4-5,11). The term “calling” is used in several theological senses:

A. Sinners are called to salvation by the grace of God through the finished work of Christ and the conviction of the Spirit (i.e. kλητός, cf. Rom. 1:6-7; 9:24, which is theologically similar to I Cor. 1:1-2 and II Tim. 1:9; II Pet. 1:10).

B. Sinners call on the name of the Lord to be saved (i.e. επικαλέω, cf. Acts 2:21; 22:16; Rom. 10:9-13). This statement is a Jewish worship idiom.

C. Believers are called to live Christlike lives (i.e. kλησίς, cf. I Cor. 1:26; 7:20; Eph. 4:1; Phil. 3:14; II Thess. 1:11; II Tim. 1:9)

D. Believers are called to ministry tasks (cf. Acts 13:2; I Cor. 12:4-7; Eph. 4:1).

[ ] “an apostle” This is a common Greek word for “send” (i.e. apostellō). This term has several theological usages.

1. The rabbis used it as one called and sent as an official representative of another, something like our English “ambassador” (cf. II Cor. 5:20).


3. The NT used it for disciples.
   a. the original Twelve who were an inner circle of disciples (cf. Luke 6:13; Acts 1:21-22)
   b. a special group of Apostolic helpers and co-workers
      (1) Barnabas (cf. Acts 14:4,14)
      (2) Andronicus and Junias (KJV, Junia, cf. Rom. 16:7)
      (3) Apollos (cf. I Cor. 4:6-9)
      (4) James, the Lord’s brother (cf. Gal. 1:19)
      (5) Silvanus and Timothy (cf. I Thess. 2:6)
      (6) possibly Titus (cf. II Cor. 8:23)
      (7) possibly Epaphroditus (cf. Phil. 2:25)
c. an ongoing gift in the church (cf. I Cor. 12:28-29; Eph. 4:11)

4. Paul uses this title for himself in most of his letters as a way of asserting his God-given call and authority as Christ’s representative (cf. Rom. 1:1; I Cor. 1:1; II Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; I Tim. 1:1; II Tim. 1:1; Titus 1:1).

“Jesus Christ” These terms are part of the fuller title “the Lord Jesus Christ” (cf. vv. 2,3,7,8,9,10). These three titles all have individual significance.

1. “Christ” is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Messiah (i.e. an Anointed One). It asserts Jesus’ OT title as YHWH’s promised One sent to set up the new age of righteousness. “Jesus” is the name given to the baby in Bethlehem by the angel (cf. Matt. 1:21). It is made up of two Hebrew nouns: “YHWH,” the covenant name for deity, and “salvation” (i.e. Hosea). It is the same Hebrew name as Joshua. When used alone it often identifies the man, Jesus of Nazareth, son of Mary (ex. Matt. 1:16; 25; 2:1; 3:13,15,16). “Lord” (used in 1:1 in KJV) is the translation of the Hebrew term adon, which meant “owner, husband, master, or lord.” The Jews became afraid of pronouncing the sacred name YHWH lest they take it in vain and break one of the Ten Commandments. Whenever they read the Scriptures, they substituted Adon for YHWH. This is why our English translations use all capitals LORD for YHWH in the OT. By transferring this title (kurios in Greek) to Jesus, the NT authors assert His deity and equality with the Father.

“by the will of God” This is the first of several emphatic statements in this introduction relating to Paul’s authority (i.e. “called an Apostle,” v. 1, “by the will of God,” v. 1, and “by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,” v. 10). Paul’s Apostolic authority is the major theological issue in the Corinthian letters, especially II Corinthians.

This same introductory phrase is used in Col. 1:1; I Cor. 1:1; II Cor. 1:1; and II Tim. 1:1. Paul was convinced that God had chosen him to be an Apostle. This special sense of calling began at his Damascus road conversion (cf. Acts 9,22,26).

“Sosthenes” This was possibly the Jewish leader mentioned in Acts 18:17, who was beaten by the mob and possibly later became a believer and a local church leader. It is possible that he was Paul’s (1) helper; (2) scribe; (3) source of information about the church or; (4) someone the church knew well.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:2

2To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours:

1:2 “to the church” This is the Greek term ekklesia. It is from two words, “out of” and “called,” therefore, the term implies the divinely called-out ones. The early church took this word from secular use (cf. Acts 19:32,39,41) and because of the Septuagint’s use of this term for “congregation” of Israel (cf. Num. 16:3; 20:4). They used it for themselves as a continuation of the OT people of God. They were the new Israel (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 6:16; I Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6), the fulfillment of God’s worldwide mission (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6; Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). This term is used in several senses in the Gospels and Acts.

1. secular town meeting, Acts 19:32,39,41
2. universal people of God in Christ, Matt. 16:18 and Ephesians
3. a local congregation of believers in Christ, Matt. 18:17; Acts 5:11 (in these verses the church in Jerusalem)
4. the people of Israel collectively, Acts 7:38, in Stephen’s sermon
5. the people of God in a region, Acts 8:3 (Judah or Palestine)

“of God which is at Corinth” This phrase expresses two distinct senses about “the church.”

1. It is a local body of born again, baptized believers. Most of the places in the NT that the word ekklesia is used reflect this local sense.
2. It is also the universal expression of the body of Christ. This is seen in Matt. 16:18 (i.e. the first of the rare usage of this term by Jesus, cf. Matt. 18:17 [twice]); Acts 9:31 uses the singular “church” for all the local congregations in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria; and finally the use of the term in Ephesians, which is a cyclical letter to the churches of Asia Minor (cf. 1:22; 3:10,21; 5:23-32).

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There is one large body of Christ made up of all believers (some now dead, some alive) and there are local expressions of that universal body.

“to those who have been sanctified” This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE, which means they have been and continue to be declared holy by the work of Jesus through the agency of the Spirit (cf. 6:11). This term (hagiazō) is related to the word “holy” (hagios) and “saints” (i.e. “holy ones” hagioi). It speaks of our separation to God for service. Here it refers to our position in Him as verse 3 does, but other places in the NT believers are to strive toward “holiness” (e.g. Matt. 5:48). It is a position to be possessed. Paul encourages this factious, prideful church by calling them “saints” even amidst their failures and sins!
The NT asserts that when sinners turn to Jesus in repentance and faith, they are instantaneously justified and sanctified. This is their new position in Christ. His righteousness has been imputed to them (cf. Rom. 4). They are declared right and holy (a forensic act of God).

But the NT also urges believers on to holiness or sanctification. It is both a theological position in the finished work of Jesus Christ and a call to be Christlike in attitude and actions in daily life. As salvation is a free gift and a cost-everything lifestyle, so too, is sanctification.

### Initial Response
- Acts 20:23; 26:18
- Romans 15:16
- I Corinthians 1:2-3; 6:11
- II Thessalonians 2:13
- Hebrews 2:11; 10:10,14; 13:12
- I Peter 1:1

### A Progressive Christlikeness
- Romans 6:19
- II Corinthians 7:1
- I Thessalonians 3:13; 4:3-4,7; 5:23
- I Timothy 2:15
- II Timothy 2:21
- Hebrews 12:14
- I Peter 1:15-16

“in Jesus Christ” This grammatical form is designated as a LOCATIVE OF SPHERE. Believers are sanctified by the Father (i.e. the source, cf. John 17:7; I Thess. 5:23) through Jesus (i.e. the grounds, cf. 1:2; Eph. 5:26). Both aspects come together in Heb. 2:11. It is normally the Holy Spirit to which this is attributed (i.e. the agency, cf. Rom. 15:16; II Thess. 2:13).

This is Paul’s favorite way to designate believers. A good example of this is Eph. 1:3,4,7,9,10,12,13. See William Barclay, *The Mind of St. Paul*, pp. 121-132. It means vital, personal union with Jesus (cf. Acts 17:28).

“by calling” This is a PRESENT MIDDLE PARTICIPLE. As Paul was called an Apostle, so too the Corinthian Christians were called saints (cf. Rom. 1:7). Notice the heavy emphasis on the doctrine of election in this chapter in vv. 9,24,26,27,28. This construction refers to the initial act of God calling them and their subsequent calling on Jesus in prayer for salvation, which resulted in ongoing prayer, worship, and obedience. Salvation is both an initial faith/repentance response and a continuing faith/repentance response. See Special Topic: Calling at 1:1.

“saints” “Saints” (hagioi) is theologically related to the OT term “holy.” (kadosh) which means “set apart for God's service” (cf. I Cor. 1:2; II Cor. 1:1; Rom. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:2). It is PLURAL in the NT except for one time in Philippians (4:21), but even there, it is used corporately. To be saved is to be part of the covenant community of faith, the family of believers, the body of Christ.

God’s people are holy because of the imputed righteousness of Jesus (cf. Rom. 4; II Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3). It is God’s will that they live holy lives (cf. 1:4; 4:1; 5:27; Col. 1:22; 3:12). Believers are both declared holy (positional sanctification) and called to lifestyle holiness (progressive sanctification). Justification and sanctification must be affirmed together!

### SPECIAL TOPIC: SAINTS

This is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew kadosh, which has the basic meaning of setting some one, some thing, or some place apart for YHWH’s exclusive use. It denotes the English concept of “the sacred.” YHWH is set apart from humanity by His nature (eternal non-created Spirit) and His character (moral perfection). He is the standard by which all else is measured and judged. He is the transcendent, Holy One, Holy Other.

God created humans for fellowship, but the fall (Gen. 3) caused a relational and moral barrier between a Holy God and sinful humanity. God chose to restore His conscious creation; therefore, He calls on His people to be “holy” (cf. Lev. 11:44; 19:2; 20:7,26; 21:8). By a faith relationship with YHWH His people become holy by their covenantal position in Him, but are also called on to live holy (cf. Matt. 5:48).

This holy living is possible because believers are fully accepted and forgiven through Jesus’ life and work and the presence of the Holy Spirit in their minds and hearts. This establishes the paradoxical situation of

1. being holy because of Christ’s imputed righteousness
Believers are “saints” (hagioi) because of the presence in our lives of (1) the will of the Holy One (the Father); (2) the work of the Holy Son (Jesus); and (3) the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The NT always refers to saints as PLURAL (except one time in Phil. 4:12, but even then the context makes it PLURAL). To be saved is to be part of a family, a body, a building! Biblical faith starts with a personal reception, but issues into a corporate fellowship. We are each gifted (cf. I Cor. 12:11) for the health, growth, and well-being of the body of Christ—the church (cf. I Cor. 12:7). We are saved to serve! Holiness is a family characteristic!

“with all who in every place” Paul uses this phrase to remind the Corinthian believers that they are part of a larger church family. They do not have the right to uniqueness or special treatment. They must conform to the whole body of Christ in doctrine and practice (cf. 4:17; 7:17; 11:16; 14:33).

“call on the name of our Lord” This refers to becoming a Christian (cf. Acts 2:21; 22:16; Rom. 10:9-13), but also to continuing worship (i.e. the OT use of the name, cf. Gen. 4:26; 12:8; 26:25). Here it is a PRESENT MIDDLE PARTICIPLE, which describes a moment-by-moment faith relationship with Christ (i.e. similar theologically to Paul’s “in Christ”) and an emphasis on an individual’s volition.

“their Lord and ours” This is another phrase that implies the unity of all believers and churches. Jesus is Lord of all the Christian congregations, which includes Corinth. Paul identifies himself and Sosthenes with the believers at Corinth in this phrase. They need to be reminded that (1) they are one of many congregations and (2) that Paul is one of them and for them!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:3

3Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1:3 “Grace” Paul has changed the normal Greek letter opening term “greetings,” charēin, to a uniquely Christian one which sounds similar, charis (cf. Rom. 1:7; II Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3 Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; II Thess. 1:2; Philemon v. 3).

“peace” It is possible that as grace reflected a typical Greek greeting so “peace” reflected the typical Hebrew greeting, shalom. The term shalom is both a Hebrew greeting and farewell. It implies not only the absence of problems, but the presence of goodness and well-being. It is just possible that Paul’s standard greeting comes from Num. 6:25-26, where both grace and peace appear. Theologically grace always precedes peace, but both are found only in a faith relationship with Christ (i.e. both corporately and individually).

“from God our Father” Both “grace” and “peace” come from the Father and the Son. The Father and Jesus are linked grammatically as one unit (i.e. one PREPOSITION, but two OBJECTS). This is a common way for NT authors to assert Jesus’ deity (cf. I Thess. 1:1; 3:11; II Thess. 1:2; 2:12; 2:16). The use of the OT titles of God applied to Jesus is another way to assert the same truth (i.e. LORD); also an OT event “Day of our Lord,” now attributed to Jesus (“the day of our Lord Jesus Christ,” cf. v. 8).

“the Lord Jesus Christ” See note at 1:1.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:4-9

4I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, 5that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, 6even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, 7so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, 8who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

1:4 “I thank my God always concerning you” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE, which expresses ongoing action. Verses 4-9 are an expansion of the things Paul thanks God for in the life of this troubled church. An introductory thanksgiving was a culturally expected element in first century letters. There is no thanksgiving in the introduction to II Corinthians (nor Galatians).
There are two ancient Greek uncial manuscripts (i.e. \( \text{N}^\prime \) and B) which omit the PRONOUN “my.” However, the Greek manuscripts of \( \text{P}^66 \), \( \text{N}^\circ \), A, C, D, F, G, as well as the Vulgate, Syriac, Coptic, and Armenian translations do include it. The UBS\(^5 \) Greek text gives its inclusion an A rating (i.e. certain).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THANKSGIVING

I. Introduction
   A. This is the appropriate attitude of believers toward God:
      1. This is the source of our praise to God through Christ
         a. II Corinthians 2:14
         b. II Corinthians 9:15
         c. Colossians 3:17
      2. This is the proper motive for ministry, I Cor. 1:4
      3. This is the continual theme of heaven
         a. Revelation 4:9
         b. Revelation 7:12
         c. Revelation 11:17
      4. This is the continual theme of believers
         a. Colossians 2:7
         b. Colossians 3:17
         c. Colossians 4:2

II. Biblical Material
   A. Old Testament
      1. Two basic words:
         a. \( \text{yadah} \), which means praise
         b. \( \text{todah} \), which means thanksgiving. It is usually used of sacrifices offered (cf. II Chr. 29:31; 33:16)
      2. David appointed special Levites to praise and thank God. This was continued by Solomon, Hezekiah, and Nehemiah:
         a. I Chronicles 16:4,7,41
         b. I Chronicles 23:30
         c. I Chronicles 25:3
         d. II Chronicles 5:13
         e. II Chronicles 7:6
         f. II Chronicles 31:2
         g. Nehemiah 11:12
         h. Nehemiah 12:24,27,31,38,46
      3. The Psalter is the collection of the praises and thanksgivings of Israel:
         a. Thanksgiving to YHWH for His faithfulness to the Covenant
            (1) Psalm 107:8
            (2) Psalm 103:1ff
            (3) Psalm 138:2
         b. Thanksgiving was part of the processional to the Temple
            (1) Psalm 95:2
            (2) Psalm 100:4
         c. Thanksgiving accompanied sacrifices
            (1) Psalm 26:7
            (2) Psalm 122:4
d. Thanksgiving given for the actions of YHWH
   (3) Deliverance from enemies
      (a) Psalm 7:17
      (b) Psalm 18:49
      (c) Psalm 28:7
      (d) Psalm 35:18
      (e) Psalm 44:8
      (f) Psalm 54:6
      (g) Psalm 79:13
      (h) Psalm 118:1,21,29
      (i) Psalm 138:1
   (2) Deliverance from prison (metaphor), Psalm 142:7
   (3) Deliverance from death
      (a) Psalm 30:4,12
      (b) Psalm 86:12-13
      (c) Isaiah 38:18-19
   (4) He puts down the wicked and exalts the righteous
      (a) Psalm 52:9
      (b) Psalm 75:1
      (c) Psalm 92:1
      (d) Psalm 140:13
   (5) He forgives
      (a) Psalm 30:4
      (b) Isaiah 12:1
   (6) He provides for His people
      (a) Psalm 106:1ff
      (b) Psalm 111:1
      (c) Psalm 136:1,26
      (d) Psalm 145:10
      (e) Jeremiah 33:11

B. New Testament
   1. The major word used for thanks and thanksgiving (some references)
      a. eucharisteō (cf. I Cor. 1:4,14; 10:30; 11:24; 14:17,18; Col. 1:3,12; 3:17)
      b. eucharistos (cf. Col. 3:15)
      c. eucharistia (cf. I Cor. 14:16; II Cor. 4:15; 9:11,12; Col. 2:7; 4:2)
      d. charis (cf. I Cor. 15:57; II Cor. 2:14; 8:16; 9:15; I Pet. 2:19)
   2. The example of Jesus
      a. He was thankful for food:
         (1) Luke 22:17,19 (I Cor. 11:24)
         (2) John 6:11,23
      b. He was thankful for answered prayer, John 11:41
   3. Other examples of thankfulness
      a. For God’s gift of Christ, II Cor. 9:15
      b. For food
         (1) Acts 27:35
         (2) Romans 14:6
         (3) I Corinthians 10:30; 11:24
         (4) I Timothy 4:3-4
c. For healing, Luke 17:16

d. For peace, Acts 24:2-3

e. For deliverance from danger
   (1) Acts 27:35
   (2) Acts 28:15

f. For all circumstances, Philippians 4:6

g. For all humans, especially leaders, I Timothy 2:1

4. Other aspects of thankfulness

a. It is God’s will for all believers, I Thessalonians 5:18

b. It is an evidence of the Spirit-filled life, Ephesians 5:20

c. To neglect it is sin
   (1) Luke 17:16
   (2) Romans 1:21

d. It is an antidote for sin, Ephesians 5:4

5. Paul’s thankfulness

a. His blessings on the church
   (1) for proclaiming the gospel
      (a) Romans 1:8
      (b) Colossians 1:3-4
      (c) Ephesians 1:15-16
      (d) I Thessalonians 1:2
   (2) for grace bestowed
      (a) I Corinthians 1:4
      (b) II Corinthians 1:11; 4:15
   (3) for accepting the gospel, I Thessalonians 2:13
   (4) for fellowship in the spread of the gospel, Philippians 1:3-5
   (5) for growth in grace, II Thessalonians 1:3
   (6) for knowledge of election, II Thessalonians 2:13
   (7) for spiritual blessings, Colossians 1:12; 3:15
   (8) for liberality in giving, II Corinthians 9:11-12
   (9) for joy over new believers, I Thessalonians 3:9

b. His personal thanksgiving
   (1) for being a believer, Colossians 1:12
   (2) for deliverance from bondage to sin, Romans 7:25; II Cor. 2:14
   (3) for the sacrificial labor of other believers, Romans 16:4; II Cor. 8:16
   (4) for some acts not occurring, I Corinthians 1:14
   (5) for personal spiritual gift, I Corinthians 14:18
   (6) for the spiritual growth of friends, Philemon 4-5
   (7) for the physical strength for ministry, I Timothy 1:12

III. Conclusion

A. Thanksgiving is our central response to God once we are saved. It issues not only in verbal assent, but lifestyle gratitude.

B. Thanksgiving in all things is the goal of a mature life in the care of God (cf. I Thess. 5:13-18).

C. Thanksgiving is a recurrent theme of both Old and New Testaments. Is it a theme of yours?

“for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus” Paul emphasizes that their standing and gifts were by the grace of God through the finished work of Jesus Christ and not by their personal merit (i.e. AORIST PASSIVE PARTICIPLE, cf. Eph.
2:8-9). This was the focus needed to offset their spiritual pride in (1) their gifted leaders; (2) their individual spiritual gifts; (3) their intellectual background (i.e. Greek culture); and (4) their social standing (i.e. Roman culture).

1:5 “in everything you were enriched in Him” This AORIST PASSIVE INDICATIVE matches the theological emphasis of v. 4 (i.e. God’s grace given in Christ). In all the PASSIVE verbs in vv. 4-9 the implied agent is God. The Triune God has provided believers everything they need.

Notice Paul’s use in this verse of three pas (i.e. “all” or “everything”). God is a complete provider. He does not need the ingenuity, intellect, or social standing of human beings.

NASB “in all speech and all knowledge”
NKJV “in all utterance and all knowledge”
NRSV “in speech and knowledge of every kind”
TEV “in all things including all speech and all knowledge”
NJB “in every kind of utterance and knowledge”

The Phillips translation has “from the words on your lips to the understanding in your hearts.” These were two aspects of the Greek-oriented (i.e. later Gnostic) spiritual pride which was developing in the Corinthian church (cf. 13:1-3). They were glorying in their gifts and performance instead of in Christ and it was God who gave them these very gifts. There was/is no room for human pride (cf. Eph. 2:9). See Special Topic: Boasting at 5:6.

The knowledge Paul is alluding to is not theoretical knowledge, nor academic knowledge, but Christian truth and how it applies to life (cf. 8-10; Rom. 14:1-15:13). Human knowledge builds up, but God’s knowledge edifies and leads to peace and harmony in the Christian fellowship. Oh how we need God’s gift of knowledge in the church today!

1:6 “even as the testimony concerning Christ” The Apostolic preaching of the gospel, energized by the Spirit, enriched these believers in spiritual giftedness. Like all of God’s blessings and gifts, these flow through Christ to needy, responsive human hearts.

NASB, NKJV “was confirmed in you”
NRSV “has been strengthened among you”
TEV “has become firmly fixed in you”
NJB “has taken root in you”

This is the Greek term bebaios, which has three connotations.
1. that which is sure, certain, or able to be relied on (cf. Rom. 4:16; II Cor. 1:7; Heb. 2:20; 3:6,14; 6:19; II Pet. 1:10,19).
2. the process by which something’s trustworthiness is shown or established (cf. Rom. 15:8; Heb. 2:2; cf. Louw and Nida, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Vol. 1, pp. 340,377,670).

Here it refers to God’s power demonstrated among them (i.e. spiritual gifts). It could refer to other manifestations of the Spirit, because it is another AORIST PASSIVE INDICATIVE paralleled to v. 5 (and also the AORIST PASSIVE PARTICIPLE in v. 4), it could also refer to God’s actions through the Holy Spirit in their conversions.

1:7
NASB, NJB “so that you are not lacking in any gift”
NKJV “so that you come short in no gift”
NRSV “so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift”
TEV “that you have not failed to receive a single blessing”

The term “gift” is charisma. This word is related to the term “grace,” charis, which emphasizes that the spiritual gifts are given by God for the common good (cf. 12:7,11). They are meant to glorify Christ, not the Spirit or the individual Christian (cf. chapters 12-14). All of the gifts needed were present in the Corinthian church as they are in every church (cf. v. 5). God has abundantly provided (i.e. strong DOUBLE NEGATIVE connected with “lacking”) for His people during the interim between Christ’s two comings through the Holy Spirit’s ministry.

“awaiting eagerly” This Greek term can mean (1) patiently waiting for an expected future event (cf. Heb. 10:13; I Pet. 3:20) or (2) eagerly expecting a future event (cf. Rom. 8:19,23,25; Phil. 3:20; Heb. 9:28). The NKJV, NASB, and NIV translations follow #2, while NRSV, TEV, and NJB translations follow #1.
“the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ” This is the Greek term *apocalupsis*. It is often translated “revelation.” The term basically means to draw back a curtain so as to reveal something. It is the title of the last book of the NT. Here it refers to the return of Christ (cf. v. 8).

1:8
NASB, NKJV “who will also confirm you to the end”
NRSV “He will also strengthen you to the end”
TEV “He will keep you firm to the end”
NJB “he will continue to give you strength till the very end”

Throughout vv. 4-9 the active agent of the PASSIVE VERBS has been God. However, v. 8 is ambiguous. Some commentators think that for the first time in this section Christ is the referent of “who.” It seems contextually better to assume that God the Father is still the active agent who sustains believers and establishes their acceptableness.

The term “confirm” was used in v. 6. This church needed to be stabilized, to be constant and unwavering. This is one of the main purposes of Paul’s letters to them. Christ’s gospel was confirmed (i.e. v. 6) and they will be confirmed by God’s help (i.e. v. 8). In II Cor. 2:8 Paul wants their love for him to be confirmed.

The Bible has two seemingly paradoxical truths about the believer’s relationship with God: (1) it is covenantal in nature; therefore, it involves an initial and an ongoing faith and repentant response. We must be diligent to maintain our relationship and (2) it is secure in God’s faithfulness (cf. Jude 24). No one can steal our relationship from us (cf. John 6:37,39; 10:28; Rom. 8:38-39). Security and perseverance are both biblical (cf. Eph. 2:8-9,10 and Phil. 2:12-13). They are the two necessary aspects of “covenant.”

“blameless” See Special Topic following.

**SPECIAL TOPIC: BLAMELESS, INNOCENT, GUILTLESS, WITHOUT REPROACH**

A. Opening Statements
1. This concept theologically describes mankind’s original state (i.e. Gen. 1, the Garden of Eden).
2. Sin and rebellion have decimated this condition of perfect fellowship (i.e. Gen. 3).
3. Humans (male and female) long for the restoration of fellowship with God because they are made in His image and likeness (i.e. Gen. 1:26-27).
4. God has dealt with sinful mankind in several ways
   a. godly leaders (i.e. Abraham, Moses, Isaiah)
   b. sacrificial system (i.e. Lev. 1-7)
   c. godly examples (i.e. Noah, Job)
5. Ultimately God provided the Messiah
   a. as full revelation of Himself
   b. as the perfect sacrifice for sin
6. Christians are made blameless
   a. legally through Christ’s imputed righteousness
   b. progressively through the work of the Spirit
   c. the goal of Christianity is Christlikeness (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; Eph. 1:4), which in reality, is the restoration of the image of God lost in the fall of Adam and Eve
7. Heaven is a restoration of the perfect fellowship of the Garden of Eden. Heaven is the New Jerusalem coming down out of God’s presence (cf. Rev. 21:2) to a purified earth (cf. II Pet. 3:10). The Bible begins and ends on the same themes.
   a. intimate, personal fellowship with God
   b. in a garden setting (Gen. 1-2 and Rev. 21-22)
   c. by prophetic statement, the presence and companionship of animals (cf. Isa. 11:6-9)

B. Old Testament
1. There are so many different Hebrew words that carry the concept of perfection, blamelessness, innocence that it would be hard to name and show all the intricate relationships.
2. The main terms carrying the concept of perfection, guiltlessness, or innocence (according to Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, pp. 94-99) are:
   a. *shalom*
   b. *thamam*
   c. *calah*

3. The Septuagint (i.e. the Bible of the early church) translates many of these concepts into Koine Greek terms used in the NT.
   a. *amōnos* (cf. Exod. 29:1; Lev. 1:3,10; 3:1,6,9; Num. 6:14; Ps. 26:1,11)
   b. *amiantos* and *aspliūs* also have cultic connotations

C. New Testament

1. the legal concept
   a. Hebrew legal cultic connotation is translated by *amōnos* (cf. Eph. 5:27; Phil. 2:15; I Pet. 1:19)
   b. Greek legal connotation (cf. I Cor. 1:8; Col. 1:22)

2. Christ is the sinless, blameless, innocent One (*amōnos*) (cf. Heb. 9:14; I Pet. 1:19)

3. Christ’s followers must emulate Him (*amōnos*) (cf. Eph. 1:4; 5:27; Phil. 2:15; Col. 1:22; II Pet. 3:14; Jude 24; Rev. 14:5)

4. This concept is also used of church leaders
   a. *aneklētos*, “without accusation” (cf. I Tim. 3:10; Titus 1:6-7)
   b. *anepileptos*, “above criticism” or “no handle for reproach” (cf. I Tim. 3:2; 5:7; 6:14; Titus 2:8)

5. The concept of “undefiled” (*amiantos*) is used of
   a. Christ Himself (cf. Heb. 7:26)
   b. the Christian’s inheritance (cf. I Pet. 1:4)

6. The concept of “wholeness” or “soundness” (*holoklēria*) (cf. Acts 3:16; I Thess. 5:23; James 1:4)


8. The concept of “not subject to blame” is conveyed by *amāntos* (cf. I Pet. 3:14)

9. The concept of “spotless,” “unblemished” is often used in passages that have one of the above terms also (cf. I Tim. 6:14; James 1:27; I Pet. 1:19; II Pet. 3:14)

D. The number of words in Hebrew and Greek which convey this concept shows its importance. God has provided our need through Christ and now calls on us to be like Him.

Believers are positionally, forensically declared “right,” “just,” “blameless” by the work of Christ. Now believers are to possess their position. “Walk in the light as He is in the light” (cf. I John 1:7). “Walk worthy of the calling” (cf. Eph. 4:1,17; 5:2,15). Jesus has restored the image of God. Intimate fellowship is now possible, but remember God wants a people who reflect His character, as His Son did. We are called to nothing less than holiness (cf. Matt. 5:20,48; Eph. 1:4; I Pet. 1:13-16). God’s holiness, not only legally, but existentially!

“in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” The NT authors have taken the OT “Day of YHWH” and applied it to Jesus’ Second Coming. Jesus Christ is YHWH’s surrogate in creation, redemption, and judgment.

1:9 “God is faithful” The term “faith” in the OT is a metaphorical extension of a stable or firm stance. It came to denote metaphorically that which is sure, trustworthy, dependable, and faithful. None of these describe even redeemed fallen mankind. It is not mankind's trustworthiness, or faithfulness or dependability, but God’s (cf. Deut. 7:9; Ps. 36:5; 40:10; 89:1,2,5,8; 92:2; 119:90; Isa. 49:7; Rom. 3:3; I Cor. 10:13; II Cor. 1:18; I Thess. 5:24; II Tim. 2:13). We trust in His trustworthy promises, not our trustworthiness! Covenant obedience flows from gratitude! The biblical focus has always been on His faithfulness, not the believers’ faith! Faith cannot save anyone. Only grace saves, but it is received by faith (cf. Eph. 2:8-9). The focus is never on the amount of faith (cf. Matt. 17:20), but on its object (Jesus). Our hope is in the unchanging character of the God who calls and promises (cf. Mal. 3:6; II Cor. 1:20).

God deals with fallen humanity by means of covenant. He always takes the initiative (cf. John 6:44, 65) and sets the agenda and the boundaries (cf. Mark 1:51; Acts 20:21). He allows fallen mankind to participate in their own salvation by responding to His covenant offer. The mandated response is initial and continuing faith, repentance, obedience, service, worship, and perseverance.

“through whom you were called” This is the continuing emphasis on God’s election of the Corinthian believers (cf. 1:2,9,24,26; Acts 18:9).

“fellowship with His Son” This is the Greek term koinonia which means joint participation in. God has called us to be in union with His Son both positionally (See Special Topic: Sanctification at 1:2) and relationally. The goal of Christianity is Christlikeness (cf. Rom. 8:29; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; 2:10).

Believers’ lifestyles after they meet Christ are evidence of their salvation (cf. the NT books of James and I John). They are saved by grace through faith unto works (cf. Eph. 2:8-9,10)! They are saved to serve (cf. Rom. 6:11)! Faith without works is dead, as are works without faith (cf. Matt. 7:21-23 and James 2:14-26). The goal of the Father’s choice is that believers be “holy and blameless” (cf. Eph. 1:4).

Paul was often attacked for his radically free gospel because it seemed to encourage godless living. A gospel so seemingly unconnected to moral performance might lead to abuse. Paul’s gospel was free in the grace of God and the finished work of Christ and the wooing of the Holy Spirit, but it also demanded an appropriate response, not only in initial repentance, but in ongoing repentance. Godly living is the result, not lawlessness. Good works are not the mechanism of salvation, but the result. This paradox of a completely free salvation and a cost-everything response is difficult to communicate, but the two must be held in a tension-filled, paradoxical, dialectical balance.

“His Son” Jesus as the Son of God is a recurrent theme in Paul’s writings (cf. Rom. 3:4,9; 5:10; 8:3,39,32; I Cor. 1:9; II Cor. 1:19; Gal. 1:16; 2:20; 4:4,6; Eph. 4:13; Col. 1:13; I Thess. 1:10). He is not “son” in time only, but “Son” in eternity (cf. Heb. 1:2; 3:6; 5:8; 7:28). There has never been a time when Jesus was not the Son. Jesus’ exaltation by the resurrection and at the ascension merely restores and magnifies His pre-existent, pre-incarnate glory.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:10-17**

10Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. 11For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe’s people, that there are quarrels among you. 12Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, “I am of Paul,” and “I of Apollos,” and “I of Cephas,” and “I of Christ.” 13Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? 14I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15so that no one would say you were baptized in my name. 16Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other. 17For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void.

1:10 “Now” This is an ADVERSATIVE. Paul begins the main body of the letter.

“I exhort you” This phrase was both tender and tough. It was a call to appropriate living as well as an authoritative challenge. Paul often used this term (cf. I Cor. 1:10; 4:16; 16:15; II Cor. 2:8; 5:20; 6:1; 10:1; 12:1,8; 15:30; Eph. 4:1; Phil. 4:2; I Thess. 4:10; I Tim. 1:3; Phililemon vv. 9-10). See full note at II Cor. 1:4-11. See full note at II Cor. 1:4-11.

“brethren” Paul uses the term “brethren” or “brother” often. Even though Paul had to exhort this congregation with strong words they still are his brothers and sisters in Christ.

Paul often uses this term to signal a new subject, but in this book he also uses it to signal the unity of this church with Paul and the other churches.

“by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” In Jewish life the name represented one’s character and authority. Here the Phillips translation caught the essence “by all that our Lord Jesus Christ means to you.”
SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NAME OF THE LORD

This was a common NT phrase for the personal presence and active power of the Triune God in the church. It was not a magical formula, but an appeal to God’s character.

Often this phrase refers to Jesus as Lord (cf. Phil. 2:11)
1. at the profession of one’s faith in Jesus at baptism (cf. Rom. 10:9-13; Acts 2:38; 8:12,16; 10:48; 19:5; 22:16; I Cor. 1:13,15; James 2:7)
3. at a healing (cf. Acts 3:6,16; 4:10; 9:34; James 5:14)
5. at the time of church discipline (cf. Matt. 18:15-20)
7. in prayer (cf. John 14:13-14; 15:2,16; 16:23; I Cor. 1:2)
8. a way of referring to Christianity (cf. Acts 26:9; I Cor. 1:10; II Tim. 2:19; James 2; I Pet. 4:14)

Whatever we do as proclaimers, ministers, helpers, healers, exorcists, etc., we do in His character, His power, His provisions—in His Name!

“that you all agree” There are two PRESENT ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVES in Paul’s purpose (i.e. hina) clause.
1. that there may not continue to be dissensions (PRESENT ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE)
2. that they may (PRESENT ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE) be having been knit together (i.e. PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE, which makes this a PERIPHRASTIC).

These SUBJUNCTIVES add a note of contingency. There were divisions and these factions were not knit together. The necessary attitudes and actions to maintain unity are listed in Eph. 4:2-3.

Paul’s desire for this church reflects Jesus’ prayer in John 17:11,21-23, “that they may be one, even as We are.” This is also the thrust of Eph. 4:1-6. Unity (not uniformity) is crucial for a healthy, growing, Great Commission church (cf. Phil. 1:27). Lack of unity results in blinded minds (cf. II Cor. 3:14; 4:4; 11:3).

“there be no divisions among you” This term (i.e. schismata) was used in Koine Greek of factious political parties (cf. Acts 14:4; 23:7). We get the English word, “schism,” from this Greek term. This was one of the major problems in this church (cf. 11:18-19). These divisions were based on:
1. believers’ personal preference for certain leadership skills (i.e. rhetoric)
2. believers’ pride and jealousy over spiritual gifts
3. believers’ recognition of economic categories (i.e. rich and poor)
4. believers’ prejudice over social rank (i.e. slave and free)
5. believers’ racial pride (i.e. Jew and Gentile)
6. believers’ jealousy or pride over marital status (i.e. married and unmarried)
7. believers’ pride over intellectual prowess (i.e. first century educational elitism, sophists)

In many ways this emphasis on arrogance, pride, dogmatism, and personal preference describes the modern church’s denominational confusion. Each group claims to be number one following their human leaders (i.e. Luther, Calvin, Arminius, Wesley, etc.). Each group thinks they exclusively reflect God’s mind. Oh, the continuing need for humility and teachability. All those who continually call on Jesus’ name are His church!

“that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment” The Today’s English Version (TEV) translation has “completely united with only one thought and one purpose.” That purpose is the Kingdom of God, the gospel, the Great Commission, personal holiness, not personal biases, preferences, or agendas!

1:11 “Chloe’s people” We know nothing about this lady except that perhaps she was a member of the church at Corinth or at least her workers were members. Her name was a nickname for the agriculture goddess, Demeter. Her servants are one source of Paul’s knowledge about the problems which had developed within the house churches at Corinth.

“that there are quarrels among you” This same term (i.e. eris) is listed in fruits of the flesh in Gal. 5:20 which characterizes fallen, angry, selfish people. It is also listed in several other Pauline lists of sins (cf. II Cor. 12:20; I Tim. 6:4). It should never, never characterize the church of Jesus Christ!
1:12 This seems to be a list of the factions (i.e. Paul’s group, Apollos’ group, Peter’s group, Jesus’ group). Much has been made of the characteristics of the leaders (i.e. Paul = freedom party, which included Gentiles by faith alone; Apollos = philosophical party; Cephas = Jewish traditionalist or legalistic party, cf. II Cor. 11:18-33); Christ = those of special rank, calling, giftedness, or spirituality (cf. possibly II Cor. 12:1). However, there is no certain information in the NT about the theology or motivation of each group. These leaders themselves were not factious. It was the groups at Corinth who claimed them as their champions who were factious.

“Apollos” This was a highly educated and eloquent preacher from Alexandria, Egypt. He was in Corinth (cf. Acts 18:24-19:1), but he refused to go back (cf. 16:12). He was just the kind of leader this church used.

“Cephas” This is the Aramaic equivalent to the Greek name, Peter. It is uncertain if Peter was ever in Corinth. If not, this may reflect a “Judaistic” party (cf. Galatians and possibly II Corinthians).

“I of Christ” It is uncertain if this is Paul’s reaction to the leader-oriented factions or another factious group who claimed only Christ as their leader. Clement of Rome, who wrote to Corinth in A.D. 95 (i.e. I Clem. 48) does not mention a Christ’s party, although he does mention the other factious groups. This supports the view that this may be an exclamation by Paul. They may choose to acknowledge and follow human leaders, but he lifts up and belongs to Christ alone!

Other scholars have supposed that this may have been a group that claimed a special knowledge of Jesus or a special revelation from Jesus or a special relationship to Jesus (i.e. an elite, gnostic-type faction). But again, this is uncertain and mere speculation. There is so much we do not know about the first and second century church.

1:13 This verse records Paul’s horrified reaction. “Has Christ been cut up?” This is a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE, implying Christ has been and remains divided by the attitudes and actions of these factions at Corinth. If this is a question, then a “yes” response is expected.

The Papyri manuscript which was written in the A.D. 200’s, has a textual variant, “Christ cannot be divided” (but this papyri has been damaged and the text is unsure). The most ancient and reliable Greek uncial manuscripts, Α, Β, C, D, F, and G, delete the negative and thereby make this (1) a question; (2) an exclamation; or (3) a statement.

“Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul” These are Paul’s emphatic statements of Christ’s supremacy (i.e. depreciating himself) possibly addressed to these factious groups or at least the group that was called by his name.

1:14 “Crispus” This is the person mentioned in Acts 18:8 who was the leader of the synagogue in Corinth who accepted Christ. Acts 18:8 also mentions that he was baptized along with his household (cf. v. 16). Apparently Paul performed this “household” baptism. In the ancient world when the head of the household converted, usually the entire house converted. This would normally include the children and servants, if there were any.

“Gaius” This person may be the one mentioned in Rom. 16:23, in whose house the church at Corinth met. His full Roman name would be Gaius Titus Justus.

1:15 “in My name” See Special Topic at 1:10.

1:16 “Stephanas” This is the person mentioned in I Cor. 16:15,17. He was one of the three church members who brought a letter from the church to Paul at Ephesus.

1:17 “For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach” This is not meant to disparage baptism, but to react to the factious spirit in the church of Corinth that was lifting up certain leaders. However, this statement does indicate that baptism was not seen as a “sacramental” agency of grace. It is surprising that some interpret Paul’s writings in a sacramental sense when in all his writings he specifically mentions the Lord’s Supper only once in I Cor. 11 and baptism twice, in Rom. 6:1-11 and Col. 2:12. However, baptism is the will of God for every believer:

1. it is the example of Jesus
2. it is the command of Jesus
3. it is the expected, normal procedure for all believers

I do not believe it is the channel for receiving the grace of God or the Spirit. It was that public opportunity for new believers to express their faith in a very public and decisive way. No NT believer would ask, “Must I be baptized to be saved?” Jesus did it! Jesus commanded the church to do it! Do it!
NASB "not in cleverness of speech"
NKJV "now with wisdom of words"
NRSV "not with eloquent wisdom"
TEV "without using the language of men’s wisdom"
NJB "not by means of wisdom of language"

The term *sophia* (i.e. cleverness or wisdom) in vv. 17-24 is used in its human orientation (i.e. worldly wisdom, human wisdom, fallen wisdom). Human eloquence and/or wisdom cannot take the place of God’s good news in Christ’s substitutionary death. The power is in the message, not in the messenger (i.e. not even in Paul, cf. II Cor. 10:10; 11:6). A segment of this church prided themselves in rhetoric. A group of Jewish-oriented false teachers will later come to Corinth and attack Paul for his lack of rhetorical speaking skills in II Cor 10-13. No flesh will glory before God (cf. 1:29; Eph. 2:9).

"so that the cross of Christ would not be made void" If humans could save themselves through their actions or intellect, then Christ’s death would not have been necessary! But, they could not! The power of the cross is God’s complete provision through Christ. Everything that needs to be done for the whole world to be saved is finished, complete, and available in the life, teachings, death, resurrection, ascension, and coming again of Christ, to which humans can only respond/receive by faith.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:18-25

18For 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.  19For it is written, “I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE.”  20Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?  21For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.  22For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; 23but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, 24but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.  25Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

1:18 "For the word of the cross" This “word” (i.e. *logos*) is related to the content of Paul’s preaching (cf. vv. 17 and 23). Usually in his preaching Paul emphasizes both the crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ. But in this context he focuses on the crucifixion (cf. Gen. 3:15; Ps. 22; Isa. 53; Zech. 9-14) and its results (cf. 1:30).

NASB, NKJV, NRSV “foolishness”
TEV “is nonsense”
NJB “folly”

This Greek word comes into English as “moron.” It is a key element in Paul’s description of fallen human wisdom (cf. vv. 18,21,23,25), also notice 2:14; 3:18-19; 4:10. The gospel is revelation (i.e. self disclosure) from God, not human discovery!

“to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” These are two PRESENT PARTICIPLES. The first is a PRESENT MIDDLE PARTICIPLE and the second a PRESENT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. See Special Topic: Greek Verb Tenses Used for Salvation at 3:15. There are only two kinds of people; those who are perishing and those who are being saved (cf. II Cor. 2:15; 4:3). The term "perishing" does not mean physical annihilation, but permanent loss of fellowship with God, for which they were created. Modern interpreters have taken the Hebrew euphemisms and literalized them. Two examples are
1. “sleep” = death, not unconsciousness until resurrection
2. “perish” = spiritual loss, not annihilation

Some say that annihilation (i.e. cessation of life) is more humane than a permanent hell (cf. Fudge, *The Fire That consumes*). The problem arises when the same word used to describe hell is used of heaven (i.e. “eternal,” cf. Matt. 25:46) and the mention of a double resurrection as in Dan. 12:2; John 5:28-20; and Acts 24:15.. Yet it is not God who sends people to hell, but their own rejection of (1) the light they have (i.e. Ps. 19:1-6; Rom. 1-2) or (2) the gospel (i.e. the unpardonable sin and the sin unto death are the sin of unbelief). Unbelief in this life affects eternity.

The NT describes salvation as a
1. past decisive volitional act (i.e. AORIST TENSE, Acts 15:11; Rom. 8:24; II Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5)
2. a process which continues through life (i.e. PRESENT TENSE, I Cor. 1:18; 15:2; II Cor. 2:15)
3. a past event which becomes a state of being (i.e. PERFECT TENSE, Eph. 2:5,8)
4. a future consummation (i.e. FUTURE TENSE, Rom. 5:9,10; 10:9; 13:11; I Cor. 3:15; Phil. 1:28; I Thess. 5:8-9; Heb. 1:14; 9:28)

The theological danger is to isolate any one of these as “the” essence of salvation. We must always be on guard against an easy believism which emphasizes the initial act only or perfectionism which emphasizes the product only. Salvation is an initial, volitional response to God’s free offer in Christ which issues in a daily Christlikeness. It is not only a person to welcome, but a message about that person to be received and a life in emulation of that person to live. It is not a product, an insurance policy, a ticket to heaven, but a growing daily relationship with Jesus. The NT does not emphasize making a decision, but being a disciple (cf. Matt. 28:19-20).

The real mystery is that when the gospel is presented, some say “yes” and are saved, but some say “no” and their rebellion is reaffirmed (cf. Luke 2:34; John 9:39; I Pet. 2:7). It does not surprise me that people say yes, but I am amazed that with (1) the desire of God for all to be saved; (2) the finished work of Christ; (3) the wooing of the Spirit; (4) the felt guilt of humanity; and (5) the purposelessness of life without God, that people say “No”! This is the mystery of election (cf. II Cor. 3:14; 4:4; 11:3).

“The power of God” The gospel is the power of God (cf. 1:24; Rom. 1:16). The gospel reveals and channels the power of God. It produces faith. It produces repentance. It produces wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (cf. 1:30). The preaching of the cross does all of this. It is God’s power behind the written word (i.e. the Bible), the living word (i.e. Christ), the preached word (i.e. the gospel), and the established word (i.e. Christlikeness/the kingdom of God).

1:19 This is a quote of Isa. 29:14 from the Septuagint. It is an example of OT synonymous parallelism. The emphasis is on the folly of human wisdom without God (cf. Isa. 29:13; Eccl. 1:12-18; 12:12).

“destroy” See Special Topic: Apollumi at 8:11.

1:20 This is a list of human rationalists (i.e. Jewish and Gentile). Humans cannot discover the gospel. It is the mystery of God hidden from the ages (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13). God’s plan and provisions seem foolish because they devalue human merit and wisdom.

“of this age . . . of the world” These two phrases reflect a similar concept in that this period of time is fallen. This is not the world that God intended, but the gospel will transform this fallen age into God’s intended creation (i.e. Gen. 1-2).

The term “world” is used in two senses in the NT: (1) the physical planet (cf. John 3:16) and (2) fallen human society organized and functioning apart from God (cf. James 1:27; 4:4; I John 2:15-17). In Paul’s writings the Hebrew term olam, translated into Greek as aiôn, came to be synonymous with kosmos (cf. 1:20; 2:6; 3:19; Eph. 2:2).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THIS AGE AND THE AGE TO COME

The OT prophets viewed the future by an extension of the present. For them the future will be a restoration of geographical Israel. However, even they saw a new day (cf. Isa. 65:17; 66:22). With the continued willful rejection of YHWH by the descendants of Abraham (even after the exile) a new paradigm developed in Jewish intertestamental apocalyptic literature (i.e. I Enoch, IV Ezra, II Baruch). These writings begin to distinguish between two ages: a current evil age dominated by Satan and a coming age of righteousness dominated by the Spirit and inaugurated by the Messiah (often a dynamic warrior).

In this area of theology (eschatology) there is an obvious development. Theologians call this “progressive revelation.” The NT affirms this new cosmic reality of two ages (i.e. a temporal dualism):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jesus</th>
<th>Romans 12:2</th>
<th>I Cor. 1:20; 2:6,8; 3:18</th>
<th>II Cor. 4:4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I Timothy 6:17</td>
<td>II Timothy 4:10</td>
<td>Titus 2:12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In NT theology these two Jewish ages have been overlapped because of the unexpected and overlooked predictions of the twocomings of the Messiah. The incarnation of Jesus fulfilled the OT prophecies of the inauguration of the new age. However, the OT also saw His coming as Judge and Conqueror, yet He came at first as the Suffering Servant (cf. Isa. 53), humble and meek.
23

(cf. Zech. 9:9). He will return in power just as the OT predicted (cf. Rev. 19). This two-stage fulfillment caused the Kingdom to be present (inaugurated), but future (not fully consummated). This is the NT tension of the already, but not yet!

1:21 “For since in the wisdom of God” This may be an allusion to Prov. 8:22-31, as is John 1:1-5,9-14. It also refers to the plan of God to redeem fallen humanity. Redemption was planned in the heart of God before creation (cf. Matt. 25:34; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29; Eph. 1:4; I Pet. 1:19-20; Rev. 13:8). This plan involved

1. foreknowledge of mankind’s fall
2. mankind’s inability to perform the will of God (cf. Deut. 31:27-29; Josh. 24:19; Gal. 3)
3. God’s provision in Christ (i.e. the new covenant, cf. Jer. 31:31-34)
4. the inviting of Jew and Gentile by faith in Christ (cf. v. 21; Eph. 2:11-3:13)

“did not come to know God” The Greeks did not believe that God was knowable. Their deities had human frailties and were uninvolved in this world. Fallen humanity cannot discover God, but God has chosen to reveal Himself through Christ, (i.e. the Living Word) and through the Bible (i.e. the written Word), as well as through redeemed humanity (i.e. the established word)!

“God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached” It is not the presentation, but the content of the gospel that is foolishness to the fallen mind (cf. 2:14).

“to save those who believe” This is an AORIST ACTIVE INFINITIVE followed by a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE. This is the essence of gospel proclamation! The term “save” was used in the OT for physical deliverance, but in the NT it came to be used for spiritual forgiveness and acceptance. Our acceptance by God through Christ is a completed fact, but on our part it is a continuing covenantal relationship. All dealings between God and humans are covenantal. God always initiates the covenant and sets its requirements, but He has chosen that we must personally respond and continue to respond. See Special Topic at 3:15.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NEED TO PERSEVERE

The biblical doctrines related to the Christian life are difficult to explain because they are presented in typically eastern dialectical pairs. These pairs seem contradictory, yet both are biblical. Western Christians have tended to choose one truth and ignore or depreciate the opposite truth. Let me illustrate.

1. Is salvation an initial decision to trust Christ or a lifetime commitment to discipleship?
2. Is salvation an election by means of grace from a sovereign God or mankind’s believing and repentant response to a divine offer?
3. Is salvation, once received, impossible to lose, or is there a need for continual diligence?

The issue of perseverance has been contentious throughout church history. The problem begins with apparently conflicting passages of the NT:

1. texts on assurance
   a. statements of Jesus (John 6:37; 10:28-29)
   b. statements of Paul (Rom. 8:35-39; Eph. 1:13; 2:5,8-9; Phil. 1:6; 2:13; II Thess. 3:3; II Tim. 1:12; 4:18)
   c. statements of Peter ( I Pet. 1:4-5)
2. texts on the need for perseverance
   a. statements of Jesus (Matt. 10:22; 13:1-9,24-30; 24:13; Mark 13:13; John 8:31; 15:4-10; Rev. 2:7,17,20; 3:5,12,21)
   b. statements of Paul (Rom. 11:22; I Cor. 15:2; II Cor. 13:5; Gal. 1:6; 3:4; 5:4; 6:9; Phil. 2:12; 3:18-20; Col. 1:23)
   c. statements of the author of Hebrews (2:1; 3:6,14; 4:14; 6:11)
   d. statements of John (I John 2:6; II John 9)
   e. statement of the Father (Rev. 21:7)

Biblical salvation issues from the love, mercy, and grace of a sovereign Triune God. No human can be saved without the initiation of the Spirit (cf. John 6:44,65). Deity comes first and sets the agenda, but demands that humans respond in faith and repentance, both initially and continually. God works with mankind in a covenantal relationship. There are privileges and responsibilities!

Salvation is offered to all humans. Jesus’ death dealt with the fallen creation’s sin problem. God has provided a way and wants all those made in His image to respond to His love and provision in Jesus.
1:22 “Jews ask for signs” This reflects Paul’s knowledge of the life of Christ (cf. Matt. 12:38; 16:1,4; Mark 8:11-12; John 4:48; 6:30).

1:23 This verse should begin with the adversative “but.” Paul’s answer to both a desire for “signs” and “wisdom” was the gospel.

“crucified” This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. Jesus’ crucifixion, not logic nor miracles, is the heart of Paul’s gospel. The PERFECT TENSE asserts that Jesus remains the “crucified one.” When we see Jesus in heaven He will have retained the marks of His crucifixion (cf. John 20:25) because they have become His badges of honor and glory. Jesus is the only part of the Trinity that has a physical body. He is not omnipresent throughout the universe as are the Father and the Spirit.

It is surely possible that this PERFECT TENSE is a CONSUMMATIVE PERFECT which focuses on the completion of an event or act, implying the result (cf. Daner and Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament, pp. 202-203). Jesus crucified sealed our salvation

NASB, NKJV, NRSV, “stumbling block”
TEV “that is offensive”
NJB “an obstacle”

This Greek term (i.e. skandalon) was used for the trigger mechanism on an animal trap (cf. Gal. 5:11). The Jews rejected Christ because of the crucifixion (cf. Deut. 21:23). They were expecting the Messiah to be a conquering military leader (and He will be when He returns!) The Jews did not recognize a Suffering Messiah (cf. Gen. 3:15; Ps. 22; Isa. 52:13-53:12) and a two-stage coming (i.e. incarnation and glorious return).

NASB, NJB “and to the Gentiles foolishness”
NKJV “to the Greeks foolishness”
NRSV “foolishness to Gentiles”
TEV “nonsense to the Gentiles”

The Greeks rejected Christ because the concept of resurrection did not fit their preconceived philosophical ideals. This statement of Paul also shows that the supposed “dying and rising redeemer” of the fertility cults and mystery religions was not a major tenet of Greek thought and surely not the source of Paul’s view of Jesus.

Be careful not to judge the gospel by your own culture or national categories! The NKJV, following the Textus Receptus, has “Greeks,” which follows the corrected Greek uncial manuscripts C⁴ and D⁴. All other Greek manuscripts have “Gentiles.” The term “Greeks” does occur in vv. 2 and 24. Probably ancient scribes changed v. 23 to make them all consistent.

1:24 “but to those who are the called” The opening of I Corinthians emphasizes God’s call (i.e. election) and God’s grace as the only grounds for the Corinthian church’s salvation (cf. vv. 2,9,26,27; Eph. 1-2). We learn from John 6:44,65 that no one comes to God unless the Spirit draws him/her. God’s call does not eliminate or minimize the need for human response, both initially and continually.
SPECIAL TOPIC: ELECTION

Election is a wonderful doctrine. However, it is not a call to favoritism, but a call to be a channel, a tool, or means of others’ redemption! In the OT the term was used primarily for service; in the NT it is used primarily for salvation which issues in service. The Bible never reconciles the seeming contradiction between God’s sovereignty and mankind’s free will, but affirms them both. A good example of the biblical tension would be Romans 9 on God’s sovereign choice and Romans 10 on mankind’s necessary response (cf. 10:11,13).

The key to this theological tension may be found in Eph. 1:4. Jesus is God’s elect man and all humans are potentially elect in Him (Karl Barth). Jesus is God’s “yes” to fallen mankind’s need (Karl Barth). Ephesians 1:4 also helps clarify the issue by asserting that the goal of predestination is not heaven later, but holiness (Christlikeness) now. We are often attracted to the benefits of the gospel and ignore the responsibilities! God’s call (election) is for time as well as eternity.

Doctrines come in relation to other truths, not as single, unrelated truths. A good analogy is a constellation versus a single star. God presents truth in eastern, not western, genres. The Bible is ancient Eastern literature. We must not remove the tension caused by dialectical (paradoxical) pairs of doctrinal truths (ex. God as transcendent versus God as immanent; security vs. perseverance; Jesus as equal with the Father vs. Jesus as subservient to the Father; Christian freedom vs. Christian responsibility to a covenant partner; etc.).

The theological concept of “covenant” unites the sovereignty of God (who always takes the initiative and sets the agenda) with a mandatory initial and continuing repentant, faith response from humanity (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21). Be careful of proof-texting one side of the paradox and depreciating the other. Be careful of asserting only your favorite doctrine or system of theology.

“both Jews and Greeks” This shows the purpose of the gospel is to unite all humans in Christ. This is the mystery of God hidden from the ages, but now clearly revealed (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13).

1:25 “the foolishness of God is wiser than man” This is an OT theme (cf. Isa. 55:8-9). It is repeated in I Cor. 1:18,21,23. This is the term ἄρωσ. It and its other forms are used often by Paul in his Corinthian letters.
1. ἄρώς (foolish), I Cor. 1:25,27; 3:18; 4:10
2. ἄρωσία (foolishness), I Cor. 1:18,21,23; 2:14; 3:19
3. ἄρωσίζω (made foolish), I Cor. 1:20

“the weakness of God is stronger than men” This is basically asserting God’s incomparable greatness. He is even magnified through human weakness (cf. I Cor. 12:5,7-10). It may refer to the “apparent” failure of Jesus’ death from a purely human point of view (cf. II Cor. 13:4), yet in reality it was a victory of eternal consequences!

The gospel, the victory, is all of God and not of mankind. See Special Topic: Weakness at II Cor. 12:9.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:26-31

26For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; 27but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, 28and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, 29so that no man may boast before God. 30But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, 31so that, just as it is written, “LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD.”

1:26-31 This last paragraph of chapter one shows us the tension-filled relationship of “wisdom” and “knowledge” as it relates to the gospel. In one sense they are “bad,” in another they are “good.” Let me quote a wonderful passage from Herman Ridderbos’ Paul, An Outline of His Theology:

“To be sure, the relationship of faith and knowledge, pistis and gnosis, just as that of faith and works, is ambivalent. On the one hand knowledge stands in faith’s way, that is, when, just as good works for the Jews, it represents the human will to self-redemption. As this antithesis is developed in Galatians and Romans with respect to works, this threat to the Christian faith from the side of gnosis is elucidated especially in I Corinthians (cf., e.g., I Cor. 1:26-29). And this danger exists not merely from the side of what Paul calls “the wisdom of this world” (I Cor. 1:21), but also from a certain kind of Christian gnosis. Paul does recognize that gnosis in itself: we know that we all have knowledge (I Cor. 8:1). But he immediately adds to this: knowledge puffs up, love builds up. What is at issue here is a wrongly employed Christian gnosis, which elevates itself above one’s neighbor, the weak; a knowledge that
is indeed in the service of one’s own individual freedom, but not of the edification of the church. This gnosis only promotes proud individualism and stands over against love. In that sense gnosis, even as works, can come to stand over against love; as such it is injurious and without profit (1 Cor. 13:2,3)” p. 242.

1:26
NASB, NRSV, NJB “consider”
NKJV “see”
TEV “remember”

This is either a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE or a PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE. Moffatt translates it as, “Look at your own ranks.” This passage was not meant to be a put down to the early church and its leaders, but an affirmation of the love and power of God. It was meant to shatter the pride of this arrogant church. The early church was made up mostly of the “have nots” of society. However, apparently one of the factions in Corinth was made up of Roman patrons and the culturally elite. By using these who have no worldly status, God magnifies His power.

“not many wise according to the flesh” This refers to human wisdom or worldly standards (cf. 1:20; 2:6,8; 3:18). Paul uses the term “flesh” (i.e. sarx) in several ways in his writings.
1. the human body (cf. 5:5; 7:28; Rom. 2:28)
2. human descent (i.e. father-son, cf. 10:18; Rom. 1:3; 4:1)
3. humanity as a whole (cf. 1:26,29)
4. human weakness because of the fall of mankind in Gen. 3 (cf. Rom. 6:19; 7:18)

“not many mighty” This refers to physical strength or social standing.

“not many noble” This refers to one’s family background which would involve wealth, education, and social privilege. These three characterizations fit the Sophists, who were so proud of their education, position, and sophistication.

1:27 “God has chosen the foolish things of the world” This is an AORIST MIDDLE INDICATIVE. God Himself has chosen to manifest His power through the weak so that there will be no doubt who should receive the glory (cf. II Cor. 12). The victory is in God’s resources, not human achievement (cf. v. 29; Eph. 2:9) or social standing.

1:28
NASB “the base things of the world and the despised”
NKJV “the base things of the world and things which are despised”
NRSV “what is low and despised in the world”
TEV “what the world looks down on and despises”
NJB “those who by human standards are common and contemptible”

This phrase is in contrast to the “wise. . .mighty. . .noble” of v. 26. The term “base things” is literally “those of low birth,” which is another reference to Roman nobility.

NJB, NRSV “the things that are not”
NKJV “the things which are not”
TEV “thinks is nothing”

Is this another category of debased things/people or a summary? Because there is no kai (i.e. and) before this phrase as there is with all the others, it is probably a summary statement. God calls and uses those people of whom the world takes no notice! The theological points are (1) “no flesh will glory before God” (cf. 1:29); (2) God’s power and equipping is magnified in the weakness of the human vessel (cf. II Cor. 12:1-10); and (3) Christ’s mediation is magnified (cf. 1:30). In Him, everything that the Jews and Greeks sought and strived after, is a gift from YHWH, through Messiah, energized by the Holy Spirit!

“nullify the things that are” This is the Greek term, katargeō. See Special Topic below.
SPECIAL TOPIC: NULL AND VOID (KATARGEΩ)

Katargeo was one of Paul’s favorite words. He used it at least twenty-five times, but it has a very wide semantic range.

A. Its basic etymological root is from argos
   1. inactive
   2. idle
   3. unused
   4. useless
   5. inoperative

B. The compound with kata was used to express
   1. inactivity
   2. uselessness
   3. that which was cancelled
   4. that which was done away with
   5. that which was completely inoperative


D. Paul uses it in a figurative sense in two primary ways
   1. God making inoperative things which are hostile to mankind
      a. mankind’s sin nature (Rom. 6:6)
      b. the Mosaic law in relation to God’s promise of “the seed” (Rom. 4:14; Gal. 3:17; 5:4,11; Eph. 2:15)
      c. spiritual forces (I Cor. 15:24)
      d. the “man of lawlessness” (II Thess. 2:8)
      e. physical death (I Cor. 15:26; II Tim. 1:10; Heb. 2:14)
   2. God replacing the old (covenant, age) for the new
      a. things related to the Mosaic Law (Rom. 3:3,31; 4:14; II Cor. 3:7,11,13,14)
      b. analogy of marriage used of Law (Rom. 7:2,6)
      c. the things of this age (I Cor. 13:8,10,11)
      d. this body (I Cor. 6:13)
      e. leaders of this age (I Cor. 1:28; 2:6)

This word is translated many different ways, but its main meaning is to make something useless, null and void, inoperative, powerless but not necessarily non-existent, destroyed or annihilated.

1:29 “no man may boast before God” The verb is an AORIST MIDDLE SUBJUNCTIVE which implies a settled personal choice. No created flesh entity will vaunt itself before the creator (cf. Eph. 2:9)! This was the central truth of Paul’s message to the proud Corinthians and to fallen mankind in general, Jew or Gentile (cf. Rom. 3:27; Eph. 2:9). See Special Topic: Boasting at 5:6.

1:30
NASB “by His doing”
NKJV “of Him”
NRSV “He is the source”
TEV “God”
NJB “by Him”

This is literally “out of him,” which is a Greek idiom expressing the First Cause, the Prime mover. The Father sent it, Jesus brought it, and the Spirit energized it. What follows is a list of God’s gifts to believers through Christ.

“wisdom from God” In Jewish thought wisdom is personified in Prov. 8:22-31 and Col. 2:2-3. Wisdom is a person. Truth is a person. The gospel is a person—Jesus! (cf. John 14:6).

If, however, Paul was addressing the philosophical element in the church, then sophia would have a connection with their pride in their cultural traditions (i.e. Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, etc.). It would be a metaphor from academy. It is also possible that an incipient gnosticism was present in the eclectic religious milieu of Corinth and possibly had infiltrated the church (cf. 1:18-2:8; 3:18-23; 8:1-2). If so, then Paul’s comments in Colossians are relevant (i.e. Christ, Himself, is wisdom, cf. Col. 1:9; 2:3).
“righteousness” This was a metaphor from the law court (cf. Rom. 3:21-26; II Cor. 5:21). By Paul’s day the rabbis had transferred the semi-personal wisdom of Prov. 8 to the Mosaic Law. To it was attributed ultimate authority. If Paul was thinking of the Jewish element in the Corinthian church, this was a powerful and ultimate designation.

SPECIAL TOPIC: RIGHTEOUSNESS

“Righteousness” is such a crucial topic that a Bible student must make a personal extensive study of the concept.

In the OT God’s character is described as “just” or “righteous.” The Mesopotamian term itself comes from a river reed which was used as a construction tool to judge the horizontal straightness of walls and fences. God chose the term to be used metaphorically of His own nature. He is the straight edge (ruler) by which all things are evaluated. This concept asserts God’s righteousness as well as His right to judge.

Man was created in the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1,3; 9:6). Mankind was created for fellowship with God. All of creation is a stage or backdrop for God and mankind’s interaction. God wanted His highest creation, mankind, to know Him, love Him, serve Him, and be like Him! Mankind’s loyalty was tested (cf. Gen. 3) and the original couple failed the test. This resulted in a disruption of the relationship between God and humanity (cf. Gen. 3; Rom. 5:12-21).

God promised to repair and restore the fellowship (cf. Gen. 3:15). He does this through His own will and His own Son. Humans were incapable of restoring the breach (cf. Rom. 1:18-3:20).

After the Fall, God’s first step toward restoration was the concept of covenant based on His invitation and mankind’s repentant, faithful, obedient response. Because of the Fall, humans were incapable of appropriate action (cf. Rom. 3:21-31; Gal. 3). God Himself had to take the initiative to restore covenant-breaking humans. He did this by

1. declaring sinful mankind righteous through the work of Christ (forensic righteousness)
2. freely giving mankind righteousness through the work of Christ (imputed righteousness)
3. providing the indwelling Spirit who produces righteousness (ethical righteousness) in mankind
4. restoring the fellowship of the garden of Eden by Christ restoring the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) in believers (relational righteousness)

However, God requires a covenantal response. God decrees (i.e. freely gives) and provides, but humans must respond and continue to respond in

1. repentance
2. faith
3. lifestyle obedience
4. perseverance

Righteousness, therefore, is a covenantal, reciprocal action between God and His highest creation. It is based on the character of God, the work of Christ, and the enabling of the Spirit, to which each individual must personally and continually respond appropriately. The concept is called “justification by faith.” The concept is revealed in the Gospels, but not in these terms. It is primarily defined by Paul, who uses the Greek term “righteousness” in its various forms over 100 times.

Paul, being a trained rabbi, uses the term dikaiosuné in its Hebrew sense of the term SDQ used in the Septuagint, not from Greek literature. In Greek writings the term is connected to someone who conformed to the expectations of deity and society. In the Hebrew sense it is always structured in covenantal terms. YHWH is a just, ethical, moral God. He wants His people to reflect His character. Redeemed mankind becomes a new creature. This newness results in a new lifestyle of godliness (Roman Catholic focus of justification). Since Israel was a theocracy, there was no clear delineation between the secular (society’s norms) and the sacred (God’s will). This distinction is expressed in the Hebrew and Greek terms being translated into English as “justice” (relating to society) and “righteousness” (relating to religion).

The gospel (good news) of Jesus is that fallen mankind has been restored to fellowship with God. Paul’s paradox is that God, through Christ, acquires the guilty. This has been accomplished through the Father’s love, mercy, and grace; the Son’s life, death, and resurrection; and the Spirit’s wooing and drawing to the gospel. Justification is a free act of God, but it must issue in godliness (Augustine’s position, which reflects both the Reformation emphasis on the freeness of the gospel and Roman Catholic emphasis on a changed life of love and faithfulness). For Reformers the term “the righteousness of God” is an OBJECTIVE GENITIVE (i.e. the act of making sinful mankind acceptable to God [positional sanctification]), while for the Catholic it is a SUBJECTIVE GENITIVE, which is the process of becoming more like God (experiential progressive sanctification). In reality it is surely both!!

In my view all of the Bible, from Gen. 4 - Rev. 20, is a record of God’s restoring the fellowship of Eden. The Bible starts with God and mankind in fellowship in an earthly setting (cf. Gen. 1-2) and the Bible ends with the same setting (cf. Rev. 21-22). God’s image and purpose will be restored!

To document the above discussions note the following selected NT passages illustrating the Greek word group.
1. **God is righteous (often connected to God as Judge)**
   a. Romans 3:26
   b. II Thessalonians 1:5-6
   c. II Timothy 4:8
   d. Revelation 16:5

2. **Jesus is righteous**
   b. Matthew 27:19
   c. I John 2:1,29; 3:7

3. **God’s will for His creation is righteousness**
   a. Leviticus 19:2
   b. Matthew 5:48 (cf. 5:17-20)

4. **God’s means of providing and producing righteousness**
   a. Romans 3:21-31
   b. Romans 4
   c. Romans 5:6-11
   d. Galatians 3:6-14
   e. Given by God
      (1) Romans 3:24; 6:23
      (2) I Corinthians 1:30
      (3) Ephesians 2:8-9
   f. Received by faith
      (1) Romans 1:17; 3:22,26; 4:3,5,13; 9:30; 10:4,6,10
      (2) I Corinthians 5:21
   g. Through acts of the Son
      (1) Romans 5:21-31
      (2) II Corinthians 5:21
      (3) Philippians 2:6-11

5. **God’s will is that His followers be righteous**
   a. Matthew 5:3-48; 7:24-27
   b. Romans 2:13; 5:1-5; 6:1-23
   c. II Corinthians 6:14
   d. I Timothy 6:11
   e. II Timothy 2:22; 3:16
   f. I John 3:7
   g. I Peter 2:24

6. **God will judge the world by righteousness**
   a. Acts 17:31
   b. II Timothy 4:8

Righteousness is a characteristic of God, freely given to sinful mankind through Christ. It is
1. a decree of God
2. a gift of God
3. an act of Christ
But it is also a process of becoming righteous that must be vigorously and steadfastly pursued; it will one day be consummated at the Second Coming. Fellowship with God is restored at salvation, but progresses throughout life to become a face-to-face encounter at death or the Parousia!

Here is a good quote taken from *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* from IVP

“Calvin, more so than Luther, emphasizes the relational aspect of the righteousness of God. Luther’s view of the righteousness of God seems to contain the aspect of acquittal. Calvin emphasizes the marvelous nature of the communication or imparting of God’s righteousness to us” (p. 834).

For me the believer’s relationship to God has three aspects:
1. the gospel is a person (the emphasis of the Eastern Church and Calvin)
2. the gospel is truth (emphasis of Augustine and Luther)
3. the gospel is a changed life (emphasis of the Roman Catholic church)

They are all true and must be held together for a healthy, sound, biblical Christianity. If any one is over emphasized or depreciated, problems occur.

We must welcome Jesus!
We must believe the gospel!
We must pursue Christlikeness!

**“sanctification”** This was a metaphor from the sacrificial system of Israel (cf. Rom. 6:19-23). This is the from the same root as “holy” or “consecrated.” In the OT it referred to a person, place, or thing that was separated to God’s service. Theologically it refers to the believer’s position in Christ. The moment one puts his faith in Him, he is justified and sanctified (cf. Rom. 8:30). See Special Topic at 1:2.

**“redemption”** This means “to buy back” (cf. Rom. 3:24). This was a metaphor from the slave market. It is the major OT concept of salvation.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: RANSOM/REDEEM

#### I. OLD TESTAMENT

A. There are primarily two Hebrew legal terms which convey this concept.

1. **Gaal**, which basically means “to free” by means of a price paid. A form of the term go’el adds to the concept, a personal intermediary, usually a family member (i.e. kinsman redeemer). This cultural aspect of the right to buy back objects, animals, land (cf. Lev. 25,27), or relatives (cf. Ruth 4:15; Isa. 29:22) is transferred theologically to YHWH’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt (cf. Exod. 6:6; 15:13; Ps. 74:2; 77:15; Jer. 31:11). He becomes “the redeemer” (cf. Job 19:25; Ps. 19:14; 78:35; Prov. 23:1; Isa. 44:14; 43:14; 44:6,24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7,26; 54:5,8; 59:20; 60:16; 63:16; Jer. 50:34).

2. **Padah**, which basically means “to deliver” or “to rescue”
   a. the redemption of the first born, Exod. 13:13,14 and Num. 18:15-17
   b. physical redemption is contrasted with spiritual redemption, Ps. 49:7,8,15
   c. YHWH will redeem Israel from their sin and rebellion, Ps. 130:7-8

B. The theological concept involves three related items

1. There is a need, a bondage, a forfeiting, an imprisonment
   a. physical
   b. social
   c. spiritual (cf. Ps. 130:8)
2. A price must be paid for freedom, release, and restoration
   a. of the nation, Israel (cf. Deut. 7:8)
   b. of the individual (cf. Job 19:25-27; 33:28)
3. Someone must act as intermediary and benefactor. In *gaal* this one is usually a family member or near kin (i.e. *go’el*).
4. YHWH often describes Himself in familial terms
   a. Father
   b. Husband
   c. Near Kin
Redemption was secured through YHWH’s personal agency; a price was paid, and redemption was achieved!

II. NEW TESTAMENT

A. There are several terms used to convey the theological concept.
   1. *Agoraz* (cf. I Cor. 6:20; 7:23; II Pet. 2:1; Rev. 5:9; 14:34). This is a commercial term which reflects a price paid for something. We are blood-bought people who do not control our own lives. We belong to Christ.
   2. *Exagoraz* (cf. Galatians 3:13; 4:5; Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5). This is also a commercial term. It reflects Jesus’ substitutionary death on our behalf. Jesus bore the “curse” of a performance-based law (i.e. Mosaic Law), which sinful humans could not accomplish. He bore the curse (cf. Deut. 21:23) for us all! In Jesus, God’s justice and love merge into full forgiveness, acceptance, and access!
   3. *Lu* (cf. Lutron, “a price paid” (cf. Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45). These are powerful words from Jesus’ own mouth concerning the purpose of His coming, to be the Savior of the world by paying a sin-debt He did not owe (cf. John 1:29).
   b. *Lutro*, “to release”
      (1) to redeem Israel, Luke 24:21
      (2) to give Himself to redeem and purify a people, Titus 2:14
      (3) to be a sinless substitute, I Pet. 1:18-19
   c. *Lutrosis*, “redemption, deliverance, or liberation”
      (1) Zacharias’ prophecy about Jesus, Luke 1:68
      (2) Anna’s praise to God for Jesus, Luke 2:38
      (3) Jesus’ better, once offered sacrifice, Heb. 9:12
   4. *Apolytrasis*
      a. redemption at the Second Coming (cf. Acts 3:19-21)
         (1) Luke 21:28
         (2) Romans 8:23
         (3) Ephesians 1:14; 4:30
         (4) Hebrews 9:15
      b. redemption in Christ’s death
         (1) Romans 3:24
         (2) I Corinthians 1:30
         (3) Ephesians 1:7
         (4) Colossians 1:14
   5. *Antilytron* (cf. I Tim. 2:6). This is a crucial text (as is Titus 2:14), which links release to Jesus’ substitutionary death on the cross. He is the one and only acceptable sacrifice; the one who dies for “all” (cf. John 1:29; 3:16-17; 4:42; I Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; II Pet. 3:9; I John 2:2; 4:14).

B. The theological concept in the NT implies
   1. Mankind is enslaved to sin (cf. John 8:34; Rom. 3:10-18; 6:23).
2. Mankind’s bondage to sin has been revealed by the OT Mosaic Law (cf. Gal. 3) and Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matt. 5-7). Human performance has become a death sentence (cf. Col. 2:14).

3. Jesus, the sinless lamb of God, has come and died in our place (cf. John 1:29; II Cor. 5:21). We have been purchased from sin so that we might serve God (cf. Rom. 6).

4. By implication both YHWH and Jesus are “near kin” who act on our behalf. This continues the familial metaphors (i.e. father, husband, son, brother, near kin).

5. Redemption was not a price paid to Satan (i.e. Medieval theology), but the reconciliation of God’s word and God’s justice with God’s love and full provision in Christ. At the cross peace was restored, human rebellion was forgiven, the image of God in mankind is now fully functional again in intimate fellowship!

6. There is still a future aspect of redemption (cf. Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:14; 4:30), which involves our resurrection bodies and physical intimacy with the Triune God.

1:31 This is a quote from Jer. 9:23-24. Paul repeats this quote in II Cor. 10:17. “Lord” in the Jeremiah passage refers to YHWH, but here to Jesus! This is a common NT technique to affirm the deity of Jesus.

We do not boast in and of ourselves, but of Him in whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily! These two quotes of Jeremiah show a connection between I Cor. 1-4 and II Cor. 10-13. The opponents are Jewish sophists who boasted of the rhetorical style (cf. Bruce W. Winter, Philo and Paul Among the Sophists).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is God’s calling emphasized so often by Paul?
2. How can God call sinful people “holy”?
3. What is the purpose of spiritual gifts in the church?
4. Why was the church at Corinth so factious?
5. How does v. 12 relate to modern denominations?
6. Is Paul putting down baptism in v. 17?
7. Why did the Jews reject the gospel?
8. Why did the Greeks reject the gospel?
9. Why has God chosen to use weak people with no social or intellectual standing to spread the gospel?
I CORINTHIANS 2

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UBS⁴</th>
<th>NKJV</th>
<th>NRSV</th>
<th>TEV</th>
<th>NJB</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proclaiming Christ Crucified</td>
<td>Christ Crucified</td>
<td>The Message About Christ on the Cross</td>
<td>The True Wisdom and the False (1:17-3:4)</td>
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<td>The Revelation by God’s Spirit</td>
<td>Spiritual Wisdom</td>
<td>Spiritual Wisdom</td>
<td>God’s Wisdom</td>
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<td>2:13-16</td>
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READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS ON I CORINTHIANS 2:1-16

BACKGROUND

A. There were some in the church at Corinth who were very intellectually oriented (i.e. first century rhetorical traditions). Into this context of overemphasized human knowledge and performance, Paul begins in chapter 1 with an emphasis on the grace of God (as he also does in Eph. 2:1-10). Yet, he admitted that wisdom and knowledge are also among the gifts of God. In chapter 2, Paul continues on this theme by emphasizing revelation versus human discovery. As the Corinthians had no claim on the knowledge they possessed, they equally had no claim on the means of attaining that knowledge.
B. Basically, chapter 2:1-16 is an amplification of chapter 1:18-25.

C. Verses 10-16 can be understood as referring to several categories of spiritual insight or revelation. God has acted so as to reveal Himself to us (i.e. revelation, vv. 10-12); He has chosen certain men to record and explain His acts (i.e. inspiration, v.13), and finally the Spirit enables Bible readers to understand the main truths of His revelation (i.e. illumination, vv. 14-16).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT 2:1-5**

1And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. 2For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. 3I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, 4and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.

2:1 “brethren” This designation for believers is often used by Paul, consciously or subconsciously, to denote the next step in presentation of a truth or the presentation of a new truth (cf. 2:1; 3:1; 4:6; 7:24; 10:1; 11:33; 12:1; 14:6,20,35; 15:1,31,50,58; 16:15). See fuller note at 2:6.

- **NASB** “I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom”
- **NKJV** “did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom”
- **NRSV** “I did not come proclaiming...in lofty words or wisdom”
- **TEV** “I did not use long words and great learning”
- **NJB** “I did not come with any brilliance of oratory or wise argument”

Paul is expressing the difference between himself and the false over-emphasis on knowledge and rhetoric of some of the Corinthian church leaders. Apollos, not Paul, was the polished rhetorician and they wanted Paul to simulate his public speaking style. For “superiority” (huperche) see Special Topic following.

**SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL’S USE OF “HUPER” COMPOUNDS**

Paul had a special fondness for creating new words using the Greek PREPOSITION huper, which basically means “over” or “upper.” When used with the GENITIVE (ABLATIVE) it means “in behalf of.” It can also mean “about” or “concerning,” like peri (cf. II Cor. 8:23; II Thess. 2:1. When used with the ACCUSATIVE it means “above,” “over,” or “beyond” (cf. A. T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research, pp. 625-633). When Paul wanted to accentuate a concept he used this PREPOSITION in a compound.

Here is a list of Paul’s special use of this PREPOSITION in compounds.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A.</th>
<th><strong>Hapax legomenon</strong> (a word used only once in the NT)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td><strong>Huperakmos</strong>, one past the prime of life, I Cor. 7:36</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td><strong>Huperauxan</strong>, to increase exceedingly, II Thess. 1:3</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td><strong>Huperbain</strong>, to overstep or transgress, I Thess. 4:6</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td><strong>Huperkeina</strong>, beyond, II Cor. 10:16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td><strong>Huperekteina</strong>, overextend, II Cor. 10:14</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td><strong>Huperentugchan</strong>, to intercede, Rom. 8:26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td><strong>Hupernikao</strong>, to be abundantly victorious, Rom. 8:37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td><strong>Hyperpleonaz</strong>, to be in exceeding abundance, I Tim. 1:14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td><strong>Huperapso</strong>, to exalt supremely, Phil. 2:9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td><strong>Huperphrone</strong>, to have lofty thoughts, Rom. 12:3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B. Words used only in Paul’s writings.

1. *Huperairomai*, to exalt oneself, II Cor. 12:7; II Thess. 2:4
2. *Huperballontas*, above measure, exceedingly, II Cor. 11:23; (ADVERB only here, but VERB in II Cor. 3:10; 9:14; Eph. 1:19; 2:7; 3:19)
3. *Huperbolē*, an overshooting, an extraordinary amount, Rom. 7:13; I Cor. 12:31; II Cor. 1:8; 4:7,17; 22:7; Gal. 1:13
4. *Huperekperissou*, beyond all measure, Eph. 3:20; I Thess. 3:10; 5:13
5. *Huperlian*, in the highest degree or pre-eminently, II Cor. 11:5; 12:11
6. *Huperochō*, prominence, excellence, I Cor. 2:1; I Tim. 2:2
7. *Huperperisseu̇s*, to super abound, Rom. 5:20 (MIDDLE VOICE, to be abundantly filled, overflowing, II Cor. 7:4)

C. Words used by Paul and rarely in other NT writers

1. *Huperaṅ̇os*, far above, Eph. 1:21; 4:10; and Heb. 9:5)
2. *Huperechō*, excellence, pre-eminence, Rom. 13:1; Phil. 2:3; 3:8; 4:7; I Pet. 2:13

Paul was a man of great passion; when things or people were good, they were very good and when they were bad, they were very bad. This PREPOSITION allowed him to express his superlative feelings about sin, self, Christ and the Gospel.

NASB, NKJV  “the testimony of God”
NRSV, NJB  “mystery of God”
TEV  “God’s secret truth”

There is a Greek manuscript variant here. The Greek term *musterion* (mystery) appears in MSS P66, Ï’, A, and C. The word *marturion* (testimony) appears in the ancient manuscripts Ï², B, C, D. If it is “mystery,” this concept is described in 2:7; Eph. 2:11-3:13; and Col. 1:26-27, which is the union of Jews and Greeks through Christ into one family (i.e. the church). If it is “testimony,” it is linking back to 1:6, which would be synonymous with “the gospel.” The Untied Bible Societies’ Greek NT fourth edition gives “mystery” a “B” rating (i.e. almost certain).

The term “mystery” was used often in the first century Koine papyri found in Egypt in reference to the new initiate to secret knowledge available only to a special group (i.e. mystery religions). Paul takes this technical term and uses it in connection with those who have the Spirit (i.e. believers) and those who do not. There is no distinction at this point in Paul’s presentation between believers (cf. 3:1). All are considered “the mature” (cf. 2:6).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE MYSTERY

Paul uses this term in several different ways:

1. A partial hardening of Israel to allow Gentiles to be included. This influx of Gentiles will work as a mechanism for Jews to accept Jesus as the Christ of prophecy (cf. Rom. 11:25-32).
2. The gospel made known to the nations, telling them that they are all included in Christ and through Christ (cf. Rom. 16:25-27; Col. 2:2).
3. Believers’ new bodies at the Second Coming (cf. I Cor. 15:5-57; I Thess. 4:13-18).
4. The summing up of all things in Christ (cf. Eph. 1:8-11).
5. The Gentiles and Jews are fellow-heirs (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13).
6. Intimacy of the relationship between Christ and the Church described in marriage terms (cf. Eph. 5:22-33).
7. Gentiles included in the covenant people and indwelt by the Spirit of Christ so as to produce Christlike maturity, that is, restore the marred image of God in man (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 6:5,11-13; 8:21; 9:6; Col. 1:26-28).
8. The end time Anti-Christ (cf. II Thess. 2:1-11).
9. An early church summary of the mystery found in I Tim. 3:16.
2:2 “I” In verses 1-5 Paul seems to be comparing himself with (1) his previous presentation of the gospel at Athens where he used Greek logic, even quoted their poets (i.e. first suggested by Origen, cf. Acts 17:16-34) or (2) his presentation of the gospel versus those at Corinth who spoke with human wisdom and human rhetoric about spiritual matters.

“Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE (cf. 1:23). There are two theological aspects revealed in this PARTICIPLE:

1. the PERFECT tense reveals that Jesus remains the crucified One. When we see Him, He will still have the scars. They have become His badge of glory (see note at 1:23).
2. the PASSIVE voice reveals that Jesus’ death was (1) by the Father’s agency and was His eternal plan (cf. Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29) for redemption (cf. Isa. 53:10) or (2) by human sin and rebellion demanded a sacrifice (cf. 5:14-15,18-19).

The message about Christ’s death on humanity’s behalf is the central message of Paul’s theology. The concept of a suffering and dying Messiah was foreign to Jewish thought. This aspect of the gospel must have initially troubled Paul. How could YHWH’s anointed One be cursed by God (cf. Deut. 21:23). Yet, this was part of the OT revelation (cf. Gen. 3:15; Ps. 22; Isa. 53). Jesus, the sinless Son of God, died in our place (cf. Rom. 5:18-19; II Cor. 5:21). He became the curse for us (cf. Gal. 3:13). Christ crucified for all is God’s hidden mystery (cf. Col. 1:26-28; 2:2-4).

2:3 “I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling” Paul is showing us his inadequacies: (1) he was fearful because of his rough treatment at Philippi, Thessalonika, and Berea (cf. Acts 16-17); (2) he was disappointed at the results and possibly his methodology used in Athens (i.e. Origen’s view from Acts 17:22-34); (3) his physical problem, probably eye trouble, caused him great difficulty (cf. II Cor. 12:7-9); and (4) Paul’s lack of faith and discouragement while at Corinth. Christ had to appear to Paul several times to encourage him (cf. Acts 18:9-10; 23:11; 27:23). His words and his physical condition were not what turned people to faith in Christ, but the gospel’s appeal and the Spirit’s power (cf. v. 4; 1:17; II Cor. 10:10).

It is helpful to me as a minister of Jesus Christ to realize
1. Jesus had His own discouraging moments (i.e. Gethsemane)
2. the Apostles often did not fully understand Jesus’ teachings
3. Paul felt fearful and weak.

We must always acknowledge the weakness of the flesh yet also the tremendous power of the gospel and the Spirit! God’s character and provisions are magnified through human weakness (cf. 1:26-29; II Cor. 12).

Paul’s weaknesses are these very things that the false teachers in II Cor. 10-13 attacked Paul for. They magnified their strengths (i.e. education, social position, spiritual giftedness, speaking skills). Apparently Paul’s writings were more rhetorically structured (i.e. II Cor. 10-13) and powerful than his oral messages. See Special Topic: Weakness at II Cor. 12:9.

2:4

NASB “not by persuasive words of human wisdom”
NKJV “not with persuasive words of human wisdom”
NRSV “not with persuasive words of wisdom”
TEV “not delivered with skillful words of human wisdom”
NJB “not meant to convince by philosophical argument”

There are many variants of this phrase in the Greek manuscripts.
1. The first problem relates to the rare adjective peithois (cf. MSS P, N, A, B, C, D), which is not found anywhere else in the Septuagint, Koine papyri, or the NT.
2. Some think the variants were caused by scribes who were unfamiliar with this adjective. They may have slightly changed its form to peithoi, which means “persuasion.”
4. In some manuscripts the term “words” (i.e. logos or logos) is missing (cf. MSS P, F, G and the Greek text used by Chrysostom).

It seems best from the general context to link this phrase with Paul’s rejection of human rhetoric, logic, and wisdom (cf. 1:17; 2:1,13). However, the exact meaning of the word piethois remains uncertain.

“in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” This refers to the changed lives of the Corinthian converts. It also may relate to the presence of confirming signs that often attended Paul’s preaching of the gospel (cf. Acts 13:11; 14:10; 16:18,28; 19:11-12; 20:10). See note on capital or lower case “s” spirit at 2:11.

2:5 For Paul, mankind’s only hope was in the grace of the Father, the finished work of the Son, and the power of the Spirit. In other words, God Himself is the only true foundation for salvation. God’s revelation, not human discovery; God’s wisdom, not human eloquence or logic, are the only source of confidence.
For Paul, God’s gospel and fallen mankind’s appropriate convenantal responses (i.e. repentance and faith) are the keys to eternal life.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:6-13**

6 Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; 7 but we speak God’s wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; 8 the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; 9 but just as it is written, “THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND WHICH HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.” 10 For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. 11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, 13 which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.

2:6 “Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature” Paul may (1) be using sarcasm here relating to the Corinthians’ overemphasis on human wisdom and their view of their own “maturity” (cf. George E. Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament, pp. 383-385) or (2) this may relate to the baby believers of 3:1-4 which Paul relates to the worldly factious spirit in the church. In Eph. 4:13 this very term, teleios, describes mature believers as over against children (i.e. literally “infants” Eph. 4:14). Notice also 14:20; Phil. 3:15 and Heb. 5:14.

“a wisdom, however, not of this age” This is Paul asserting the Jewish concept of two ages: the current evil age, dominated by fallen humanity, and the age of righteousness to come, dominated by the Messiah. Human earthly wisdom is basically presuppositional and changes from culture to culture and period to period. See Special Topic on the concept of the two Jewish ages at 1:20.

“nor of the rulers of this age” It is possible that this phrase refers to angelic ranks or Gnostic aeons (cf. Rom. 8:38-39; Eph. 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:10,15). It seems more in line with this context to interpret these as human leaders (cf. v. 8; Acts 3:17; Rom. 13:1-2). It is so hard to know if Paul is speaking purely of human logic or the demonic activity behind human logic; both are present. Humans are influenced because of their fallenness (cf. Rom. 12:2; Gal. 1:14; Eph. 2:2), but also they are influenced by the presence of supernatural evil (i.e. angelic and demonic, cf. II Cor. 4:4; Dan. 10).

**NASB**

“who are passing away”

**NKJV**

“who are coming to nothing”

**NRSV**

“who are doomed to perish”

**TEV**

“powers that are losing their power”

**NJB**

“who will not last long now”

This is a PRESENT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE of the term which means “to be made inoperative” (cf. 1:28; Rom. 6:6). Paul uses this term twenty-seven times. If this refers to human authorities, they will die. If this refers to angelic authorities, this age will pass away into the new age of righteousness. See Special Topic: Katargeō at 1:28.

2:7 “but” This is a strong adversative “alla.” Paul’s wisdom and power were from God.

“God’s wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom” This wisdom is from God (i.e. Theos is fronted, or placed first, in the Greek text for emphasis); this is hidden wisdom (i.e. PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE); this mystery has now been clearly manifested in Christ (cf. Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:3-5; Col. 1:26). This uncovered secret (i.e. the gospel) emphasizes God’s revelation versus human discovery (cf. Rom. 16:25-26; Eph. 1:9-10; 3:3-5; Col. 1:26; 2:2-3). The most comprehensive definition of this mystery is that Jew and Gentile are united in one new people of God (i.e. the church, cf. Eph. 2:11:-3:13). See Special Topic: Mystery at 2:1.

**NASB**

“which God predestined”

**NKJV**

“which God ordained”

**NRSV**

“which God decreed”

**TEV**

“which he had already chosen”

**NJB**

“which God predestined”

The definitive passages on predestination in the NT are Rom. 8:28-30; Rom. 9; and Eph. 1:3-14. These texts obviously stress that God is sovereign. He is in total control of all things, including human history. There is a preset divine redemption plan being worked out in time. However, this plan is not arbitrary or selective. It is based not only on God’s sovereignty and foreknowledge, but also on His unchanging character of love, mercy, and undeserved grace.

We must be careful of our western (American) individualism or our evangelical zeal coloring this wonderful truth. We must also guard against being polarized into the historical, theological conflicts between Augustine versus Pelegius or Calvinism versus Arminianism.

Predestination is not a doctrine meant to limit God’s love, grace, and mercy, nor to exclude some from the gospel. It is meant to strengthen believers by molding their world view. God’s love is for all mankind (cf. I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9). God is in control of all things. Who or what can separate us from Him (cf. Rom. 8:31-39)? Predestination forms one of two ways to view life. God views all history as present. Humans are time-bound. Our perspective and mental abilities are limited. There is no contradiction between God’s sovereignty and mankind’s free will. It is a covenantal structure. This is another example of biblical truth given in paradoxical, dialectical, tension-filled pairs. Biblical doctrines are presented from different perspectives. They often appear paradoxical. The truth is a balance between the seemingly opposite pairs. We must not remove the tension by picking one of the truths. We must not isolate any biblical truth into a compartment by itself.

It is also important to add that the goal of election is not only heaven when we die, but Christlikeness now (cf. Eph. 1:4; 2:10)! We were chosen to be “holy and blameless.” God chooses to change us so that others may see the change and respond by faith to God in Christ. Predestination is not a personal privilege, but a covenantal responsibility! We are saved to serve!

“before the ages” The phrase “before the ages” is an OT idiom referring to eternity past. It corresponds to the Hebrew term ‘olam, which can mean eternity past or future. It also can denote a limited period of time. It must be translated in context. Its translation is related to its object (i.e. God, OT covenant promises, earthly life, the wicked, etc.)

This is also true for the NT Greek translations aiōn, aiōnios, eis ton aiōna, which follow the Septuagint’s translation of ‘olam. God is eternal, but physical things (i.e. the heavens and earth) will pass away (cf. II Pet. 3:10). As with all words, but especially ‘olam and aiōn, the context is crucial and determines the translation.

For interesting discussions of “eternality” see Robert B. Girdlestone’s Synonyms of the Old Testament, pp. 312-319 and F. F. Bruce’s, Answers to Questions, pp. 202-203.

“to our glory” See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY

The biblical concept of “glory” is difficult to define. Believers’ glory is that they understand the gospel and glory in God, not in themselves (cf. 1:29-31; Jer. 9:23-24).

In the OT the most common Hebrew word for “glory” (khbd) was originally a commercial term relating to a pair of scales (“to be heavy”). That which was heavy was valuable or had intrinsic worth. Often the concept of brightness was added to the word to express God’s majesty (cf. Exod. 19:16-18; 24:17; Isa. 60:1-2). He alone is worthy and honorable. He is too brilliant for fallen mankind to behold (cf. Exod 33:17-23; Isa. 6:5). YHWH can only be truly known through Christ (cf. Jer. 1:14; Matt. 17:2; Heb. 1:3; James 2:1).

The term “glory” is somewhat ambiguous: (1) it may be parallel to “the righteousness of God”; (2) it may refer to the “holiness” or “perfection” of God; or (3) it could refer to the image of God in which mankind was created (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6), but which was later marred through rebellion (cf. Gen. 3:1-22). It is first used of YHWH’s presence with His people during the wilderness wandering period in Exod. 16:7,10; Lev. 9:23; and Num. 14:10.

2:8 “if” A. T. Robertson, in Word Pictures in the New Testament, p. 85, calls this a SECOND CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence called “contrary to fact.” A false statement is made to highlight a false conclusion, “If the rulers of this age had understood (i.e. PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE), which they did not, then they would not have crucified (i.e. AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE) the Lord of glory, which they did.”

“the Lord of glory” This phrase is used of YHWH in Acts 7:2; Eph. 1:17. A similar phrase is used of Jesus in James 2:1. This is another example of NT authors using a title of YHWH for Jesus and thereby asserting His equality with YHWH (cf. II Cor. 4:6).
**2:9 “it is written”** This is a characteristic phrase (i.e. PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE) of introducing an OT quote. Clement of Rome (i.e. The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians XXXIV), writing in A.D. 95, says it is a quote from the Septuagint of Isa. 64:4 or possibly combined with 65:17 (cf. Isa. 52:15 and Jer. 3:16). Origen and Jerome thought Paul was quoting from a noncanonical book called *Apocalypse of Elijah*, which has almost completely been lost. God has acted in ways that human beings could not ever have imagined (cf. Isa. 55:8-9), but now through the gospel and the Spirit they can by faith! What a wonderful promise!

**“heart”** See Special Topic at 14:25.

**2:10 “For to us God revealed them through the Spirit”** The Father, through the Spirit, has unveiled (i.e. *apokalupto*, AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE) this hidden mystery in Christ. All wisdom is in Christ (cf. 1:18-25,30).

Notice the Triune God in vv. 8-10: the crucified Lord of glory (i.e. Jesus), God (i.e. the Father), and the Spirit.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: THE TRINITY

Notice the activity of all three Persons of the Trinity. The term “trinity,” first coined by Tertullian, is not a biblical word, but the concept is pervasive.

1. the Gospels
   a. Matthew 3:16-17; 28:19 (and parallels)
   b. John 14:26
3. Paul
   a. Romans 1:4-5; 5:1,5; 8:1-4,8-10
   b. I Corinthians 2:8-10; 12:4-6
   c. II Corinthians 1:21; 13:14
   d. Galatians 4:4-6
   e. Ephesians 1:3-14,17; 2:18; 3:14-17; 4:4-6
   f. I Thessalonians 1:2-5
   g. II Thessalonians 2:13
   h. Titus 3:4-6
4. Peter - I Peter 1:2
5. Jude - vv. 20-21

It is hinted at in the OT

1. Use of plurals for God
   a. Name *Elohim* is plural, but when used of God always has a singular verb
   c. “One” in the Shema of Deuteronomy 6:4 is plural (as it is in Gen. 2:24; Ezek. 37:17)
2. The angel of the Lord as a visible representative of deity
   b. Exodus 3:2,4; 13:21; 14:19
   c. Judges 2:1; 6:22-23; 13:3-22
   d. Zechariah 3:1-2
3. God and Spirit are separate, Genesis 1:1-2; Psalm 104:30; Isa. 63:9-11; Ezek. 37:13-14
4. God (YHWH) and Messiah (Adon) are separate, Psalm 45:6-7; 110:1; Zechariah 2:8-11; 10:9-12
5. Messiah and Spirit are separate, Zechariah 12:10
6. All three mentioned in Isa. 48:16; 61:1

The deity of Jesus and the personality of the Spirit caused problems for the strict, monotheistic, early believers:

1. Tertullian - subordinated the Son to the Father
2. Origen - subordinated the divine essence of the Son and the Spirit
3. Arius - denied deity to the Son and Spirit
4. Monarchianism - believed in a successive manifestation of God
   The trinity is a historically developed formulation informed by the biblical material
   1. The full deity of Jesus, equal to the Father, affirmed in 325 A.D. by the Council of Nicea
   2. The full personality and deity of the Spirit equal to the Father and Son was affirmed by the Council of Constantinople (381 A.D.)
   3. The doctrine of the trinity is fully expressed in Augustine’s work De Trinitate

   There is truly mystery here. But the NT seems to affirm one divine essence with three eternal personal manifestations.

“for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God” The emphasis here is on the full personality of the Spirit (cf. Isa. 63:10; Eph. 4:30). The Spirit is our only means of knowing God (cf. Rom. 8:26-27; 11:33-36). This is the continuing emphasis of the entire context that human means are unable to know God or the things (i.e. plans) of God. “Deep” is a metaphor of that which is (1) profound as opposed to shallow or (2) hidden beyond mankind’s reach or discovery. The Spirit’s work is crucial in conviction, salvation, and Christlike living (cf. John 16:7-14).

   The phrase “the deep things of God” (NKJV) may have been a catchphrase of one of the factions at Corinth. The deep things of God are available to all who exercise faith in Christ. There are no hidden secrets anymore. The gospel is revealed to all who will receive. There are no “deeper things,” no elitism, no exclusivism!

   This wonderful assurance of God’s provision and care was exploited by later Gnostics, who claimed it as a proof-text for special knowledge (ex. the non-canonical and gnostic book of Ascension of Isaiah).

2:11-12 This is an example of the previously stated truth. Notice the first and third uses of “spirit” in this verse have a little “s,” while the second use of “Spirit” has a capital “S.” In the Greek text there is no way to distinguish capitals; therefore, this is the interpretation of the translators. A capital “S” would refer to the Holy Spirit and a small “s” to the human spirit (cf. 6:18; Rom. 8:16; II Cor. 2:13; 7:13; 12:18; Gal. 6:18; Phil. 4:23). This may be an allusion to Prov. 20:27.

2:12 “the spirit of the world” This is a third connotation of the term kosmos (i.e. world), human society organized and functioning without God. Today we would call it “atheistic humanism” (cf. v. 6), also called “spirit of slavery” in Rom. 8:15.

“that we may know the things freely given to us by God” Believers can understand the gospel of Christ and their blessings in Him through the Holy Spirit.

   It is certainly true that in their fallen and temporal state even believers cannot fully, exhaustively know God, but can know and understand everything needed for salvation and godly living through the revelation of the Father, the person and work of the Son, and the illumination of the Spirit. Because we cannot know everything is no excuse not to embrace the clear truths of the Bible and walk in them.

   It is also crucial that believers acknowledge that God’s wisdom has been “freely given” (cf. Rom. 8:32). It is a gift of God which He desires to give to all humans made in His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27), but now through rebellion are estranged from Him. It is not the result of human intelligence, social standing, or ingenuity, but God’s love and mercy through Christ’s work and the Spirit’s agency. Since Christ, ignorance is willful! The Holy Spirit brings light, truth, and salvation. The spirit of this world brings darkness, deception, and death.

2:13 “which things we also speak” It is crucial that believers share these God-given truths. They are life and light to a lost and dying world; a loved world which has been redeemed if they will only receive God’s Son, God’s truth! Revelation is primarily redemptive (cf. II Tim. 2:15) and then transformational (cf. II Tim. 3:16-17).

NASB   “in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words”
NKJV   “which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual”
NRSV   “taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual”
TEV    “we do not speak in words taught by human wisdom, but in words taught by the Spirit”
NJB    “in terms learnt from the Spirit, fitting spiritual language to spiritual things”

   This is a very ambiguous phrase for several reasons. Before attempting to sort this out, remember the larger context is the key and not ambiguous details of Greek grammar or philology. The larger context relates to the mature believers (cf. v. 6). It contrasts human wisdom and knowledge with God’s wisdom, which is Christ, and God’s knowledge, which is expressed in the gospel. This is the main truth of chapters 1 and 2.
The Holy Spirit is an indispensable channel of communication (cf. John 16:8-14). He reveals spiritual truths to those who have trusted Christ and received the indwelling Spirit. In some ways Paul’s discussion here is similar to Jesus’ parable of the sower or soils (cf. Matt. 13). The gospel message is understood and responded to by receptive hearers, but rejected by unresponsive hearers.

The term "pneumatikois" can be NEUTER (i.e. spiritual things) or MASCULINE (i.e. spiritual people). Another group of hearers is mentioned in the next verse, "psuchikos" (i.e. the natural or lost person). It is probable that the term in v. 13 refers to spiritual people. This same group is previously mentioned in v. 6 (i.e. "teleiois", the mature or equipped believers) as well as v. 15 (i.e. where they are called "pneumaikos"). There seem to be three groups of people referred to in this context: (1) lost people; (2) saved, but immature believers; and (3) mature believers. There is often no visible difference between # 1 and #2.

If so then how does the Spirit communicate spiritual truths? The PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, "sunkrinontes", is used in the Septuagint for interpreting dreams (cf. Gen. 40:8,16,22; 41:12,15; Jdgs. 7:15; Dan. 5:12; 7:15,16). However, this same Greek word is used only here and in II Cor. 10:12 in the NT having its normal sense of “comparing.” Exactly how the Spirit communicates spiritual truth to spiritual people is ambiguous and because of that we should not become dogmatic or rigid on how to interpret this text. The great truth is that the Holy God seeks and accomplishes communication with fallen humanity (cf. v. 12). God is speaking, are we listening?

There is an interesting article on “Revelation and Scripture” in the *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, pp. 461-462. Here is but one paragraph.

“…For the NT writers, revelation concerns truth. Truth is a function of language. In this way revelation and Scripture are inextricably joined in NT theology. Event and interpretation go together. The NT revelation as it concerns Jesus Christ involves not merely abstract and timeless ethical truths, or the subjective experiences of the disciples, but it has to do with events that are concrete, particular, and actual. The apostolic statement and interpretation of the events is the truth of the matter. The writers intend to convey to the reader what is actually the case—that is, to state what was going on in the things that were happening. Whatever charge may be made against the NT writers as to their religious beliefs, we much recognize that they claim to give us divine revelation expressed in human language (I Cor. 2:13).”

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:14-16**

14But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. 15But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised 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.

This is the opposite of a “spiritual person” referred to in 2:6,13 and 3:1. The term (i.e. "psuchikos") is used several times in the NT where it refers to life on earth; life lived in relation to the five senses only (i.e. "bios", life vs. "zo", life). The "ikos" ending means “characterized by” (cf. 3:3). It then could mean earthly vs. heavenly or unspiritual vs. spiritual (cf. I Cor. 15:44,46; James 3:15; and Jude 19).

"does not accept"  
"does not receive"  
"cannot receive"  
"has no room for"

This Greek negated term means “rejects,” “refuses to accept,” “cannot comprehend,” or “cannot make sense of.” This term without negation is often used of welcoming a guest. This term (i.e. "dechomai", cf. Luke 8:13; Acts 8:14; 11:1; 17:11; II Cor. 11:4; I Thess. 1:6; James 1:21) is synonymous with "lambanō" (cf. John 1:12; 12:48; 14:17). It does not relate to human ignorance, but to the incapacity of understanding spiritual truth!

This is the mystery of how/why some who hear the gospel respond and some do not. Is this rejection related to predestination or human volition? The answer is “yes,” but exactly how these two relate is part of the dialectical nature of revelation itself (cf. Phil. 2:12-13). I like what Frank Stagg in *New Testament Theology* says, “in the New Testament, the opposite of election is not non-election, but man’s rejection of God’s salvation” p. 87.
“they are spiritually appraised” This is a legal term that speaks of the preliminary exhaustive examination before a trial (cf. Luke 23:14; Acts 12:19; 24:8; 25:26; 28:18) or to examine something carefully (i.e. the Scriptures, cf. Acts 17:11; food, cf. I Cor. 10:25,27). This same word occurs twice more in verse 15.

Believers endued with the Spirit are able to judge appropriately the things in both the physical and spiritual realms (cf. 1:22-25 and 2:2). However, the unspiritual of verse 14 cannot properly discern spiritual things, spiritual truths, or spiritual people.

“yet he himself is appraised by no one” This, of course, is the generic MASCULINE form. Believers cannot be judged, yea even truly understood, by unbelievers (cf. 4:3-4). This may be a reference to some of Paul’s enemies at Corinth (cf. 9:3). It is the indwelling Spirit who brings light through the gospel to reality, not this age’s reality or physical reality, but God’s reality!

2:16 This is an allusion to Isa. 40:13 in the Septuagint. The grammatical form of this question expects a “no” answer. This continues the contextual emphasis on the need of the Spirit for humans to hear the gospel and to understand spiritual truth. This context and John 14-16 are crucial in understanding the work of the Spirit of God.

Without the Spirit fallen humanity engages in speculations, myths, even demonically inspired false truths! Oh, the tragedy of world religions and human philosophy.

“But we have the mind of Christ” The pronoun “we” is emphatic! This could refer to (1) Paul and his companions; (2) Christian preachers; or (3) mature Christians. This does not mean believers know everything Christ knows, but that the Spirit has opened our minds to His perspective, His priorities, His heart (cf. Rom. 12:2; Phil 2:5).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Define Paul’s use of the word, “mystery” in this context.
2. What did Paul mean that he came in fear and great trembling to Corinth?
3. What was the evidence that Paul’s preaching was empowered by God?
4. Why are the New Testament authors reluctant to describe heaven or hell in detail?
5. Explain the difference between “revelation,” “inspiration,” and “illumination.”
6. List the three distinct ways Paul uses the term “spirit” in this chapter.
7. List the four distinct ways that Paul uses the term, “wisdom,” in this chapter.
8. Look up v. 13 in several English translations. What do you think this verse teaches?
I CORINTHIANS 3

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UBS⁴</th>
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READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO I CORINTHIANS 3:1-23

A. In this chapter, Paul continues to develop the characterization of the Corinthian Christians as immature as in chapter 2.

B. The personality-focused factions that are mentioned in chapter 1 are mentioned again specifically in chapter 3. This shows that chapters 1-3 are a sustained argument about human wisdom and Christian leadership.
C. Note the three groups.
1. natural man, 2:14
2. spiritual man, 3:1
3. babes in Christ, 3:1

D. Verses 10-17 have long been viewed as describing individual, carnal Christians. This is possible by comparing the larger context of 1:12 through 3:4-5. Another evidence for this view would be that Paul is addressing the church (PLURAL “you”) in vv. 1 and 16. The recurrent use of “each man,” “no man,” “any man” in vv. 10,11,12,13, 14,15, 17,18 also gives credence to this interpretation. It does not specifically say “leaders” although v. 10 obviously refers to Apollos.

However, it is also possible to relate this text to church leaders (cf. v. 10). The factious groups do not refer to all Corinthian Christians (i.e. mature of 2:6), just some of them (i.e. “men of flesh, infants in Christ, 3:1). It is the leaders of these factious groups that Paul is comparing to himself and Apollos in 3:6-9. The immediate context relates vv. 10-15 to leaders, to how they use their spiritual gifts in serving the church. This is the thrust of the warning of v. 17.

It is difficult to decide between the two views: (1) the NT does not discuss the spiritual status and consequences of carnal Christians and (2) the “destruction” of v. 17 is not clarified. Verses 15 and 17 must be held in tension. All the “ifs” in this context are FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentences which are assumed true for the purposes of the author. Verse 14 assumes they are true believers, while v. 15 assumes some will suffer the loss of all reward. The term for “test” in v. 13 implies a test resulting in approval. However, the context implies that Paul is accusing them of not understanding the gospel; of being unspiritual, jealous, and factious.

It seems best to me not to relate this text to all Christians, but also, neither to restrict it to leaders. This text specifically relates to those who promote factions and divisions within the church. All believers will give an account to God of their service to or damage to His body, the church (cf. II Cor. 5:10; Gal. 5:10).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:1-4

1And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. 2I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, 3for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? 4For when one says, “I am of Paul,” and another, “I am of Apollos,” are you not mere men?


“could not speak to you” This is an AORIST INDICATIVE and an AORIST INFINITIVE, which refers to Paul’s initial preaching at Corinth.

“as to spiritual men”

NASB
NKJV, NRSV “as to spiritual people”
TEV “to people who have the Spirit”
NJB “as spiritual people”

To whom is Paul addressing these verses: (1) all the believers or (2) the spiritually immature (i.e. the factions cf. v. 4)? The answer to this question involves how one interprets 2:6. Were there some Spirit-led, mature believers in the Corinthian church or were all of them immature?

“but” This is the strong adversative alla. There is a contrast between the “mature” of 2:6 (i.e. spiritual men) and the “men of flesh” in 3:1-4. Both groups have the Spirit (i.e. are Christians), but the first is characterized by the Spirit, while the second group is characterized by the world.

“men of flesh”

NASB
NKJV “as to carnal”
NRSV “as people of the flesh”
TEV “as though you belonged to this world”
NJB “as people still living by your natural inclinations”
This is “sarkinos” in Greek. The inos ending means “made of” or “derived from” (e.g. “hearts of flesh,” cf. II Cor. 3:3) so this would mean “made of flesh.” Paul uses the word “flesh” in several different ways. This context (i.e. “as to infants in Christ”) seems to use it of believers who have the Spirit, but walk after the ways of the world. This is not Paul’s flesh vs. Spirit (cf. Rom. 8:1-11), but a category of believers. If this is true this context is one of the few places in the NT that this distinction is made. Here is the tragedy of salvation without sanctification. Claiming Christ as Savior, but not living as if Christ is Lord. If this appalling spiritual condition is characterized by jealousy, strife, and a factious spirit, what of the modern church? Oh, the tragedy of “baby Christians” to the Kingdom of God and the heart of the King!

□ “as to infants in Christ” Every believer starts as a baby Christian. There is no shame in this. This is the origin of the familial metaphor derived from the concept of being “born again” (cf. John 3:3; II Cor. 5:17; I Pet. 1:3,23), but we must not stay infants!

3:2 “I gave you milk to drink” This is a continuing metaphor of the new Christian as being a brand new creature characterized as a child (cf. Heb. 5:12-14; I Pet. 2:2). Tertullian and Hippolytus tell us that the early church gave a glass of milk to the new converts at their first communion as a symbol of this very truth.

□ “for you were not yet able to receive it” By the time Paul wrote this letter, many months had passed. Although it is appropriate to be a baby Christian at the beginning of the Christian life, it is a tragedy to still be a baby Christian after many years. These opening verses of chapter 3 must have hurt the intellectual pride of the leaders of the factions. There is a startling play on the IMPERFECT tense (i.e. “for you were not yet able”) and the PRESENT tense (i.e. “even now you are not able”). The word “able” is the Greek term dunamai, which means the power to act, to accomplish, to function toward a desired result. Believers are saved to serve; they are called to Christlikeness now, not only to heaven later. These “believers” had no Kingdom power, just flesh power, which is, in reality, powerlessness!

3:3
NASB “you are still fleshly”
NKJV “you are still carnal”
NRSV “you are still of the flesh”
TEV “you still live as people of this world live”
NJB “you still live by your natural inclinations”

This is sarkikos in Greek. The ending ikos means “characterized by” (cf. 2:14-15). Paul is making a play on the word sarks (flesh) in vv. 1 and 3 to describe many of the Christians at Corinth as being saved, but very immature. They were selfish, not selfless!

□ “jealousy and strife” These are two of the works of the flesh listed in Gal. 5:19-21. They were evidence that some Corinthian Christians were still carnal.

In some early Greek manuscripts (i.e. P46, D, and the Syriac translations) there is an additional descriptive term, “divisions,” which is also found in Gal. 5:20. It surely does describe the problem at Corinth. However, the term is missing in MSS P11, א, B, C, and P and the Vulgate, Coptic, and Armenian translations. It appears to be a scribal addition (i.e. UBS4 rates its omission as “almost certain”).

□ “are not walking like mere men” The grammatical form of this question expects a “yes” answer. This is the essence of carnality. Maturity is seen by its fruits, both in attitude and actions (cf. Rom. 8:1-11; Matt. 7:1ff).

3:4 This reflects the divisions of 1:10-17.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:5-9</th>
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<tr>
<td>3What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. 4I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. 5So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. 6Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. 7For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building.</td>
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3:5
NASB, NRSV,
NJB “what”
NKJV, TEV “who”

45
The King James version has “who” (i.e. *tis*), following the Greek manuscripts P46, C, D, G, and G. Most modern English translations have “what” (i.e. *ti*), which seems to be purposeful to take the focus off the personalities. This is confirmed by *ti* in verse 7.

“Servants” This is the term (i.e. *diakonos*) from which we get our English word “deacon” (cf. Phil. 1:1; I Tim. 3:8,12). It became one of three Greek words (i.e. *therapeuo*, *hupereueo* and *diakoneo*) used to denote service, help, or ministry (another common term *latreuo* denotes priestly service). See Special Topic: Servant Leadership at 4:1.

“through whom you believed” Christianity begins with a volitional decision to receive (i.e. AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE) God’s gospel, which is Jesus Christ, His teachings, His redeemative actions, His resurrection, and His return. One cannot osmose into salvation. It is not a matter of one’s parents, one’s nation, one’s intelligence. It is a matter of God’s covenant gift and our covenantal response (i.e. repentance, faith, obedience, service, and perseverance). People become Christians by receiving Christ, believing the gospel and walking in Christ. These had done the first two, but lacked the third. The good news is a Person, a truth, and a lifestyle. All three are crucial for maturity.

The Greek term believe (i.e. *pisteu*o) is translated in English as believe, trust, or faith. Its OT counterpart meant “to be firm,” thereby came to be used metaphorically of someone who was trustworthy, loyal, dependable, or faithful. As the implications of this context reveal, humans can only respond to God’s trustworthiness, God’s faithfulness, God’s covenant loyalty. Human faith is a response to God’s faithfulness! The object of faith, the promise of faith is God! His grace, His mercy, His call, His Son, His Spirit, these are the only hope of rebellious mankind.

“even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one” The emphasis here is on the divine element, not human response or performance. But the goal of predestination is holiness (cf. Eph. 1:4; 2:10), not a privileged position, not the exercise of personal privilege or personal preference. Every believer is equipped by God for service in and for the church (cf. I Cor. 12:7,11; Eph. 4:11-13).

The exact identification of “the Lord” is difficult. Usually it is God the Father who calls to salvation. But Paul has used “Lord” several times already in I Corinthians to refer to Jesus (cf. 1:2,3,7,8,9,10; 2:8). However, several times Paul quotes an OT passage where Lord refers to YHWH (cf. 1:31; 2:16; 3:20). The ambiguity is clearly seen in 2:16 where Lord in an OT quote is used in parallel to “the mind of Christ.”

The phrase “to each one” also clearly shows the difficulty in determining who is being addressed. Is it the leaders like Paul and Apollos, the believers in Corinth, or all believers?

1. All believers are called and gifted, but some are also called and gifted to lead (cf. Num. 16:3).
2. Is the context exclusively corporate or is there an individual emphasis (i.e. certain leaders)?

3:6 “planted. . .watered” Paul is using agricultural metaphors. The gospel is the seed (i.e. Matt. 13), but humans sow it and nurture it.

“but God was causing the growth” This is an IMPERFECT tense, which means continual action in past time. Apollos’ and Paul’s actions were one-time events, but God’s actions are continuing (cf. v. 7).

3:8

NASB, NKJV “are one”
NRSV “have a common purpose”
TEV “there is no difference between”
NJB “it is all one”

The question of this brief and ambiguous Greek phrase (i.e. NASB, NKJV) is (1) are all leaders equal or (2) do all leaders share in the same church-growing ministry? The true contrast is not between spiritual gifts (i.e. initial evangelist or disciple, pastor/teacher, etc.), but between God’s work and human instrumentality. The key is God!

“but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor” The concept of rewards is developed in vv. 10-15. In discussing rewards see fuller note at 3:14.

This idea of rewards for service is related to the spiritual principle delineated in v. 13 and Gal. 6:7. We reap what we sow (cf. II Cor. 9:6).

3:9 “we are God’s fellow workers” This refers to Paul and Apollos. This is the Near Eastern metaphor of a family working together in the field (cf. II Cor. 6:1). This verse has three possessive GENITIVES: Paul and Apollos belong to God, as does the church in Corinth.

“you are God’s field, God’s building” This refers to the Corinthian church. Paul is using the metaphors of agricultural growth (cf. Isa. 61:3; Matt. 15:13) and building construction (cf. Eph. 2:20-22; Col. 2:7; I Pet. 2:5) to describe the church. Theologically it must be remembered that the church is a people, not a building.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:10-15

10According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. 11For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. 14If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. 15If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

3:10 “According to the grace of God which was given to me” Paul is asserting his salvation, call, and giftedness as the Apostle to the Gentiles (cf. 15:10).

“a wise master builder” This could also mean “building supervisor.” We get the English word “architect” from this Greek word. In a sense Paul is asserting his authority as the Christ-called Apostle to the Gentiles and the first to share the gospel with these Corinthians.

“I laid a foundation” This refers to Paul’s initial preaching of the gospel at Corinth.

“and another is building on it” Paul started the church, but others contributed to its growth. Apollos is one example (cf. vv. 5-9). However, in context this must also relate to those leaders in the church who were promoting a factious spirit. They may have been leaders of different house churches.

“each man must be careful” This is literally a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE of blepo, “I see.” This is the warning that church leaders will give an account to God of their church work, as will all believers (cf. II Cor. 5:10).

3:11 There are two criteria mentioned in this passage for the church: (1) the leader’s/believer’s message must be Christocentric (cf. vv. 11-12 and Eph. 2:20-21) and (2) the leader’s/believer’s life must be Christlike (cf. vv. 12-15).

3:12 “if” This is the first in a series of FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentences which are assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purpose (cf. vv. 12,14,15,17,18). There were (and are) fruitful and precious leaders and hurtful and destructive leaders!

“any man builds on the foundation” The major interpretive question here is which foundation is Paul speaking about: (1) the gospel, v. 11 or (2) the church at Corinth, v. 10? Is he addressing leaders or believers in general? One’s interpretation of vv. 10-15 must relate to vv. 16-17, which describes the church as a whole as the temple of God.

“gold, silver, precious stones” The emphasis here is on what is durable, beautiful, and costly and cannot be destroyed by fire. Precious stones may be jewels, semi-precious stones, or polished marble stones.

3:13

NASB “will become evident”
NKJV “will become manifest”
NRSV “will become visible”
TEV “will be seen”
NJB “will be shown”

This clear manifestation of believers’ or leaders’ ministry (i.e. motives, actions, purposes) is emphasized by a three-fold repetition of verbs in v. 13.

1. become evident (i.e. phaino)
2. show (i.e. deo)
3. reveal (i.e. apokalupto)

This open display and judgment of believers must relate to the judgment seat of Christ in II Cor. 5:10.
“the day will show it” This refers to the OT “Day of the Lord,” which will involve both glorification and rewards for believers and judgment for unbelievers. However, even believers will also give an account before the judgment seat of Christ (cf. II Cor. 5:10; Matt. 12:36-37; 25:31ff; Rom. 2:16; 14:12; Gal. 5:10; Heb. 13:17).

“fire” See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FIRE

Fire has both positive and negative connotations in Scripture.

A. Positive
   1. warms (cf. Isa. 44:15; John 18:18)
   2. lights (cf. Isa. 50:11; Matt. 25:1-13)
   3. cooks (cf. Exod. 12:8; Isa. 44:15-16; John 21:9)
   4. purifies (cf. Num. 31:22-23; Prov. 17:3; Isa. 1:25; 6:6-8; Jer. 6:29; Mal. 3:2-3)
   5. holiness (cf. Gen. 15:17; Exod. 3:2; 19:18; Ezek. 1:27; Heb. 12:29)
   7. God’s empowering (cf. Acts 2:3)
   8. Protection (cf. Zech. 2:5)

B. Negative
   1. burns (cf. Josh. 6:24; 8:8; 11:11; Matt. 22:7)
   2. destroys (cf. Gen. 19:24; Lev. 10:1-2)
   4. punishment (cf. Gen. 38:24; Lev. 20:14; 21:9; Josh. 7:15)
   5. false eschatological sign (cf. Rev. 13:13)

C. God’s anger against sin is expressed in fire metaphors
   1. His anger burns (cf. Hos. 8:5; Zeph. 3:8)
   2. He pours out fire (cf. Nah. 1:6)
   3. eternal fire (cf. Jer. 15:14; 17:4)

D. Like so many metaphors in the Bible (i.e. leaven, lion) fire can be a blessing or a curse depending on the context.

“will test “ This refers to the refiner’s fire (cf. 4:5), which tests with a view toward approval (i.e. dokimazō).

SPECIAL TOPIC: GREEK TERMS FOR “TESTING” AND THEIR CONNOTATIONS

There are two Greek terms which have the idea of testing someone for a purpose.

1. Dokimazō, dokimion, dokimasia
   This term is a metallurgist term for testing the genuineness of something (metaphorically, someone) by fire. The fire reveals the true metal by burning off (purifying) the dross. This physical process became a powerful idiom for God and/or humans testing others. This term is used only in a positive sense of testing with a view towards acceptance. It is used in the NT of testing.
   a. oxen, Luke 14:19
   b. ourselves, I Cor. 11:28
   c. our faith, James 1:3
   d. even God, Heb. 3:9
   The outcomes of these tests were assumed to be positive (cf. Rom. 1:28; 14:22; 16:10; II Cor. 10:18; 13:3; Phil. 2:27; I Pet. 1:7). Therefore, the term conveys the idea of someone being examined and proved to be
   a. worthwhile
   b. good

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c. genuine
d. valuable
e. honored

2. *Peirazō, peirasmos*

   This term has the connotation of examination for the purpose of fault finding or rejection. It is often used in connection with Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness.
   b. This term (*peirazō*) is used as a title for Satan in Matt. 4:3; I Thess. 3:5.
   c. It (in its compound form, *ekpeirazō*) is used by Jesus to not test God (cf. Matt. 4:7; Luke 4:12; also see I Cor. 10:9)
   d. It is used in connection with the temptation and trials of believers (cf. I Cor. 7:5; 10:9,13; Gal. 6:1; I Thess. 3:5; Heb. 2:18; James 1:2,13,14; I Pet. 4:12; II Pet. 2:9).

“the quality of each man’s work” In context this must refer to one’s church involvement. All the spiritual gifts are for the building up of the church (cf. 12:7). There is no spiritual distinction between clergy and laity, leader and follower, but there is a task distinction (cf. Num. 16:3). Leaders are more accountable (cf. James 3:1).

3:14 “If” This is the second in a series of FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentences, assumed to be true from the perspective of the writer or for his literary purpose (cf. vv. 12,14,15,17,18).

“he will receive a reward” This passage refers to rewards, not salvation. All of the people addressed are assumed to be believers!

   The NT concept of rewards must be distinguished from salvation by merit (cf. Rom. 6:23). In the OT rewards or blessings were connected to obedience (cf. Deut. 11:13-32,27-29; Ps. 1). In a sense, that is still true. However, salvation is a gift, not a reward. The life of faith and obedience is a result of salvation, not a means to salvation. Rewards can be lost, yet salvation retained. Rewards are a recognition of the developing ministry of believers. Paul has now universalized his eschatological evaluation (cf. I Thess. 2:19-20; Phil. 2:14-16) to include all believers. Rewards are a way of recognizing those who have ministered effectively and faithfully in the furtherance of the gospel. Rewards are God’s gifts through His empowering for His Kingdom. Yet, like all covenant relationships, believers must appropriately and continually respond (cf. I Cor. 9:24-27). See Special Topic: Degrees of Rewards and Punishments at 9:24-27.

3:15 “If any man’s work is burned up” Oh, the tragedy of a fruitless, selfish, factious Christian life; a tragedy for the person; a tragedy for the church; and a tragedy for the unsaved!

“but he himself will be saved” This shows the priority of grace even with the possibility of the loss of reward.

   This concept may answer the theological dilemma of a free salvation in the grace of God, the finished work of Christ, and the wooing of the Spirit contrasted to the cost-everything mandate of the Christian life. My only fear in using this text as a key concept is how rare in Scripture the theological category of a “back-slidden,” carnal, baby Christian is used! The modern church uses this concept to explain an ineffective, apathetic, worldly church, but seldom delineates the NT mandate of spiritual growth (cf. Heb. 5:11-14).

**SPECIAL TOPIC: GREEK VERB TENSES USED FOR SALVATION**

Salvation is not a product, but a relationship. It is not finished when one trusts Christ; it has only begun! It is not a fire insurance policy, nor a ticket to heaven but a personal relationship with Jesus that issues in daily Christlikeness.

**SALVATION AS A COMPLETED ACTION (AORIST)**

- Acts 15:11
- Romans 8:24
- II Timothy 1:9
- Titus 3:5
- Romans 13:11 (combines the AORIST with a FUTURE orientation)
SALVATION AS A STATE OF BEING (PERFECT)
- Ephesians 2:5,8

SALVATION AS A CONTINUING PROCESS (PRESENT)
- I Corinthians 1:18; 15:2
- II Corinthians 2:15
- I Peter 3:21; 4:18

SALVATION AS A FUTURE CONSUMMATION (FUTURE in VERB TENSE or context)
- (Implied in Matt. 10:22, 24:13; Mark 13:13)
- Romans 5:9,10; 10:9,13
- I Corinthians 3:15; 5:5
- Philippians 1:28;
- I Thessalonians 5:8-9
- I Timothy 4:16
- Hebrews 1:14; 9:28
- I Peter 1:5,9

Therefore, salvation begins with an initial faith decision (cf. John 1:12; 3:16; Rom. 10:9-13), but this must issue in a process of lifestyle faith (cf. Rom. 8:29; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; 2:10) which will one day be consummated in sight (cf, I John 3:2). This final state is called glorification. This can be illustrated as
1. initial salvation—justification (saved from the penalty of sin)
2. progressive salvation—sanctification (saved from the power of sin)
3. final salvation—glorification (saved from the presence of sin).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:16-17

16Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.

3:16 “Do you not know that you are a temple of God” There is no ARTICLE with “temple” (i.e. naos, the central shrine itself). The PRONOUN “you” is PLURAL, while “temple” is SINGULAR; therefore, in this context “temple” must refer to the whole church at Corinth (cf. II Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21-22), which may have involved several house churches.

The focus of Jewish faith developed into the Temple ritual and liturgy (cf. Jer. 7) instead of personal faith in YHWH. It is not where or when or how one worships, but who one is in relationship with, God. Jesus saw His body as the temple of God (cf. John 2:21). Jesus is greater than the OT Temple (cf. Matt. 12:6). God’s activity has moved from a sacred building into a sacred (i.e. redeemed, holy) body of believers. The focus of God’s activity in the world is people! Jesus’ body is now a place, both corporately and individually.

“that the Spirit of God dwells in you” “Dwells” is a PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE. “You” is PLURAL. The concept of the temple as the unique dwelling place of YHWH in the OT is paralleled here with the concept of the church as the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.

The concept of indwelling deity is recurrent in the NT. All three persons of the Trinity are said to indwell believers: (1) the Spirit (cf. John 14:16-17; Rom. 8:9,11; I Cor. 3:16; 6:19; II Tim. 1:14); (2) the Son (cf. Matt. 28:20; John 14:20;23; 15:4-5; Rom. 8:10; II Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27); and (3) both the Son and the Father (cf. John 14:23 and II Cor. 6:16).

3:17 “If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence, which assumes the reality of unspiritual believers damaging the work of the church (i.e. leaders or the factions). Here the emphasis is on the actions of the individual believer. This does not affect their salvation, v. 15, but their longevity and reward.

The supreme tragedy of believers living selfish, fruitless lives is the potential of the resources at their disposal. They know the gospel; they have the Spirit, yet they and the church are damaged by their actions. This is where Luke 12:48 speaks loudest! Is it speaking to you?

The term phthereiō (destroy) has several uses in the NT.
1. spoil or corrupt physically (i.e. rotting fruit or decaying meat, even metaphorically of spoiling financially)
2. spoil or corrupt morally (i.e. breaking the rules of an athletic contest or seducing someone sexually)
3. destroy
   a. physically
   b. spiritually
   c. eternally

Only the immediate context can determine its meaning. Here it is used in parallel clauses, but it is uncertain if it has the same meaning in each clause because the first refers to the church and the second to a person. This term in context is referring to saved, but immature, believers who are causing a factious spirit to develop in the church at Corinth.

It is hard to define what “destroy” means in this context (cf. Matt. 18:6; Luke 17:1-2; Rom. 14:15; I Cor. 5:5; 8:11; I Tim. 1:20).

While I am on this subject, I personally do not believe this term (and related terms) can legitimately be used to prove the physical annihilation of lost persons (Judge, The Fire That Consumes), but rather their conscious, eternal separation from God (i.e. hell, cf. Dan. 12:2; Matt. 25:46; Acts 24:15).

It is even possible that what Paul is referring to here relates to I Cor. 5:5 and I Tim. 1:20, where the church disciplines one out of their fellowship (but always with the hope and prayer of restoration following repentance).

“the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are” This is a corporate concept. The related and logical implication is that the individual believer is also a temple of God (cf. I Cor. 6:19). Christians are called to holiness (cf. Matt. 5:48; Eph. 1:4).

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**SPECIAL TOPIC: HOLY**

**I. Old Testament Usage**

A. The etymology of the term (*kadosh*) is uncertain, possibly Canaanite. It is possible that part of the root (i.e. *kd*) means “to divide.” This is the source of the popular definition “separated (from Canaanite culture, cf. Deut. 7:6; 14:2,21; 26:19) for God’s use.”

B. It relates to cultic things, places, times, and persons. It is not used in Genesis, but becomes common in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers.

C. In the Prophetic literature (esp. Isaiah and Hosea) the personal element previously present, but not emphasized, comes to the fore. It becomes a way of designating the essence of God (cf. Isa. 6:3). God is holy, His name representing His character is Holy. His people who are to reveal His character to a needy world are holy (if they obey the covenant in faith).

D. God’s mercy and love are inseparable from the theological concepts of covenants, justice, and essential character. Herein is the tension in God toward an unholy, fallen, rebellious humanity. There is a very interesting article on the relationship between God as “merciful” and God as “holy” in Robert B. Girdlestone, Synonyms of the Old Testament, pp. 112-113.

**II. The New Testament**

A. The writers of the NT are Hebrew thinkers (except Luke), but influenced by Koine Greek (i.e. the Septuagint). It is the Greek translation of the OT that controls their vocabulary, not Classical Greek literature, thought, or religion.


C. Because God is holy, His children are to be holy (cf. Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7,26; Matt. 5:48; I Pet. 1:16). Because Jesus is holy His followers are to be holy (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; II Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; I Thess. 3:13; 4:3; I Pet. 1:15). Christians are saved to serve in Christlikeness.

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**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:18-23**

18Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, he must become foolish, so that he may become wise. 19For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, “He is THE ONE WHO CATCHES THE WISE IN THEIR CRAFTINESS”; 20and again, “THE LORD KNOWS THE REASONINGS of the wise, THAT THEY ARE USELESS.” 21So then let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you, 22whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the
“Let no man deceive himself” This is a PRESENT IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which usually means to stop an act already in process. Some of the believers at Corinth were priding themselves on their membership in or allegiance to certain leaders and/or special knowledge.

The term “deceive” is the intensified form of apatao (cf. Eph. 5:6; I Tim. 2:14; James 1:26) with the prefix ek (cf. Rom. 7:11; 16:8; II Thess. 2:3). This term is synonymous with planao (i.e. to wander, to deviate, to go astray), which is used in the Synoptic Gospels, John’s writings, and Paul (cf. I Cor. 6:9; 15:33 and the adjective in II Cor. 6:8). Self deception is a spiritual tragedy (cf. Rom. 12:16; Gal. 6:3; II Tim. 3:13; I John 1:8). Paul may be alluding to Prov. 3:7 or Isa. 5:21 or even Jer. 9:23-24. Many of the leaders of the factions at Corinth thought they were mature and wise, but they were self-deceived.

“If” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence. Many in the Corinthian church prided themselves on their supposed spirituality or spiritual giftedness or knowledge. These tendencies are similar to what was later called gnosticism. It is historically uncertain if Corinth was being influenced by this developing Greek intellectual exclusivism. This system of thought (a radical dualism between spirit and matter) is not fully documented until the second century, but it was a major heresy of the early church.

“any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age” This refers to the person who thinks that he/she is wise. There were those in the church who claimed superiority based on their spirituality, knowledge, social standing, or intelligence. It is possible that this refers to the group leaders of the factions mentioned in 1:12; 3:5,21.

“he must become foolish” This is an AORIST MIDDLE (deponent) IMPERATIVE. The gospel of God, Christ Himself, is the only true wisdom. This term is used often to describe the “wisdom of this age” (cf. 1:18,27; and here). Paul even uses it in 4:10 in a sarcastic sense in relation to the Corinthian Christians who claimed and magnified human wisdom.

“the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God” This is because it is based on limited, worldly, finite, fallen knowledge (cf. 1:18,21,23,25).

The following slightly modified quotes are from Job 5:13 and Psalm 94:11. For the term “craftiness” see fuller note at II Cor. 4:2.

3:21
NASB “so then let no one boast in men”
NKJV “therefore let no one glory in men”
NRSV “so let no one boast about human leaders”
TEV “no one, then, should boast about what human beings can do”
NJB “so there is to be no boasting about human beings”

This may even be an allusion to Jer. 9:23-24. Human boasting is mentioned several times in I Cor. (cf. 1:29,31; 3:21; 4:7; and II Cor. 5:12; 10:17; 11:12,18,30; 12:1,5,6,9). See fuller note at 5:6. It was a major problem in Corinth (and with humans in general). This problem involved more of the church than just a few leaders. Followers are also responsible. This sounds so much like modern denominational arrogance and pride (i.e. I am of Calvin; I am of Wesley; I am of . . ., cf. 4:6).

Paul is asserting that all things (i.e. a listing very much like Rom. 8:38-39) belong to believers through Christ including all the preachers listed. The term kosmos (i.e. world) is used here in a positive sense of the created order (cf. LXX of Gen. 1:31). Believers are fellow-heirs of all things and all times through Christ (cf. Rom. 8:12-17). Don’t limit yourself.

SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL’S USE OF KOSMOS

Paul uses the term kosmos in several ways.
1. all the created order (cf. Rom. 1:20; Eph. 1:4; I Cor. 3:22; 8:4,5)
2. this planet (cf. II Cor. 1:17; Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:20; I Tim. 1:15; 3:16; 6:7)
3. humans (cf. 1:27-28; 4:9,13; Rom. 3:6,19; 11:15; II Cor. 5:19; Col. 1:6)
4. humans organized and functioning apart from God (cf. 1:20-21; 2:12; 3:19; 11:32; Gal. 4:3; Eph. 2:2,12; Phil. 2:15; Col. 2:8,20-24). It is very similar to John’s usage (i.e. I John 2:15-17)
5. the current world structures (cf. 7:29-31; Gal. 6:14, similar to Phil. 3:4-9, where Paul describes Jewish structures)
In some ways these overlap and it is hard to categorize every usage. This term, like so many in Paul’s thought, must be defined by the immediate context and not a pre-set definition. Paul’s terminology was fluid (cf. James Stewart’s *A Man in Christ*). He was not attempting to set up a systematic theology, but to proclaim Christ.

3:23 “you belong to Christ”  The “you” is emphatic and PLURAL. This shows Christ’s exalted position in the church (cf. 1:29-31). This also points toward their responsibility as believers.

“Christ belongs to God”  This refers to Christ’s temporal submission to the Father (cf. 11:3; 15:28). This is not a matter of essence (cf. John 1:1-3), but a matter of function. The Trinity is task oriented.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the difference between milk and solid food as it relates to Christian preaching?
2. Will Christians stand before God in judgment? If so, why?
3. Who is being addressed in vv. 10-15?
4. Does v. 16 refer to individual believers or the church corporate?
5. What does the term “destroy” mean in v. 17? How does it relate to v. 15?
6. Does Christ’s subordination to the Father, which is clearly seen in vv. 23 and 15:28, mean He is not deity?
# I CORINTHIANS 4

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

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**READING CYCLE THREE** (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. vii) **FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

**BRIEF OUTLINE OF CHAPTER 4**

A. Verses 1-5 deal with Christians judging and being judged.

B. Verses 6-13 contrast the proud Corinthian leaders and true apostles.

C. In verses 14-21 Paul discusses his authority and travel plans in light of opponents’ charges.
Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy. But to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you, or by any human court; in fact, I do not even examine myself. For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord. Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men’s hearts; and then each man’s praise will come to him from God.

4:1 “Let a man regard us in this manner” This is a PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) IMPERATIVE. Believers must evaluate or consider the status of leadership. For the Kingdom of God leadership is servanthood/stewardship (cf. Mark 10:42-44). Paul’s theology follows Jesus’ words.

“servants of Christ”

SPECIAL TOPIC: SERVANT LEADERSHIP

God’s leaders are gifts to the church (Eph. 4:11), but they are still servants, not bosses! Paul uses several terms to address the idea of servant/minister in the Corinthian letters.

1. domestic help (originally “to raise dust”)
   a. diakonos, I Cor. 3:5; II Cor. 3:6; 6:4; 11:15 (twice), 23
   b. diakonia, I Cor. 16:15; II Cor. 3:7,8,9 (twice); 4:1; 5:18; 6:3; 8:4; 9:1,13; 11:8
   c. dialone, II Cor. 3:3

2. servant or assistant, hupēretes (in the NT it is used of many different types of attendants), I Cor. 4:1

3. slave (one who is owned and directed by another)
   a. doulos, I Cor. 7:21,22 (twice),23; II Cor. 4:5
   b. doulao, I Cor. 9:19

4. co-worker, co-helper (compound of sun + worker), sunergos, II Cor. 1:24

5. supplier (originally one who funds a chorus)
   a. chorēgea, II Cor. 9:10
   b. epichorēgea, II Cor. 9:10

6. minister (used in the Septuagint of Joseph to Potiphar, Joshua to Moses, Samuel to Eli, Abishag to David and of the Levites to Israel (i.e. the general term for service in the Septuagint), leitourgia, II Cor. 9:12

All of these terms show Paul’s understanding of ministry. Believers belong to Christ. As Christ served others (cf. Mark 10:45), believers serve others (cf. John 3:16). Church leadership is servant leadership (cf. Matt. 20:20-28; Mark 10:32-45; Luke 22:24-27). These arrogant, prideful factions had totally misunderstood the gospel and failed to comprehend the heart and ministry of Jesus!

“stewards” This is a compound Greek term from “house” and “law.” It was the servant who managed the house/estate and gave an account to the owner (i.e. term in Matt. 25:14-46; Luke 16:1, the concept of “to allot,” “that which is assigned to someone”). This is the emphasis on responsibility to and trustworthiness of the gospel (cf. v. 2; 4:1; 9:17; Col. 1:25; I Thess. 2:4; Titus 1:7; I Pet. 4:10). God will judge His stewards (cf. vv. 4,5; 3:13). What an awesome privilege and obligation!

“of the mysteries of God” This term is used in several different ways by Paul. The primary thrust seems to be that the one God is going to unite Jews and Gentiles into one family through Christ, thereby fulfilling Gen. 3:15 and 12:3. See Special Topic: the Mystery at 2:1.

4:3 “But to me it is a very small thing that I may be examined by you” Paul was under personal attack by certain groups (i.e. babies in Christ, cf. 3:1, or even Jewish opposition similar to the Judaizers of Galatians) at Corinth. Their estimation of him was
not a central concern. He was concerned how people viewed the gospel and the church (cf. 8:13; 9:19-23; 10:23,33; II Cor. 4:2; 5:11; Rom. 14:1-15:13).

“or by any human court” This is literally “human day.” It refers to human court proceedings as 3:13 refers to “divine” court proceedings on the last day (cf. 1:8; 5:5). As 4:3a refers to the sarkinoi (i.e. immature believers of 3:1), this phrase refers to the psuchikos (i.e. natural people without the Spirit) of 2:14.

“I do not even examine myself” It is very hard to properly examine oneself spiritually. Often believers are too hard on themselves and too easy on others. Often we compare ourselves to other men (cf. II Cor. 10:12-18). We must let God judge (cf. v. 5). He knows the heart and the circumstances (cf. I Sam. 16:7; I Kgs. 8:39; I Chr. 28:9; Jer. 17:10; Luke 16:15; Acts 1:24).

4:4 “For I am conscious of nothing against myself” Before Paul’s conversion he felt this way about his relationship to the Mosaic Law (cf. Acts 23:1; Phil. 3:5-6). The Spirit revealed his covetousness (cf. Rom. 7:7) and Paul was convicted of sin and responded to the grace of God in Christ alone (cf. Rom. 3:19-26). He lived and ministered in this grace as a steward. In the paradox of free grace, but accountable stewardship, he had a peaceful conscience, but only a divine Judge in an eschatological setting could make the appropriate evaluation and reward!

NASB, NRSV “acquitted”  
NKJV “justified”  
TEV “innocent”  
NJB “justify”

This is a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE. It is a legal technical term for one being acquitted from the consequences of a crime. It is theologically similar to the “no condemnation” in Rom. 8:1 and the legal context of Rom. 8:31-35. In this context it means that Paul is not free from divine judgment (cf. II Cor. 5:10) simply because his conscience was clear.

“but the one who examines me is the Lord” Stewards will give an account for their trustworthiness (cf. v. 2; 3:11; II Cor. 5:10; 10:18).

4:5  
NASB, NKJV, NRSV “therefore”  
TEV “so”  
NJB “for that reason”

This is the conclusion of Paul’s discussion on this topic and it is a command related to premature human evaluations.

“do not go on passing judgment before the time” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which usually means to stop an act already in process (cf. Matt. 7:1-5). These factious groups or the adherents of the false teachers had already judged Paul. Paul must have had many critics at Corinth through the years (cf. II Cor. 10-12).

“but wait until the Lord comes” The Second Coming is certain; the time and manner are uncertain. True evaluation must wait until the right moment (cf. Matt. 13:24-30,36-43).

“who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness” Even believers will give an account of their motives, plans, and attitudes (cf. 3:13; John 3:17-21; Rom. 2:16; II Cor. 5:10).

“and disclose the motives of men’s hearts” This is crucial. This is why only God can judge fairly. Believers are only responsible for what they do understand, but they are always responsible for their attitudes and motives. Faithfulness will be rewarded (cf. 3:8,14,15), unfaithfulness judged (cf. 3:16-17). See Special Topic: Heart at 14:25.

“and each man’s praise will come to him from God” This is a recurrent theme (cf. Job 34:11; Ps. 62:12; Eccl. 12:14; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Matt. 16:27; 25:31-40; Rom. 2:16; 14:12; I Cor. 3:8; II Cor.5:10; I Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12; 22:12) based on the principle of Gal. 6:7.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:6-7

6Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other. 7For
who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?

4:6
NASB “I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos”
NKJV “figuratively transferred”
NRSV, TEV, 
NJB “applied”
The Greek word “figuratively applied” (i.e. meteschomatisa, which is an AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE) is very hard to translate in this context. In other contexts, Phil. 3:21, the active VOICE means to “transform,” and in II Cor. 11:13-15, the MIDDLE voice means “to disguise.” The basic idea is to transfer a set of circumstances from one group to another group. Paul is using himself and Apollos as examples for all leaders.

NASB “that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written”
NKJV “that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written”
NRSV “so that you may learn through us the meaning of the saying ‘Nothing beyond what is written’”
TEV “observe the proper rules”
NJB “nothing beyond what is written”
The phrase, “it is written” is commonly used in the NT to introduce OT quotes. Here it seems to introduce a well-known proverb. The possible interpretations are (1) an introduction to a quote from the OT (cf. 1:19; 3:19); (2) a party slogan of one of the factions at Corinth; or (3) “to observe the proper rules” (i.e. believers should live in submission to the Scriptures: (a) especially those Paul has quoted in chapters 1-3 or (b) not to go beyond the Scriptures like some of the Jewish false teachers.

NASB “so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other”
NKJV “that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other”
NRSV “so that none of you will be puffed up in favor of one against another”
TEV “none of you should be proud of one person and despise another”
NJB “no individual among you must become filled with his own importance and make comparisons, to another’s detriment”
The Greek term phusioè originally meant to inflate or puff up something (i.e. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament, p. 105 and Vincent, Word Studies, p. 766, from phusa - bellows). It came to be used in Christian literature (possibly coined by Paul) metaphorically for pride or arrogance. This was a major spiritual problem for the church at Corinth. Paul uses this word in I Cor. 4:6,18,19; 5:2; 8:1; 13:4 and in a list of sins in II Cor. 12:20. It is only used outside the Corinthian letters in the NT in Col. 2:18, where it refers to gnostic visions of special knowledge.

Believers must not arrogantly choose certain teachers over other teachers. They must judge proclaimers by the content of their message (I John 4:1-6) and their lifestyle (Matt. 7:1ff), not by their presentation nor their personality nor by their personal preferences nor by the human leaders they claim as their own.

4:7
NASB “For who regards you as superior”
NKJV “For who makes you differ from another”
NRSV “For who sees anything different in you”
TEV “Who made you superior to others”
NJB “Who made you so important”
The pronoun “you” and the verbs are SINGULAR in v. 7, but it is still an “any-of-you” context. The PLURAL “you” continues in v. 8.
The Greek compound term diakrinoì is used often in I Corinthians and in several senses.
1. to prefer or to confer a superiority (cf. 4:7)
2. to judge (cf. 6:5)
3. to make a distinction (cf. 11:29)
4. to examine (cf. 11:31; 14:29)
5. to discern (the noun form of diakrisi, cf. 12:10)
The related compound anakrinoì is used in 2:15 (twice); 4:3,4 and 14:24. The proper evaluation process between believers and leaders and between leaders and leaders was crucial for the church at Corinth.

This question/answer format is a typical method of Paul’s teaching known as “diatribe.” It is a common OT (cf. Malachi) and rabbinical technique. Paul seems to be addressing the proud leaders of the factious groups (possibly house churches).
“What do you have that you did not receive” Paul is reminding these proud leaders that they were not the originators or discoverers of truth, but recipients of other’s ministry.

“if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence which is assumed to be true from the point of view of the writer or for his literary purposes. This is the third rhetorical question of v. 7. Some leaders and their followers were acting as if they were the source of the truths they proclaimed. Another problem of Corinth was human boasting (cf. 1:29,31; 3:21; 4:7; 13:4). See fuller note at 5:6.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:8-13

1You are already filled, you have already become rich, you have become kings without us; and indeed, I wish that you had become kings so that we also might reign with you. 2For, I think, God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death; because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. 3We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are prudent in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are distinguished, but we are without honor. 4To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; 5and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; 6when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now.

4:8-13 This is shocking sarcasm!

4:8

NASB “You are already filled”
NKJV “You are already full”
NRSV “Already you have all you want”
TEV “Do you already have everything you need”
NJB “you have everything”

The pronoun “you” is PLURAL in vv. 8,10. This term “filled” is normally used of physical eating (cf. Acts 27:38), but here is it a metaphor (cf. Matt. 5:6) of spiritual pride. Verse 8 can be three questions (cf. TEV) or three statements (cf. NASB, NKJV, RSV, and REB). These are a series of sarcastic statements or questions that reveal the pride of the Corinthian factious leaders. They thought they had arrived (i.e. PERFECT PASSIVE PERIPHRASTIC). Paul wished they had, but it was not true; their actions revealed their maturity level (i.e. babies in Christ).

“kings...reign” Paul is using eschatological imagery to jolt the leaders’ arrogant self-sufficiency. In Christ all believers will co-reign with King Jesus, but only after the Second Coming. These leaders considered themselves as already reigning, spiritually speaking.

4:9 “God has exhibited us apostles last of all, as men condemned to death” This verse is an illustration taken from a Roman Triumphal March (cf. Col. 2:15), where condemned prisoners (i.e. usually later killed in the Roman arena, cf. 15:32) were displayed last in a Roman victory parade.

“we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and men” Paul is referring to the difficult task of preaching the gospel (cf. II Cor. 4:7-12; 6:3-10; 11:23-30).

The phrase “to angels” may be linked to Eph. 2:7; 3:10. God has revealed Himself to the angelic world by His actions towards humans (cf. I Pet. 1:12).

4:10 “We are fools for Christ’s sake” God’s wisdom is foolishness to the world, even sometimes to arrogant Christians.

“but you are prudent in Christ...but you are strong; you are distinguished” This is biting sarcasm which continues from vv. 7-9.


4:11 “To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless” These verses reflect Paul’s own experience (cf. II Cor. 4:7-12; 6:3-10 and 11:23-30, also notice Heb. 11:34-38).

4:12 “we toil, working with our own hands” This reflects the Jewish emphasis on the appropriateness of manual labor (cf. Acts 18:3; 20:34; I Thess. 2:9; II Thess. 3:8). This was depreciated by Greek culture, including the church at Corinth.
“when we are reviled, we bless” Paul is reflecting the teachings of Jesus (cf. Matt. 5:10-12; I Pet. 2:23). The term “reviled” (i.e. loidore) is also included in the list of sins in I Cor. 5:11 and 6:10 (i.e. loidoros). Vincent, Word Studies, says this term refers to personal verbal abuse, while the term “slandered” (i.e. dusphaneò, cf. v. 13) means public defamation (cf. 4:13; II Cor. 6:8). I have not been able to confirm this distinction. They both are part of a large number of Koine Greek terms used in the semantical category of “insult and slander” (cf. Louw and Nida, Greek-English Lexicon, vol. 1, pp. 433-434).

Paul experienced verbal abuse from many false teachers, but it was the church at Corinth that must have wounded him the most. A group of people whom he personally led to Christ became his most vocal slanderers.

4:13 “conciliate” See full note at II Cor. 1:4-11.

NASB “we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things”
NKJV “we have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things”
NRSV “we have become like the rubbish of the world, the dregs of all things”
TEV “we are no more than the world’s garbage; we are the scum of the earth”
NJB “we are treated even now as the dregs of the world, the very lowest scum”

This paragraph (vv. 8-13) shows Paul’s personal pain involved in preaching the gospel. He felt humiliated and rejected not only by the unbelieving, but by these arrogant Corinthian leaders.

The first phrase “scum of the world” referred to what was left over after the cleaning of kitchen utensils. It is literally “to cleanse all around on all sides.” In defining these rare synonyms the question of the origin of Paul’s metaphors is crucial.

1. If he uses the OT background as expressed through the Greek translation, the Septuagint, this term is used of a thorough cleansing and thereby a ransoming (cf. Prov. 21:18). Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, and Danker’s Greek/English Lexicon, p. 647 and A. T. Robertson’s Word Pictures, p. 108, suggest it could be understood as “scapegoat.”
2. If he is using the Hellenistic background the two terms in v. 13 are synonymous of that which is removed by a thorough cleaning.
3. If he is using them metaphorically then they both simply refer to humility (cf. Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, and Danker’s Greek/English Lexicon, p. 653).

The second phrase “dregs of all things” also refers to that which had been scraped out in the cleansing process. These two terms are synonymous. They are strong terms, but were used as metaphors or idioms. Possibly they are so strong and colorful to us because they are rare terms. They help intensify Paul’s sarcasm.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:14-21

4:14 “I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children. 15 For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. 16 Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me. 17 For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church. 18 Now some have become arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. 19 But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I shall find out, not the words of those who are arrogant but their power. 20 For the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power. 21 What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love and a spirit of gentleness?

4:14 “I do not write these things to shame you” Verses 8-13 have been very sarcastic. Paul feels they should be ashamed (cf. 6:5; 15:34). It is uncertain if this paragraph (i.e. vv. 14-24) points backward (i.e. chapters 1-4) or forward. They had much to be ashamed of.

“but to admonish you as my beloved children” Paul is using the metaphor of child training to encourage the Corinthians (cf. Eph. 6:4). This is a compound Greek word (i.e. “mind” plus “to place”) used to remind (cf. 10:11 and Titus 3:10). A related term (i.e. “with” plus “remembrance”) is used in v. 17; 11:24-25; II Cor. 7:15.

4:15 “if” This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence which means potential action.

NASB “countless tutors”
NKJV “ten thousand instructors”
NRSV, TEV “ten thousand guardians”
NJB “ten thousand slaves to look after you”
This is literally “slave tutors” (cf. Gal. 3:24). These slaves were responsible for accompanying the older males to school, teaching them at home, and guarding them from danger.

“fathers. . .father” This is Paul’s metaphor for describing himself as the evangelist who initially led them to faith in Christ. This deserves some respect and priority!

4:16 “I exhort you, be imitators of me” This is a PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) IMPERATIVE. We get our English word “mimic” from this Greek term “imitator.” Paul lived his faith (cf. I Cor, 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 4:9; I Thess. 1:6; 3:9) and he called on these Corinthian church leaders to do the same.

“exhort” See full note at I Cor. 1:4-11.

4:17 “I have sent to you Timothy” We have no other biblical information on this visit. Timothy was converted on Paul’s first missionary journey and recruited as a helper on the second. He became Paul’s trusted friend, companion, co-worker, and apostolic representative. Sending Timothy showed Paul’s love and concern for this church. But Paul worries about how some in the church would treat his young friend and personal representative, Timothy (cf. 16:10-11).

“just as I teach everywhere in every church” Paul wanted to emphasize that the Corinthian church had been given the same teachings as all the other churches (cf. 7:17; 11:34; 14:33; 16:1). They were not special or advanced. They did not have the right to be different, novel, or avant garde.

4:18-21 This was Paul’s future travel plans, as they relate to Corinth. He does this because some in the church are using Paul’s absence as a means of attack (cf. v. 18). They were asserting that (1) Paul’s absence was a sign that he did not really care about this church or (2) he never followed through on his promises.

4:18 “some have become arrogant” Paul has uses this term three times in this chapter (i.e. vv. 6,18,19) and several times in the Corinthian letters (cf. I Cor. 5:2; 8:1; 13:4 and II Cor. 12:20). This was a special problem for this church.

4:19 “I will come to you soon” Paul returned again and again to strengthen the churches he started (cf. 11:34; 16:5). Paul wanted to come to them, but his life was not his own. He must seek and follow the Spirit’s direction (cf. Acts 16:6).

“if the Lord wills” This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence, which means potential action. This was no meaningless phrase for Paul (cf. 16:7; Acts 18:21; Rom. 1:10; 15:32).

NASB “and I shall find out, not the words of those who are arrogant, but their power”
NKJV “and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power”
NRSV “and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power”
TEV “and then I will find out for myself the power which these proud people have, and not just what they say”
NJB “and then I shall find out not what these self-important people say, but what power they have”

The false teachers were eloquent in their speech but powerless in the results (cf. Matt. 7).

4:20 “kingdom of God” Paul does not use this concept as much as Jesus (i.e. mostly in the Synoptic Gospels). It refers to God’s reign in human hearts now (cf. Rom. 14:17), which will one day be consummated over all the earth as it is in heaven (cf. Matt. 6:10). Paul uses this phrase more in I Corinthians (cf. 4:20; 6:9; 15:24,50) than any other of his writings. These believers needed to know that they were part of a larger Christian agenda (cf. v. 17).

“does not consist in words but in power” To put this truth in an American proverb, “actions speak louder than words” or “the proof is in the pudding.”

4:21 “rod” This refers to the tutor’s stick (cf. 4:15). This church had to decide if Paul was to come as a disciplining father or a forgiving father. Their actions determined his approach.

“a Spirit of gentleness” In Synonyms of the Old Testament Robert Girdlestone has an interesting discussion of the uses of the term “spirit” in the NT (pp. 61-63).

1. evil spirits
2. the human spirit
3. the Holy Spirit
4. things that the Spirit produces in and through human spirits
   a. ‘not a spirit of slavery vs. a spirit of adoption’ - Rom. 8:15
   b. ‘a spirit of gentleness’ - I Cor. 4:21
   c. ‘a spirit of faith’ - II Cor. 4:13
   d. ‘a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him’ - Eph. 1:17
   e. ‘not a spirit of timidity vs. power, love and discipline’ - II Tim. 1:7
   f. ‘spirit of error’ vs. ‘spirit of truth’ - I John 4:6”

See another note on “spirit” at II Cor. 4:13.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why are believers not to judge themselves nor allow others to do so? How does this relate to our Christian witness?
2. What does the paragraph, verses 6-13, say about the motives and lifestyle of modern ministers?
3. Define the term “Kingdom of God.”
4. Identify and explain Paul’s use of ironical sarcasm in this chapter.
I CORINTHIANS 5

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

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READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND TO CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINE

A. This is one of several passages in the NT on church discipline (cf. I Cor. 5:2,7,13; II Cor. 2:5-7; II Thess. 3:14-15; I Tim. 1:20; Titus 3:10).

B. Church discipline has three purposes.
   1. to maintain the reputation and integrity of the local church
   2. to help disciple and restore an erring covenant brother or sister (cf. II Cor. 2:5-11; II Thess. 3:14-15)
   3. to cause other Christians not to sin (cf. I Tim. 5:20)

C. There is a staged approach.
   1. first, private confrontation and if not successful, personal disfellowship (cf. Matt. 18:15; Gal. 6:1; II Thess. 3:14-15; Titus 3:10)
   2. second, small group confrontation (cf. Matt. 18:16)
   3. third, public exclusion from the Christian fellowship (cf. Matt. 18:17; I Cor. 5:1; I Tim. 1:20)
   4. the goal is always repentance and restoration, not just isolation and punishment (cf. II Cor. 2:6-8; Gal. 6:1)
5:1 “It is actually reported” This English “actually” is the Greek holēs, a rare form which occurs in I Corinthians several times (cf. 5:1; 6:7; 15:34). It is a form of the term holos, which means “wholly,” “altogether.” This rare form seems to mean “widely known” (cf. NJB). This may have been one of the reasons Paul was so upset over this flagrant immorality. The Corinthian church was glorying in it and it was being widely reported to the other churches. Paul had to deal with this out-of-bounds action and the attitude of this church lest they negatively affect all churches (i.e. the yeast principle, cf. vv. 6-8).

“immorality” This is the Greek term “pornia” which was the general term for sexual looseness. We get the English word, pornography, from this Greek word. Greek Corinth was known for its sexual promiscuity. Even other pagans were shocked by Corinth’s immoral social license.

In the OT there is a distinction between the terms “adultery” (i.e. one or both are married) and “fornication” (i.e. neither is married), but this is not the case in Koine Greek (cf. Acts 15:20,29). This term refers to any sexual impropriety (i.e. adultery, fornication, homosexuality, even bestiality).

“of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles” This incestuous relationship was forbidden by the Mosaic Law (cf. Lev. 18:8 and Deut. 22:30), but it must have also been shocking even to the immoral pagans of Corinth. This was “too far” even for first century Roman culture (cf. Caius, Inst. I, 63 and Oxford Classical Dictionary 8, 539-540).

NASB, NKJV “the Gentiles”
NRSV “pagans”
TEV “the heathen”
NJB “Gentiles”

Paul is using this term in a specialized sense. In the OT there was a sharp distinction between Jew and Gentile. The “nations” had negative connotations. Paul is using Gentile in the sense of unbeliever. Many of those he was writing to were non-Jews.

NASB “that someone has his father’s wife”
NKJV “that a man has his father’s wife”
NRSV “for a man is living with his father’s wife”
TEV “that a man is sleeping with his stepmother”
NJB “that one of you is living with his stepmother”

This apparently refers to his living with his step-mother. Whether the man seduced his step-mother away from his father or was living with his divorced or widowed step-mother is uncertain.

5:2 It is possible to take this verse as (1) three questions; (2) three statements (NASB, NKJV); or (3) a combination (cf. NRSV, TEV, NJB, NIV).

NASB “you have become arrogant”
NKJV “you are puffed up”
NRSV “you are arrogant”
TEV “How then, can you be proud”
NJB “And you are so filled with your own self-importance”

This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE of the term “puffed up” used so often in the Corinthian letter (cf. 4:6,18,19; 5:2; 8:1; 13:4; II Cor. 12:20). It has the “to be” verb linked with it, which makes this a PERFECT PERIPHRASTIC, which implies a settled condition. The real problem was the attitude of the church (i.e. PLURAL pronoun and verbs). They were proud of this situation. This shocking incident has several possible rationales: (1) from the general context it is possible that this was seen by the church as an example of the radical newness which salvation brings or (2) it reflects the Jewish background of Rabbi Aqibah.
illustrating how a new convert was a totally new person (i.e. A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, p. 111), therefore, in the Corinthian setting this was not incest, but Christian freedom (i.e. one’s newness in Christ).

**NASB** “and have not mourned instead”  
**NKJV** “and have not rather mourned”  
**NRSV** “Should you not rather have mourned”  
**TEV** “On the contrary, you should be filled with sadness”  
**NJB** “It would have been better if you had been grieving bitterly”

This Greek word (i.e. *penthe*) was used of mourning for the dead (cf. Rev. 18:8,11). In Jewish society mourning was done for the dead, for some tragedy, or for blasphemy (cf. Mark 14:63).

**NASB** “be removed from your midst”  
**NKJV** “might be taken away from among you”  
**NRSV** “would have been removed from among you”  
**TEV** “should be expelled from your fellowship”  
**NJB** “were turned out of the community”

This is an AORIST PASSIVE SUBJUNCTIVE. This Greek word means “lift up and take away,” often involving judgment (cf. Matt. 24:39) and destruction (cf. John 11:48). The purpose of church discipline is three-fold: (1) cleansing of the local church (i.e. both from sin and the restoration of its image in the local community); (2) the reformation and redemption of erring believers. It is just possible because of v. 5 (also the same terms are used in Luke 23:18) that this refers to the death of the erring believer(s); and (3) other believers seeing God’s discipline are encouraged not to sin.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:3-5**

1 For I, on my part, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged him who has so committed this, as though I were present. 4 In the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, and I with you in spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, 5 I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

5:3-5 This paragraph is a judicial metaphor. Paul is supposing that the church called a “church court” (cf. James 2:1-4). The early church followed the administrative and worship pattern of the synagogue. These courts were common and many were excommunicated from the synagogue.

5:3 “though absent in body but present in spirit” These are both PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLES. This clearly shows Paul’s sense of his apostolic authority (cf. vv. 3 & 5). But notice that he wants the church to confirm his decision (cf. v. 4).

**SPECIAL TOPIC: SPIRIT (PNEUMA)**

The Greek term for “spirit” is used in several ways in the NT. Here are some representative classifications and examples.

**A. of the Triune God**
1. of the Father (cf. John 4:24)  
2. of the Son (cf. Rom. 8:9-10; II Cor. 3:17; Gal. 4:6; I Pet. 1:11)  
3. of the Holy Spirit (cf. Mark 1:11; Matt. 3:16; 10:20; John 3:5,6,8; 7:39; 14:17; Acts 2:4; 5:9; 8:29,35; Rom. 1:4; 8:11,16; I Cor. 2:4,10,11,13,14; 12:7)

**B. of the human life force**
1. of Jesus (cf. Mark 8:12; John 11:33,38; 13:21)  
2. of mankind (cf. Matt. 22:43; Acts 7:59; 17:16; 20:22; Rom. 1:9; 8:16; I Cor. 2:11; 5:3-5; 7:34; 15:45; 16:18; II Cor. 2:13; 7:13; Phil. 4:23; Col. 2:5)

**C. of the spiritual realm**
1. spiritual beings  
   a. good (i.e. angels, cf. Acts 23:8-9; Heb. 1:14)  
   b. evil (i.e. demonic, cf. Matt. 8:16; 10:1; 12:43,45; Acts 5:16; 8:7; 16:16; 19:12-21; Eph. 6:12)
c. ghosts (cf. Luke 24:37)
3. spiritual things (cf. John 6:63; Rom. 2:29; 8:2,5,9,15; 15:27; I Cor. 9:11; 14:12)
4. spiritual gifts (cf. I Cor. 12:1; 14:1)
6. spiritual body (cf. I Cor. 15:44-45)

D. Characterizes
1. the attitude of the world (cf. Rom. 8:15; 11:8; I Cor. 2:12)
2. thinking process of humans (cf. Acts 6:10; Rom. 8:6; I Cor. 4:2)

E. of the physical realm
1. wind (cf. Matt. 7:25,27; John 3:8; Acts 2:2)
2. breath (cf. Acts 17:25; II Thess. 2:8)

It is obvious that this term must be interpreted in light of its immediate context. There are various shades of meaning which can refer to (1) the physical world; (2) the unseen world; (3) as well as persons of this physical world or of the spiritual realm.

The Holy Spirit is that part of the Triune God who is supremely active in this stage of history. The new age of the Spirit has come. All that is good, holy, right, and true relates to Him. His presence, gifts, and ministry are crucial in the furtherance of the gospel and the success of the Kingdom of God (cf. John 14 and 16). He does not draw attention to Himself, but to Christ (cf. John 16:13-14). He convicts, convinces, woos, baptizes, and matures all believers (cf. John 16:8-11).

“have already judged him who has so committed this” This is a PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE. Paul asserts his authority even in his physical absence and his decision stands.

5:4 “In the name of our Lord Jesus” This is a Hebraic way of asserting the prestige and power of the risen Christ as Paul’s source of apostolic authority. Paul represents Him and emulates Him.

There are a variety of forms of “the name of ______” in the Greek manuscripts of this verse.
1. “our Jesus” in uncial manuscripts B, D
2. "Jesus Christ" in the uncial manuscript Ξ
3. “our Jesus Christ” in uncial manuscripts D², F, G
4. “our” in Lectionary in the minuscule manuscript 1021 (12th century)
5. “Jesus Christ our Lord” in minuscule manuscript 81 (11th century)
The United Bible Societies’ Greek NT, fourth edition (UBS⁴) says it is difficult to decide, but prefers #1.

This same manuscript problem occurs again in v. 5 (and also v. 11).
1. “Lord” in MSS P⁶⁶, B
2. “Lord Jesus” in MS Ξ
3. “Lord Jesus Christ” in MS D
4. “our Lord Jesus Christ” in MSS A, F, G, P
UBS⁴ rates #1 as almost certain.

5:5 “to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh” “Deliver” is the Greek term paradidômi, which is used in the Gospels of turning someone over to the authorities for appropriate punishment (cf. Matt. 4:12; 5:25; 10:4,17; 18:34; 20:19; 26:15; 27:2,18,26) and in Romans (cf. 1:24,26,28) for turning someone over to evil spiritual powers. This usage fits this context best (i.e. Satan being identified).

This is similar to I Tim. 1:20. There has been much discussion among scholars and commentators over what this involves. Some see it as resulting in the ultimate physical punishment (i.e. death), as in Acts 5 and I Cor. 3:17; 11:30. Others see it as a total excommunication, putting one in the realm of Satan’s activity, which is the world (cf. John 12:31; 16:11; I Cor. 4:4; I John 5:19), where his alienation from fellowship with God and His people may turn him back to God and avert eschatological judgment.

Paul saw the world as the domain of Satan (cf. Eph. 2:2). The evil which occurs in this world (i.e. death, disease, loss, etc.) are attributed to the evil one, Satan (cf. II Cor. 12:7; I Thess. 2:18). It is also possible that “flesh” may refer to mankind’s sensual rebellious lifestyle (i.e. Adamic fallen nature). See Special Topic: Personal Evil at 7:5.
“so that his spirit may be saved” Church discipline must always be redemptive and restorative, not vindictive (cf. II Cor. 2:5-11; II Thess. 3:14-15). This is the OT connotation of the word “saved,” which means physical deliverance. This person, though acting immorally, is a member of the church. He needs spiritual deliverance, not salvation.

As so often in Paul’s writings the physical body and the spirit are set in contrast (e.g. Rom. 8:1-11). They represent two distinct authority structures, two world-views, two allegiances (cf. Matt. 6:19-34; I John 2:15-17).

One more theological point about v. 5; Satan is God’s instrument, serving His redemptive purposes. In the OT Satan is an enemy of humanity, but a servant of God (cf. A. B. Davidson, An OT Theology, pp. 300-306). The relationship intensifies in the NT. Satan becomes an enemy of God, but he still is an unwilling servant. Satan’s function in v. 5 is to bring ultimate salvation to an erring church member.

“in the day of the Lord Jesus” This obviously refers to an eschatological, end-time setting. God’s temporal judgment towards Christians can be seen in 11:30-32; Acts 5, and I Tim. 1:20. Does this text imply (1) physical death, but eschatological salvation, 1:8 or (2) is his salvation dependant on his repentance?

There is a recurrent eschatological emphasis in I Corinthians (cf. 1:7-8; 3:13; 4:5; 5:5; 6:14; 11:26; 13:12; 15:50-54; 16:22). Possibly one of the theological problems in the Corinthian church was an over-realized eschatology combined with an incipient gnosticism. They thought they had arrived spiritually (cf. 4:7-10) and that the body was evil (i.e. Greek thought) and, therefore, irrelevant to spiritual issues. Paul refutes these tendencies by (1) affirming a future as well as present (cf. 5:5) judgment and (2) emphasizing the inappropriateness of immorality for believers (cf. vv. 5-6).

Also notice that OT phrases referring to YHWH have now been transferred to Jesus (cf. 1:8; II Cor. 1:14; I Thess. 5:2; II Thess. 2:2; I Tim. 4:8). This is one of the literary ways that NT authors assert the deity of Jesus of Nazareth.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:6-8

6 Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? 7Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. 8Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

5:6 “Your boasting is not good” This comment helps interpret the attitude of the Corinthian church. They were claiming a freedom and license based on the gospel. They wanted to flaunt their new freedom instead of providing a gospel witness to their community.

SPECIAL TOPIC: BOASTING

These Greek terms kauchaomai, kaucháma, and kauchósis are used about thirty five times by Paul and only twice in the rest of the NT (both in James). Its predominate use is in I and II Corinthians.

There are two main truths connected to boasting.

1. no flesh shall glory/glory before God (cf. I Cor. 1:29; Eph. 2:9)
2. believers should glory in the Lord (cf. I Cor. 1:31; II Cor. 10:17, which is an allusion to Jer. 9:23-24)

Therefore, there is appropriate and inappropriate boasting/glorying (i.e. pride).

1. appropriate
   a. in the hope of glory (cf. Rom. 4:2)
   b. in God through the Lord Jesus (cf. Rom. 5:11)
   c. in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ (i.e. Paul’s main theme, cf. I Cor. 1:17-18; Gal. 6:14)
   d. Paul boasts in
      (1) his ministry without compensation (cf. I Cor. 9:15,16; II Cor. 10:12)
      (2) his authority from Christ (cf. II Cor. 10:8,12)
      (3) his not boasting in other men’s labor (as some at Corinth were, cf. II Cor. 10:15)
      (4) his racial heritage (as others were doing at Corinth, cf. II Cor. 11:17; 12:1,5,6)
      (5) his churches
         a. Corinth (II Cor. 7:4,14; 8:24; 9:2; 11:10)
         b. Thessalonika (cf. II Thess. 1:4)
(6) his confidence in God’s comfort and deliverance (cf. II Cor. 1:12)

2. inappropriate
   a. in relation to Jewish heritage (cf. Rom. 2:17,23; 3:27; Gal. 6:13)
   b. some in the Corinthian church were boasting
      (1) in men (cf. I Cor. 3:21)
      (2) in wisdom (cf. I Cor. 4:7)
      (3) in freedom (cf. I Cor. 5:6)
   c. false teachers tried to boast in the church at Corinth (cf. II Cor. 11:12)

“Do you not know” This is a characteristic phrase used often by Paul to refer to things believers should have known, things previously communicated to them, but which they often apparently (i.e. because of their actions and attitudes) have forgotten (cf. Rom. 6:16; 11:2; I Cor. 3:16; 5:6; 6:2,3,9,15,19; 9:13,24).

“leaven” This refers to a Jewish proverb (cf. Matt. 16:6,12; Gal. 5:9) about yeast, usually in a negative sense, being likened to rottenness because of the fermentation process. However, sometimes the metaphor has a positive aspect (cf. Matt. 13:33; Luke 13:20-21), which shows that meaning is related to context.

5:7 “Clean out the old leaven” This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. It is an allusion to the Jewish custom of removing yeast from the house just before Passover each year (cf. Exod. 12:15). The annual ritual was a symbol of repentance.

NASB “that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened”
NKJV “that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened”
NRSV “that you may be a new batch, as you really are unleavened”
TEV “so that you will be entirely pure. Then you will be like a new batch of dough without any yeast, as indeed I know you actually are”
NJB “so that you can be the fresh dough, unleavened as you are”

This shows Paul’s typical combination of the MORAL command linked with the POSITIONAL statement. What we are in Christ positionally, we are to become in Christlike lifestyle. They were the people of God (i.e. unleavened), but would be the eschatological people of God (i.e. new lump).

NASB “For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed”
NKJV “For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us”
NRSV “For our Passover feast is ready, now that Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed”
TEV “For our Passover Festival is ready, now that Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed”
NJB “For our Passover has been sacrificed, that is, Christ”

Paul relates the death of Christ to the OT concept of the Passover Lamb (cf. Exod. 12:15ff; 13:7). This is the only place in the NT that this connection is specifically stated. John the Baptist saw this connection and called Jesus “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” in John 1:29.

5:8 “Therefore let us celebrate the feast” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE (a HORTATORY SUBJUNCTIVE calls for action). It relates to the only OT fast day (cf. Lev. 26), called the Day of Atonement in v. 7, while vv. 7b and 8 relate to the Passover Feast (cf. Exod. 12). This refers to our continual lifestyle because of Christ’s work for us and in us, but with an element of contingency (i.e. SUBJUNCTIVE mood).

“not with old leaven” This refers to the New Covenant in Christ (cf. Jer. 31:31-34). This new covenant excludes human boasting and arrogance. The death of Christ is the watershed of biblical revelation.

“nor with malice and wickedness” In context and by contrast, Paul is asserting the improper, even evil, motives and actions of some of the factions in the house churches of Corinth.
“but with sincerity” This rare word is possibly a compound term from “sunshine” and “judge.” It conveys the concept of unhidden, pure motives (cf. 5:8; II Cor. 1:12; 2:17; Phil. 1:10; II Pet. 3:1).

“truth” The etymology of *alētheia* is “to expose, un conceal, clearly manifest,” which is parallel with the root meaning of “sincerity.” Paul is concerned with motives! See Special Topic at II Cor. 13:8.

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:9-13

*I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; 10*I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters, for then you would have to go out of the world. 11*But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler not even to eat with such a one. 12*For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? 13*But those who are outside, God judges. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES.

5:9 “I wrote to you in my letter” This probably refers to a lost letter (cf. A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, p. 115 and M. R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, p. 769). It is possible that several of Paul’s letters have been lost (cf. Col. 4:16) or it could be an EPISTOLARY AORIST (cf. 9:15), which would refer to I Corinthians, which he was currently writing (cf. v. 11).

“immoral people” This is the Greek term *pornos* (cf. 5:9,10,11; 6:9). It relates to “immorality” (i.e. *porneia* cf. 5:1 [twice]; 6:13,18; 7:2; II Cor. 12:21) and “commit immorality” (i.e. *porneu* cf. 6:18; 10:8).

These new believers at Corinth were mostly Gentiles (probably Romans). Pagans worshiped with drunkenness and sexual acts at the temples of their gods and at special public and private dinners. Their new faith in Christ was still tainted with their Gentile past and culture.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: VICES AND VIRTUES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Lists of both vices and virtues are common in the NT. Often they reflect both rabbinical and cultural (Hellenistic) lists. The NT lists of contrasting characteristics can be seen in

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<td>3. Peter</td>
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Paul’s letter had been misunderstood. Paul urged the new believers to flee immorality. However, some interpreted this as “never associate with.” Paul had to clarify his meaning. Believers live in a fallen world; it is impossible not to come in contact with immoral people (especially if we take seriously Matt. 28:19). What Paul meant was do not let active pagans be your covenant brother, fellow church members or even best friend. This is a PRESENT MIDDLE INFINITIVE of the term sunanamignumi, which means “to mix together” (cf. 5:9,11; II Thess. 3:6,14). Verses 10-11 give a clear picture of the cultural setting of the church at Corinth.

5:11 NASB “any so-called brother”
NKJV “anyone named a brother”
NRSV “anyone who bears the name of brother or sister”
TEV “a person who calls himself a believer”
NJB “anyone going by the name of brother”

This phrase is a PRESENT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE, which links up with the THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence. It refers to someone claiming the name of Christ (cf. Eph. 5:3) or calling on the name of Christ (cf. Rom. 10:9-13; Phil 2:11). Taking Christ’s name meant taking His character. It is very clear that Paul (like Jesus) believed that one’s lifestyle revealed one’s true self (cf. Matt. 7:15-23). Profession must be matched with knowledge of the gospel, the indwelling Spirit, personal obedience, and perseverance.

“if” This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE, which means possible action. There are several lists in Paul’s writings of the sins of the flesh (cf. Romans 1:29-37; I Cor. 5:10-11; 6:9-10; II Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 4:31; 5:3-4; Col. 3:5-9).

“not even to eat with such a one” This may refer to the Lord’s Supper, but could refer to social contact (cf. 10:27). In Roman culture dinners were often opportunities for immorality.

5:12 Paul and the church must deal with members, but believers must allow God to deal with non-members. Believers must not judge one another (cf. Matt. 7:1ff; Rom. 14:1-15:13), but (1) we must examine each other’s fruits for leadership positions (cf. 6:1-3; Matt. 7) and (2) we must exercise church discipline when the reputation of the church is at risk. This is often a fine line! By implication Paul is asserting that the sinning man of v. 1 must be placed in the realm of God’s judgment (i.e. outside the church).

One wonders how this context relates to modern societies where believers and non-believers have an opportunity by voting to regulate social norms. Should believers vigorously participate in the political process? This context is limited to judgment relating to church discipline and not western, modern democracy. Believers are citizens of two realms with obligations and privileges in both! God’s Spirit, God’s will, and God’s Book help us as believers find our way in this fallen world, but unbelievers are exploited and manipulated by sin, self, and Satan. They need our witness and compassion, not our judgmental self-righteousness. They are not capable of understanding our motives, purposes, and action.

The problem of when and how Christians should “judge” each other caused several Greek manuscripts to alter this text.

1. The very early papyrus manuscript P⁴⁶ (about A.D. 200) as well as the Bahairic Coptic translation (3rd century) and Peshitta Syriac translation (5th century) just omit the negative and translate the sentence as an IMPERATIVE, “Judge ye those who are inside [the church]” (cf. Bruce M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, p. 551).

2. The Sahidic Coptic translation (3rd century) put the negative with the preceding sentence, “For what have I to do with judging those who are outside and not those who are inside? Judge those who are inside” (Metzger, p. 51).

Paul clinched his argument from the Jewish point of view by alluding to the writings of Moses (cf. Deut. 13:5; 17:7,12; 19:19; 21:21; 22:21,24; 24:7). If the church tolerates (even glories in) immoral members they will affect the whole church (cf. v. 11).
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why do churches not practice church discipline today?
2. How do we relate Paul’s apostolic authority with the authority of the local church?
3. What does it mean to turn someone over to Satan for destruction of his flesh?
4. How many letters did Paul write to Corinth?
I CORINTHIANS 6

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

<table>
<thead>
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READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

OPENING COMMENTS

I have, through the years, had several lawyers ask me about how this context relates to our modern society. First, the prohibition against taking someone (even another Christian) to court must be dealt with. One could argue that modern courts differ from pagan courts, but how so? Much of our law is also based on Roman law. Some judges today are believers, but that should not affect their judicial rulings.

There seem to be several issues involved.
1. The motive and purpose of the litigation are crucial, not just the legal basis of the case. We live in a litigious society, just like ancient Athens. Often pride, money, or revenge are the real issues.
2. The resulting social impact of greedy, petty, or angry Christians in open court must be avoided. Each believer has a corporate obligation to the Kingdom of God. Our witness is crucial.
3. However, the church has not provided an effective means of arbitration between believers. There is not an ecclesiastical forum for believers to air and deal with issues that are important to them or that are inherently unfair.
4. Possibly one solution is a Christian Lawyers Association with spiritual resources (i.e. Scripture, godly wisdom, etc.), not just legal precedent, which deals with legal issues involving believers. Believers (i.e. believing lawyers) who feel led to be involved in lawsuits should ask God’s guidance and establish guidelines by which they choose to practice law. This could develop into a forum for arbitration between believers.

Although the NT is historically and culturally conditioned, the basic problems and tendencies of humanity are not. God is speaking through these texts and believers must hear His words and will, though not in first century Greco-Roman categories. These texts call for believers to be less litigious and more Christlike. They call for the church to provide a forum (like the synagogue courts). They shout at us that personal loss is better than Kingdom (i.e. gospel) loss!

In a day of little church discipline, rampant divorce between believers, combined with a greedy, litigious society, chapters 5 and 6 are crucial texts for us to study and implement, both corporately (church and churches) and individually. American freedoms are based on equality under the law. This means as believers we live in two spheres or realms, one civil and one spiritual. We dare not abolish our legal system, but we must remember our heavenly citizenship. Both realms have rights and responsibilities. But one realm does have priority (cf. 6:19-20)!

Some believers may view the issue of litigation and the proper reasons for litigation differently. We all must walk in the light we have. This text can increase that light.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:1-6</th>
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<td>1Does any one of you, when he has a case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous and not before the saints? 2Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? 3Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life? 4So if you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church? 5I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren, but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers?</td>
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6:1
NASB “a case”
NKJV “a matter”
NRSV “a grievance”
TEV “a dispute”
NJB “a complaint”

This is used in the Koine Greek Papyri found in Egypt for (1) “an action” or “a deed”; (2) “a lawsuit”; (3) “trouble” or “difficulty”; (4) “business” or “trade” (cf. Moulton and Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament, p. 532). Number two fits this context best. We know from the Athenian documents that Greeks were culturally prone to litigations. The same, to some extent, applies to Romans. The Corinth of Paul’s day was not Greek, but Roman (see Bruce W. Winter, After Paul Left Corinth, Eerdmans, 2001).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NASB</th>
<th>“his neighbor”</th>
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<tr>
<td>NKJV, NRSV, NJB</td>
<td>“another”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEV</td>
<td>“another Christian”</td>
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This is literally heteros (cf. 10:24; 14:17; Gal. 6:4). In Classical Greek there was a distinction between alla (i.e another of the same kind) and heteros (i.e. another of a different kind). This distinction in Koine Greek (as were many of the distinctions of Classical Greek grammar and usage) was fading. This context is a good example. The use here of heteros, referring to a fellow believer, is paralleled in Rom. 13:8. In Rom. 2:1 the term has a wider meaning, possibly neighbor, fellow citizen, or Jew. The contextual clincher for the connotation in this verse is the phrase “before the saints.” A lost neighbor would probably not agree to go before a church court (cf. Matt. 18:17; James 2:1-4) in a dispute with a believer.

It is surely possible that Paul had a two-level distinction. It is a problem for a believer against a nonbeliever to go before a pagan tribunal. It is even worse for a believer to take another believer before a pagan tribunal. I prefer the interpretation that “neighbor” in v. 1 also means “covenant partner” or “fellow believer.”

| “dare” This Greek term (i.e. tolmaç) is used several times in the Corinthian letters in the sense of “to presume” or “to assure a boldness” (cf. 6:1; II Cor. 6:2,10; 11:21; and Rom. 5:7; 15:15,18; Jude 9). | |
Paul was not worried about believers being treated unfairly, but about exposing Christian problems before unbelievers. The Spirit is the key to interpersonal relationships in the church, not pagan law. Evangelism is more important than personal justice!

6:2 “do you not know” See note at 5:6.

“the saints” “Saints” (hagioi) is from the OT term “holy,” (kadosh) which meant “set apart for God’s service” (cf. Exod. 19:6; Deut. 7:6; I Cor. 1:2; II Cor. 1:1; Rom. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:2). It is always PLURAL in the NT except for one time in Philippians (4:21), but even there, it is used corporately. To be saved is to be part of the covenant community of faith, the family of believers. See Special Topic: Saints at 1:2.

God’s people are holy because of the imputed righteousness of Jesus (i.e. the INDICATIVE statement, cf. Rom. 4; II Cor. 5:21). It is God’s will that they live holy lives (i.e. the IMPERATIVE command, cf. Eph. 1:4; 4:1; 5:27; Col. 1:22; 3:12). Believers are declared holy (positional sanctification) and also called to lifestyle holiness (progressive sanctification). Justification and sanctification must be held together! See Special Topic: Sanctification at 1:2.

“will judge the world” Although Jesus mentioned specifically that the Apostles will act as judges, the logical extension of that truth is that saints will also judge (cf. Dan. 7:22,27; Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:28-30; Rev. 2:26, 3:21, 20:4). When and how are the hard questions.

“if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence, which assumes that saints will participate as judges in the end-time events.

“are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts”

This is biting sarcasm directed to those who claimed to have superior wisdom! This same term (i.e. anaxios) is used of the inappropriate behavior of the Corinthian churches at the Lord’s Supper (cf. 11:27,29). These immature believers, who claimed so much special spiritual insight, in reality did not know how to evaluate properly or act properly!

The term “smallest” is the superlative form of mikros. Paul used it earlier in 4:3. Its use heightens the sarcasm.

6:3 “Do you not know that we will judge angels” Believers are a higher spiritual order than the angels. It is hard for believers, trapped in this fallen world, to realize our true spiritual standing. Angels were created as servants of God and of redeemed humanity (cf. Heb. 1:14). It is humanity that is created in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27), not the angels. It is for humanity that Jesus gave His life, not for angels (cf. Heb. 2:14-16). Believers will one day judge the angels (i.e. rebellious angels, cf. Gen. 6; Matt. 25:41; II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6 or all angels as a metaphor of universal domination, Dan. 7:22, 27).

According to rabbinical theology the angels have always been jealous of God’s love, care, and provision for fallen humanity. The Jewish apocalyptic literature even asserts that Satan’s rebellion was related to God’s command to serve Adam’s race.

“How much more” This reflects a strong ENCLITIC PARTICLE (i.e. ge), which is used to indicate emphasis (cf. Moulton’s Analytical Lexicon, Revised, p. 75). The sarcastic contrast is obvious.

6:4 “if” This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence, which means potential action.

“do you appoint” There are several possible ways to translate this phrase. The theories are (1) INDICATIVE (a statement), “you do set up”; (2) INTERROGATIVE (a question), “do you set up?”; (3) exclamation (cf. NJB, NIV), “you set up!”; or (4) IMPERATIVE (a command), “set up.” The point is that the least Christian should be able to judge simple and ordinary earthly matters. To try to clarify the options more, there are two ways to view this text: (1) it is referring to pagan judges or (2) it is referring to the least significant members of the church. If so, it is continuing sarcasm.
NASB, NJB “who are of no account”
NKJV “those who are least esteemed”
NRSV, TEV “those who have no standing”

This very term (i.e. ἐξοθένησα, PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE) was used by Paul in 1:28 to show that God uses the “base things,” “the despised,” “the things that are not” to confound the world’s wisdom so that God Himself will receive the glory. Here it seems to imply those in the church with no standing or leadership skills. The least of the people of God are more adequate because of God’s wisdom and Spirit to deal with problems than the best educated and experienced unbelieving secular judges.

6:5 “I say this to your shame!” Paul uses this word often (cf. 4:14; 6:5; 15:34; II Thess. 3:14; Titus 2:8). Shaming is one of the Spirit’s tools to bring conviction and allow truth and trustworthy actions and attitudes to develop. This verse continues the biting sarcasm.

“What is it so, that there is not among you one wise man” This was biting sarcasm to this intellectually arrogant church. This is an emphatic double negative question, which expects a “yes” answer.

6:6 “and that before unbelievers” There is no ARTICLE, therefore the emphasis is on the worldly quality of “pagan” judges.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:7-8

7Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded? 8On the contrary, you yourselves wrong and defraud. You do this even to your brethren.

6:7 “actually, then, it is already” This phrase (i.e. ἐδεμένοις) implies that this church had already been doing these very things. They were already defeated!

This is literally “less,” but used in the sense of defeated or failed (cf. II Cor. 12:13; Rom. 11:12; II Pet. 2:19-20).

6:8 The western church, with its emphasis on the individual, has skewed the gospel. We have missed its continual emphasis on the whole, the corporate, the body! We see Christianity as something for us individually instead of something for the gospel. We are saved (individually) to serve the body (cf. I Cor. 12:7). Believers must develop a NT world view, see the world through God’s eyes and corporate, global purposes.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:9-11

9Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, 10nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. 11Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

6:9-10 Paul is obviously concerned about the lifestyle of individual Christians (cf. 5:10,11; 6:9-10), which reflects on the church. Salvation is not only a judicial act (i.e. justification by faith), it is a changed life (i.e. sanctification or Christlikeness, cf. Gal. 6:7).

The church was, and is, being “deceived.” This is a PRESENT PASSIVE IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which usually means to stop an act in process.
6:9 “do you not know” See note at 5:6. The implication is that believers, because of their salvation and indwelling of the Spirit, should know these things! But, baby (immature), carnal believers do not!!! They are mentally dominated by this fallen world’s system and the demonic (i.e. self deceived, culturally deceived, and satanically deceived, cf. 12:2).

“Do not be deceived” This is a PRESENT PASSIVE IMPERATIVE (The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Vol. 10, p. 223, says it is PRESENT MIDDLE, i.e. “Stop deceiving yourselves”) with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which usually means “stop an act in process.” This is an asyndeton like v. 18, which was a Koine Greek grammatical form which brought it to the attention of the reader or hearer.

“that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God” Paul states this twice for emphasis (vv. 9, 10). This brings the paradox of the gospel into sharp contrast. Salvation is free in the finished work of Christ, but covenantal salvation demands an appropriate and continuing response. Believers who are declared “right” in Christ must mature into Christlikeness. The goal of God has always been a righteous people that reflect His character. The NT is just like the OT in this regard. The radical nature of the New Covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34) is that human performance for salvation has been replaced with Christ’s performance. But this does not affect God’s desire for a righteous people. It just changes the mechanism. In this gospel period, believers are motivated by gratitude, not reward.

However, the spiritual principle of “sowing and reaping” is still in effect for believers and nonbelievers (cf. chapter 3). Oh, the tragedy of fruitless Christianity (cf. John 15; James 2:14-26; I Peter; I John). It impacts the Kingdom, the local church, the individual, and the lost.

Can a Christian who has committed the sins listed in vv. 9-10 be saved? For sure (cf. v. 11)! Can a Christian continue to commit these sins and be saved? Not without divine consequences—loss of fellowship with God, loss of the Spirit’s guidance, loss of assurance, loss of peace, loss of effective prayer, loss of true worship, loss of joy, loss of witness! What a price to pay!

There are several texts in Paul’s writings (cf. Acts 20:32; 26:18; I Cor. 6:9-10; 15:50; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5) which reflect Jesus’ words on inheriting the Kingdom (cf. Matt. 25:34).

NASB, NKJV, NRSV, TEV “fornicators”
NJB “the sexually immoral”

This is the general term for sexual immorality (cf. 5:1 [twice], 9,10; 6:9,11,13,18; 7:2; 10:8; II Cor. 12:21). Verses 9-10 list the sins related to first century pagan worship practices (cf. 5:9-11), which regularly involved promiscuous sexual activity in the name of the fertility god.

“idolaters” For a person with an OT perspective, there is nothing worse than this. The use of this term in the list of sins confirms that this is a list of pagan worship practices. All the Gentile believers at Corinth had come out of this background (cf. 6:11). Paul uses this concept (i.e. the worship of and service to false gods) often in his Corinthian letters (cf. 5:10,11; 6:9; 8:4,7,10; 10:7,14,19,28; 12:2; II Cor. 6:16).

“adulterers” This is the Greek term moichos, which refers to extramarital sexual unfaithfulness. This is the only place it is used in the Corinthian letters.

NASB “effeminate”
NKJV, NJB “sodomites”
NRSV “male prostitutes”
TEV “homosexual perverts”
NJB “self-indulgent”

This term (malakos) literally means soft. It could be used of clothing (cf. Matt. 11:8). When applied metaphorically of persons it referred to male prostitutes, usually young men. For a good article on homosexuality see Dictionary of Paul and His Letters, pp. 413-414.
This term (arsenokoitēs, from arsēn, a male, and keitē, one who lies with) refers to a male homosexual (cf. 1 Tim. 1:10; Rom. 1:27). This was a major problem in Roman society (cf. Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Tim. 1:10) as it was in the ancient Near East (cf. Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Deut. 23:18). These two related terms in v. 9 for homosexual activity may refer to the active (arsenokītai) and passive (malakoi) aspects of this sexual sin.

There is much modern cultural pressure to accept homosexuality as an appropriate alternate lifestyle. The Bible condemns it as a destructive lifestyle, out of the will of God for His creation.

1. it violates the command of Gen. 1 to be fruitful and multiply
2. it characterizes pagan worship and culture (cf. Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:26-27; and Jude 7)
3. it reveals a self-centered independence from God (cf. 1 Cor. 6:9-10)

However, before I leave this topic let me assert God’s love and forgiveness to all rebellious human beings. Christians have no right to act hatefully and arrogantly towards this particular sin, especially when it is obvious that all of us sin. Prayer, concern, testimony, and compassion do far more in this area than vehement condemnation. God’s Word and His Spirit will do the condemning if we let them. All sexual sins, not just this one, are an abomination to God and lead to judgment. Sexuality is a gift from God for mankind’s well-being, joy, and a stable society. But this powerful, God-given urge is often turned into rebellious, self-centered, pleasure-seeking, “more-for-me-at-any-cost,” living (cf. Rom. 8:1-8; Gal. 6:7-8).

6:11 “Such were some of you” This is an IMPERFECT INDICATIVE, which expresses a continual action in past time. This shows the moral blackness of the pagan culture of Paul’s day (cf. 12:2), but it also shows the marvelous grace and changing power of the gospel of God in Christ.

The changed lives of these converted pagans were a powerful witness to the gospel. But the change must be permanent and complete, not temporary and selective. They were different now, indwelt now, informed now. They must not return as a dog to his vomit or a pig to the mud (cf. 2 Pet. 2:22). The lost world is watching!

“but” Notice the threefold rendition of alla in the Greek text to denote these three distinct spiritual events: washing, sanctifying, and justifying performed by the Son and the Spirit through our faith, repentant response.

“you were washed” This is an AORIST MIDDLE INDICATIVE. This may refer to baptism as an initial, volitional, visible, symbolic act of inner cleansing (cf. Acts 2:38; 22:16; Titus 3:5). Most translations translate this phrase as a PASSIVE voice except the Williams translation, which has “you have washed yourselves clean.” Proselytes to Judaism baptized themselves when joining the synagogue. If this word is MIDDLE voice like Acts 22:16. This may be a theological allusion to the covenant responsibility discussion in Ezek. 18:31 combined with God’s initiating sovereignty (cf. Ezek. 36:25-27). This could be a metaphor for cleansing (cf. Titus 3:15).

“you were sanctified” This is an AORIST PASSIVE INDICATIVE by means of Christ’s death and the Spirit’s mediation (cf. 1:2,30). See Special Topic: Sanctification at 1:2d.

“you were justified” This is an AORIST PASSIVE INDICATIVE. Believers are both justified and sanctified when they believe (cf. Rom. 8:29). This positional theological standing mandates Christlike living. See Special Topic: Righteousness at 1:30c.

“in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God” This phrase probably confirms the interpretations that “washed” or “wash yourselves” in v. 11 refers to baptism (cf. Rom. 10:9-13). The early church’s public profession of faith was baptism. The candidates affirm their faith by verbally saying “I believe Jesus is Lord” or a similar liturgical confession.

The second phrase mentioning “Spirit” could be an allusion or liturgical formula based on Matt. 28:19, “baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” It is interesting how often Paul refers to “the name” in the opening chapters of I Corinthians.

1. a way of referring to believers (“who...call upon the name,” cf. 1:2)
2. a way of exhorting believers (cf. 1:10)
3. a way of asserting Paul’s authority (cf. 5:4)
4. a way of referring to believers’ initial act of calling on the name (cf. 6:11)

The name represents Jesus’ person, authority, characteristic, and status.

This is an obvious reference for the redemptive work of the Triune God (cf. vv. 10-11). The term “Trinity” is not a biblical word, but the concept is. If Jesus is divine and the Spirit is a person, then the one divine essence has three eternal, personal manifestations. See Special Topic: the Trinity at 2:10.
6:12-20

**NASB, NKJV**

“All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything. Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them. Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. Now God has not only raised the Lord, but will also raise us up through His power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be!

Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For He says, “THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH.” But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. 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? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

**6:12**

NASB, NKJV

NRSV “All things are lawful for me”

TEV “Someone will say, ‘I am allowed to do anything’”

NJB “For me everything is permissible”

This may refer to something Paul had said on an earlier occasion (cf. 10:23; Rom. 14:2,14,20) but it had been taken out of context by (1) the legalism of the Jewish believers or (2) the libertine false teachers who were using Christian freedom as a license to sin (cf. Gal. 5:13; I Pet. 2:16). Paul is trying to walk a fine line between the two extremes and yet speak to both.

This may be the first of Paul’s quoting of the slogans of the false teachers or the false teachers taking something out of context he had preached and extending his sayings into other areas (cf. 6:12,13; 7:1; 8:1,4; 10:23, see (1) The Cambridge History of the Bible, vol. 1, p. 244 and (2) Klein, Blomberg and Hubbard, Introduction to Biblical Interpretation, pp. 362-363). It is not that what they said was not true, but they took the truth beyond legitimate bounds. It is hard to know when Paul is using this technique. Possibly the following criteria may be helpful.

1. It is something Paul has himself said in other writings (cf. 10:23; Rom. 14:2,14,20).
2. It is a brief general statement of truth (like a proverb).
3. All biblical metaphors are true, but have limits as to their relevant application. No example or metaphor can be pushed at every level. They usually have one major application.

Paul attempts to restate the intended truth and limit the inappropriate extensions. This is the issue of hermeneutics in every age!

**“but not all things are profitable”** This verse speaks to the proper use of Christian freedom which must be exercised in self-limiting love (cf. 10:23; 14:26; Rom. 14:19; 15:2). The building up of the body of Christ is more important than personal rights and freedoms.

**“profitable”** This is a compound Greek term which means “to bring together for one’s benefit” (cf. 6:12; 7:35; 10:23; 12:7; II Cor. 8:10, the negative in 12:1). This parallels Paul’s statements in Rom. 14:19; 15:2; I Cor. 10:23; 14:26; II Cor. 12:19; Eph. 4:12,29. Just because a believer is free in Christ does not mean that every thing edifies other believers. We limit our freedom in love for the Lord and His church. We always seek and promote the health and vitality of the whole body of Christ (cf. I Cor. 12:7).

**“but I will not be mastered by anything”**

This is a FUTURE PASSIVE INDICATIVE of the Greek term *exousia*. This term had a wide array of usages

1. authority
2. jurisdiction
3. control
4. power
5. supernatural power

Paul may have had several of these connotations in mind in this setting. There is an obvious word play between “lawful” (*exestin*) and “masted” (*exousiasthismosia*). He did not feel that (1) any human being had the right to judge him (cf. 2:14-15; 3:4-5); (2) no supernatural being had authority over him (cf. 12:2, unbelievers are led astray by the demonic); and (3) no personal freedom
or personal preference or personal temptation (i.e. tinos, an indefinite pronominal adjective singular in contrast to the double use of panta in this verse). Paul’s authority was from Christ. It was Christ and His Spirit who controlled and empowered him. Self-control is surely one of the fruits of the Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:23; Acts 24:25; II Pet. 1:6). Paul controls his freedom so that the gospel may prosper and so should we!

Paul is asserting that Christian freedom should not be an opportunity for personal license. Many things that are good can become improper motives, attitudes, or situations (cf. Rom. 14:23). This issue of Christian freedom and Christian responsibility is the critical issue of the Corinthian letters. This issue is also dealt with in Rom. 14:1-15:13. I would like to quote my opening remarks on this subject from the Roman commentary.

**CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS FROM ROMANS 14:1-12**

A. Romans 14:1-12 tries to balance the paradox of Christian freedom and responsibility. The literary unit runs through 15:13.

B. The problem which precipitated this chapter was possibly the tension between Gentile and Jewish believers in the church of Rome. Before conversion the Jews tended to be legalistic and the pagans tended to be immoral. Remember, this chapter is addressed to sincere followers of Jesus. This chapter does not address carnal believers (cf. I Cor. 3:1). The highest motive is ascribed to both groups. There is danger in the extremes on both sides. This discussion is not a license for nit-picking legalism or flaunting liberality.

C. Believers must be careful not to make their theology or ethics the standard for all other believers (cf. II Cor. 10:12). Believers must walk in the light they have, but understand that their theology is not automatically God’s theology. Believers are still affected by sin. We must encourage, exhort, and teach one another from the Scriptures, reason, and experience, but always in love. The more one knows the more one knows he does not know (cf. I Cor. 13:12)!

D. One’s attitude and motives before God are the real keys in evaluating his actions. Christians will stand before Christ to be judged on how they treated one another (cf. vv. 10,12 and II Cor. 5:10).

E. Martin Luther said, “A Christian man is a most free Lord of all, subject to none; the Christian man is a most dutiful servant of all, subject to all.” Biblical truth is often presented in a tension-filled paradox.

F. This difficult but crucial subject is dealt with in the entire literary unit of Romans 14:1-15:13 and also in I Corinthians 8-10 and Colossians 2:8-23.

G. However, it needs to be stated that pluralism among sincere believers is not a bad thing. Each believer has strengths and weaknesses. Each must walk in the light he/she has, always open to the Spirit and the Bible for more light. In this period of seeing through a glass darkly (I Cor. 13:8-13) one must walk in love (v. 15), and peace (vv. 17,19) for mutual edification.

H. The titles, “stronger” and “weaker,” which Paul gives to these groups, prejudices them to us. This was certainly not Paul’s intent. Both groups were sincere believers. We are not to attempt to mold other Christians into ourselves! We accept one another in Christ!

**CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO ROMANS 15:1-13**

A. The discussion about Christian freedom and responsibility is continuing from chapter 14.

B. The entire argument could be outlined as

1. accept one another because God accepts us in Christ (cf. 14:1,3; 15:7);  
2. do not judge one another because Christ is our only Master and Judge (cf. 14:3-12);  
3. love is more important than personal freedom (cf. 14:13-23);  
4. follow Christ’s example and lay down your rights for others’ edification and good (cf. 15:1-13).

C. 15:5-6 reflects the threefold purpose of the entire context of 14:1-15:13

1. live in harmony with one another;  
2. live in accordance with Christ’s example;  
3. with unified hearts and lips offer united praise to God.

D. This same tension between personal freedom and corporate responsibility is dealt with in I Cor. 8-10 and Col. 2:8-23.  

6:13  
**NASB** “Food is for the stomach”  
**NKJV** “Foods for the stomach and stomach for foods”  
**NRSV** “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food”  
**TEV** “Someone else will say, ‘Food is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food’”  
**NJB** “Foods are for the stomach, and the stomach is for foods”
This may be another slogan. It seems to refer to an improper, hermeneutical extension by the libertine false teachers. Paul asserts there is an element of truth in what they say (cf. Mark 7:19). Paul is either (1) using a literary technique called diatribe, where he is using supposed objectors to make his theological points or (2) quoting the slogans of the false teachers, some part of which may have come from Jesus’ teachings or Paul’s teachings.

“but God will do away with both of them” This is an allusion to the consummated Kingdom. Food is only a part of time, not eternity. Jesus did eat fish after His resurrection, but that was an opportunity to visit with His fearful disciples, not a physical necessity for Him. Jesus also talked about a Messianic banquet, but this, too, is a metaphor of fellowship, not a physical necessity to be repeated.

The phrase “do away with” (cf. NASB) or “destroy” (cf. NKJV) is katargeō. Paul used this word twenty-seven times, but in different senses. See Special Topic: Katargeō at 1:28c.

“Yet the body is not for immorality” This clearly shows the false extension. Humans are wonderfully created for life and its development on this planet. However, there are some God-given boundaries to insure a long, happy, fruitful existence. Since the fall (cf. Gen. 3), humanity tends to grab the immediate, the self-satisfying, the personal gratification at any cost!

“the body. . .for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body” These phrases are in a parallel relationship. The thrust seems to be that we belong to the Lord (cf. v. 20; 7:23; Acts 20:28). He wants to use our bodies for His service, His purposes. This may be a word play on the human body and Christ’s church as a body.

6:14 The definitive chapter in the New Testament on the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of believers is I Cor. 15.

In light of Greek thought (i.e. the physical body is evil) it needs to be emphasized that biblical thought does not depreciate the body. In this very context the body is (1) made “for the Lord” (cf. v. 13); (2) “members of Christ” (cf. v. 15); (3) a temple indwelt by the Spirit (cf. v. 19); and (4) to glorify Christ (cf. v. 20). The body is not evil. It will be resurrected and will be part of the eternal kingdom. However, it is also the realm of temptation and the moral battleground of sin. Jesus gave Himself physically for the church. Believers must follow the example (cf. I John 3:16).

“God has not only raised the Lord” In A Textual Commentary of the Greek New Testament Bruce M. Metzger delineates the Greek manuscript variants connected to the verb tense:

1. AORIST in MSS P46C2, B
2. PRESENT in MSS P11, P46, A, D’
3. FUTURE in MSS P46C1, N, C, D3

The FUTURE tense fits the context and the parallel in II Cor. 4:14” (p. 552).

This phrase is an excellent opportunity to show that the NT often attributes the works of redemption to all three Persons of the Godhead: (1) God the Father raised Jesus (cf. Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30,33,34,37; 17:31; Rom. 6:4,9; 10:9; I Cor. 6:14; II Cor. 4:14; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12; I Thess. 1:10); (2) God the Son raised Himself (cf. John 2:19-22; 10:17-18); (3) God the Spirit raised Jesus (cf. Rom. 8:11).

“But will also raise us up” Paul rejoiced in his current personal relationship with Christ (cf. 6:17). This is Paul’s realized eschatology (cf. C. H. Dodd). In a real sense heaven had come to Paul in this life and would only be supplemented in a future life.

Paul also believed that Jesus was returning very soon. In some texts Paul asserted that he would be alive at Christ’s return (cf. I Thess. 4:17; I Cor. 15:51-52; Phil. 3:20). However, in other texts he links himself with those who are raised from the dead (cf. I Cor. 6:14; II Cor. 4:14). The whole book of II Thessalonians expects a delayed Parousia, as do parts of Matt. 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21.

The Second Coming is the hope of every Christian generation, but the reality of only one generation. However, the resurrection with its new body and intimate fellowship is a reality for all believers!

6:15 “Do you not know” See note at 5:6.

“your bodies are members of Christ” Paul uses an analogy from Gen. 2:24 as a basis for a warning about believers’ oneness in sexual immorality of any kind. Believers are one with Christ (cf. 12:20,27; Rom. 12:5; Eph. 4:12,16,25).

“prostitute” This is the Greek term porne, which comes from the verb “to sell” (i.e. pernai, cf. Kittel, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. 6, p. 580). In Corinth (and the ancient Near East) there were two kinds of prostitutes, one cultic (i.e. pagan worship) and slaves (i.e. for profit). Paul repeatedly discussed porneia (cf. 5:1 [twice]; 9:10,11; 6:9,13,15,16,18; 7:2; 10:8; II Cor. 11:21). Pagan worship was expressed in sexual acts. Paul’s hearers had grown up and participated in these rituals and rites, but they are now Christians!
NASB “May it never be”
NKJV “Certainly not”
NRSV “Never”
TEV “Impossible”
NJB “Out of the question”

This exclamatory phrase (a rare OPTATIVE mood expressing a strong wish, desire, or prayer) is used often by Paul to express his horror at how some respond (i.e. diatribe) to his statements or rhetorical questions (cf. Rom. 3:4; 6:31; 6:2,15; 7:7,13; 9:14; 11:1,11; I Cor. 6:15; Gal. 2:17; 3:21; 6:14).

6:16 “THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH” This is a quote from Gen. 2:24. In marriage two persons voluntarily become one flesh. Physical intimacy is a strong bonding experience. It has an appropriate, God-ordained place in life. Like all of God’s gifts, it can be abused and taken beyond God-given bounds.

6:17 This is a spiritual analogy drawn from Gen. 2:24. As a man and wife become one flesh physically, the believer and his Lord become one spiritual entity (cf. John 17:11,23; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 5:21-33). A good example of this theological concept is Rom. 6:1-11. Believers die with Christ, are buried (in baptism) with Christ, and are raised with Christ.

NASB “the one who joins himself”
NKJV “he who is joined”
NRSV “anyone united”
TEV “he who joins himself”
NJB “anyone who attaches himself”

This is exactly parallel to 6:16. The grammatical construction is (1) a PRESENT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE as in v. 16 (cf. Zerwick and Grosvenor, A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament, p. 508) or (2) a PRESENT MIDDLE PARTICIPLE (cf. Harold K. Moulton, The analytical Greek Lexicon Revised, p. 236). The dynamic equivalent translations (i.e. TEV, NJB), as well as NASB, translate it as a MIDDLE voice. It is obvious that the context is focusing on the volition of the parties involved.

6:18 “Flee immorality” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE without a grammatical connection to what goes before or after (i.e. asyndeton), which for a Koine Greek reader was a way of emphasis, causing the phrase to stand out.

Human sexuality is a gift from a gracious God, but there are appropriate and inappropriate aspects related to how one exercises God’s gift. Paul affirms marriage by his quote of Gen. 2:24, but firmly set the limits on premarital or extramarital promiscuity.

Believers must be constantly diligent in this area, especially when the culture is promiscuous. Sex sins are major problems to the life of faith. Believers must live sexually appropriate transformed lives (cf. II Cor. 12:21; Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5).

“Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body” This is a strange comment. I wish I understood it better. It may reflect (1) the pagan culture of Corinth; (2) a teaching emphasis of the false teachers; or (3) a preaching emphasis of Paul (cf. vv. 12, 13).

Humans do not have a soul, they are a soul (cf. Gen. 2:7). Related to this is Paul’s understanding that believers do not have a body, they are a body. This is possibly a theological development from Genesis and against Greek thought that depreciated the physical body as evil. The OT and the NT affirm a physical resurrection which is a way of affirming the goodness and eternality of human corporeal existence. Later gnostic libertine or antinomian teachers would separate the physical aspects from the mental aspects, thereby affirming salvation as knowledge instead of godliness or righteousness. Paul affirms that the gospel is

1. a person to welcome
2. a truth about that person to believe
3. a life of that person to emulate

These cannot be separated! Humans are a unity! Salvation is comprehensive. The kingdom has arrived. There is an unbreakable bond between faith and obedience. Initial sanctification must lead to progressive sanctification. Righteousness is both a gift (INDICATIVE) and a command (IMPERATIVE).

My colleague at East Texas Baptist University, Dr. Bruce Tankersley, reminded me that in cultic prostitution the prostitute is a surrogate for the deity. Therefore, sexual relations were not only immoral, but idolatrous.

“your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit” Christianity replaces the physical temple of the Jews with the spiritual temple of Christ’s physical body (cf. John 2:21) as His corporate body, the church (cf. 10:16,17; 11:29; 12:12-27). This concept of temple is used in two senses in I Corinthians: (1) in 3:16-17 it is used of the entire local church and (2) here it is used of the individual believer. This expresses the fluid relationship between the corporate and individual aspects.

Paul’s major point in this context is a call to holiness. Believers are to be radically different from the surrounding culture. This has two purposes: (1) it accomplishes the goal of Christlikeness and (2) it attracts people to faith in Christ, which are the twin foci of the Great Commission (cf. Matt. 28:19-20).

“the Holy Spirit who is in you” This is an emphasis on the indwelling Holy Spirit. The power for the Christian life is a gift of God, just like salvation. We must yield ourselves to the Spirit’s work. All three persons of the Trinity indwell the believer: (1) the Spirit (cf. John 14:16-17; Rom. 8:9,11; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; II Tim. 1:14); (2) the Son (cf. Matt. 28:20; John 14:20,23; 15:4-5; Rom. 8:10; II Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27); (3) the Father (cf. John 14:23; II Cor. 6:16).

Believers are God-possessed people. This is volitionally different from demon possession in that the volitional cooperation of the believer is crucial at every stage and level. The demonic destroys the individual’s will, but the sovereign God has chosen to honor the freedom of His human creation. Only in Christian maturity (i.e. Christlikeness) does God’s will become the dominate guiding force!

6:20 “you have been bought with a price” This is an AORIST PASSIVE INDICATIVE. This metaphor comes from the slave market (cf. 7:22-23; Rom. 3:24; Gal. 3:13; 4:5). In the OT this was known as the go’el, which was a near relative who bought one back from slavery (cf. Lev. 25:25). This is a reference to Christ’s substitutionary, vicarious atonement (cf. Isa. 53; Mark 10:45; II Cor. 5:21). When one accepts Christ he relinquishes personal rights to his/her body and takes on the responsibility for the corporate health and vitality of the whole temple, the whole body (cf. I Cor. 12:7).

“glorify God in your body” This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE, an urgent command, not an option. How believers live is crucial for assurance, for peace, for witness! See Special Topic: glory at 2:7.

There are two extremes to avoid in the Christian life: (1) everything is improper; (2) everything is proper. Our bodies are for God, not for self; they are for service, not for sin (cf. Rom. 6). This view of the body is very different from the Greek view of the body as the prison house of the soul. The body is not evil, but it is the battleground of the spiritual life.

There is an additional phrase in NKJV, “and in your spirit, which are God’s,” which is in a few late uncial and in many later minuscule Greek manuscripts. However, the older texts do not have it. It is not in P66, N, A, B, C*, D*, F, or G.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Does this chapter teach that Christians in our day should not go to court?
2. How and when will saints judge the angels?
3. Does the list of sins in verses 9 and 10 refer to individual acts or habitual lifestyle?
4. When Paul asserts that everything is permissible for me, what does he mean exactly by that statement in reference to personal habits and specific commands in the Bible?
5. Why are sexual sins such a significant spiritual problem?
6. Explain the difference between the Greek view of the body and the Christian view of the body.
# I CORINTHIANS 7

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

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### READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. vii)

**FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.
CONCEPTUAL INSIGHTS TO 7:1-40

A. This is Paul’s most extensive discussion of marital relationships. He deals with
1. sexual immorality, 6:9-20; 7:2
2. marriage, vv. 2-5, 10-16, 28
3. singles, vv. 60-9, 25-26, 29-35
4. virgins, vv. 36-38
5. remarriage of widows and widowers, vv. 39-40
6. the recurrent theme is, “stay as you are,” vv. 1, 6-7, 8, 10, 17-24, 26-35, 37, 40; because of the current crisis and the expected parousia, he allows for exceptions

B. Chapter 7 is a very good example of how the local and temporal situation must be taken into account before one can accurately interpret the Bible or draw universal principles for application. It is very difficult in the book of I Corinthians to know the historical setting because
1. we do not know exactly what the current crisis was in Corinth (possibly famine)
2. we do not know which factious group Paul is addressing and in which verses (i.e. ascetics or libertines)
3. we do not have the letter that the church wrote to Paul asking these questions (cf. 7:1,25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1,12)

C. There seem to be two inappropriate attitudes/factions in Corinth that were causing great strife. The first were those people who tended toward asceticism (cf. 7:1). The other group were those who tended toward moral looseness or antinomianism (cf. 6:12; 10:23). All truth is attacked by the extremes. In I Cor. 7, Paul is trying to walk a practical and theological tightrope between these excesses, while still speaking to both groups.

D. There is a recurrent theme running through chapter 7. It is characterized by verses 17, 20, 24, 26, 40 and made allusion to in verse 8. That theme is “stay as you are” because the time is short. This cannot be a universal principle because (1) this is related to a period of persecution; (2) marriage is God’s will for mankind (cf. Gen. 1:28); and (3) this church faced internal problems with false teachers.

    One wonders which category (i.e. never married, once married, or married to an unbeliever) Paul himself experienced. Maybe he existentially knew them all. Most Jews married out of rabbinical interpretation of Gen.1:28 as well as tradition. Paul’s wife either died (i.e. he was a widower) or she left him because of his new faith (i.e. he was a divorcée). At the point of his call to salvation and ministry (i.e. the Damascus road) he personally chose celibacy, as did Barnabas, but he never condemned Peter’s marriage (cf. 9:5).

E. Marriage in the Bible is the expected norm (cf. Gen. 1:28; 2:18). Paul was probably married at one time (i.e. the implication of Acts 10:26, if Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin, then he had to be married). He asserts that marriage is an honorable state for the believer (cf. I Cor. 6:16; 7:14; II Cor. 11:2 and Eph. 5:22-31). We must remember that Paul is addressing a local first century, Gentile, factious, cosmopolitan situation.

F. Paul’s discussion of circumcision in verse 19 affirms that for Paul OT rituals and regulations have passed away in the gospel of Jesus Christ for believing Gentiles (cf. Acts 15) and are, therefore, not binding. Theologically speaking it is usually stated that Paul affirms the ethical aspects of the OT, but negates the ceremonial aspects. To some extent this is true.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:1-7

1Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. 2But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband. 3The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. 4The wife 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. 5Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. 6But this I say by way of concession, not of command. 7Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that.

7:1 “Now concerning the things about which you wrote” Possibly the issues addressed in chapters 1-6 were related to Paul by Chloe’s people. The phrase “now concerning” refers to specific questions that the church at Corinth sent to Paul probably by
Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (cf. 7:25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1,12). It is very difficult to interpret this chapter without knowing exactly what questions the Corinthians asked and who asked them (i.e. the faithful believers, the libertine group, the ascetic group, or one of the factious house churches).

NASB, NKJV  “it is good for a man not to touch a woman”  
NRSV  “it is well for a man, not to touch a woman”  
TEV  “A man does well not to marry”  
NJB  “Yes, it is a good thing for a man not to touch a woman”

The term “good” has a wide semantic field, but in this context it means “profitable” or “to one’s advantage” (cf. vv. 1,8,26). It is used in this same sense in the Septuagint in Gen. 2:18. Paul’s whole purpose is what is best for the individual in times of distress and what is best for the Kingdom of God.

This may refer to (1) a quote from the letter that the Corinthians wrote to Paul; (2) a slogan of one of the factious groups; or (3) a phrase taken out of Paul’s preaching, but misinterpreted and applied in an ascetic, legalistic, or libertine way.

This term “touch” has many different connotations, “lay hands on,” “handle,” “control”. It came to be used metaphorically of sexual contact (cf. LXX Gen. 20:6; Prov. 6:29; Josephus’ Antiquities 1.163; also Plato, Leges 8.840a; and Plutarch, Alex. M. 21.4. See Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Danker’s Lexicon, p. 102, but not used in a sexual sense in the Koine Papyri from Egypt).

Paul is not depreciating marriage or human sexuality, but humanity’s abuse of sexuality. Mankind always takes God’s gifts beyond God’s bounds. The social climate of Corinith was immoral to the extreme (cf. v. 2a).

NASB  “but because of immoralities”  
NKJV  “Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality”  
NRSV  “But because of cases of sexual immorality”  
TEV  “But because there is so much immorality”  
NJB  “yet to avoid immorality”

Marriage was not a problem for Paul. This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE, THIRD PERSON SINGULAR. Many believe he was a rabbi because he studied under Gamaliel, a rabbi, and he was zealous for the law. He knew that marriage was considered necessary to fulfill Genesis, “be fruitful and multiply” (cf. Gen. 1:28; 9:1,7). Sex is a gift from God. Gentile society was so sexually permissive and immoral because sex was used in pagan worship practices that Paul felt it necessary to address the issue.

Paul addresses the theological topic of celibacy and the current setting of persecution. There is a spiritual gift of celibacy. It is not more spiritual than marriage. The single person is able to devote more time, energy, and personal resources to ministry. This is good, but not for all, not for the majority!

Paul’s real issue in this context is not singleness, but “stay as you are.” The times were hard. Persecution was increasing. History tells us of three empire-wide famines during this period. Paul affirms marriage (cf. 6:16), but in the current social setting advocates singleness. This is not necessarily a universal principle, but a temporary, cultural admonition.

Paul’s concern in v. 2 is the pervasive immorality of first century Greco-Roman culture. In a promiscuous society faithful, monogamous marriage is far better spiritually, emotionally, and physically than pagan worship. Not only is marriage advocated, but the proper responsibility of each partner is affirmed.

7:2 “each man is to have his own wife and each woman is to have her own husband” These are two PRESENT IMPERATIVES, but are not functioning as commands, unless this anticipates v. 5. This is a grammatically parallel structure as are vv. 3 and 4. Marriage is not the exception. It is the norm, not a concession (cf. I Tim. 4:3; Heb. 13:4).

7:3 This verse also has two PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVES. Paul gives four guidelines in two verses. It is just possible that Paul is dealing with two problems in this area of human sexuality (cf. Gordon D. Fee, To What End Exegesis, pp. 88-98).

1. promiscuous Christians who continued their previous pagan sexual patterns, particularly at pagan temples and feasts (i.e. libertines)
2. Christians who have made even married sex a spiritual taboo (i.e. ascetics, cf. v. 5 and thereby v. 1 becomes a slogan or one of the factions)

7:4 This verse shows Paul’s ability to balance the impropriety of his own culture (cf. Eph. 5:21,22-33). In Paul’s day wives had few rights. Paul addresses both married partners with a mutual responsibility. Sexual needs are not evil. They are a God-given desire.
7:5 “Stop depriving one another” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which usually implies “stop an act in process.” This relates to the problem of asceticism in the Corinthian church. It also asserts that sex, or withholding sex, must not be a tool to control one’s spouse!

“except by agreement” This phrase begins with ei mē, which means “unless perhaps” or “unless it be” (cf. Luke 9:13). It is giving one possible exception to the stated norm. This type of structure (i.e. a rule then an exception) is used throughout this chapter. Paul is walking the theological tightrope between legalism/asceticism and libertinism/antinomianism. Each faction had its own agenda and slogans!

Notice Paul is expressing an egalitarian model. The husband does not have the right to choose alone! Biblical male headship is tragically misunderstood. The husband must act in self-giving ways for the maturity of the family (cf. Eph. 5:25-29), not for personal interest or in personal preference, but in spiritual stewardship.

NASB, NRSV “so that you may devote yourselves to prayer”
NKJV “that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer”
TEV “in order to spend your time in prayer”
NJB “to leave yourselves free for prayer”

“Fasting” is in the Textus Receptus following the MSS N, K, and L and the Peshitta. However, the vast majority of ancient Greek texts, P73, P66, A, B, C, D, G, P, most ancient translations, and most modern English translations, do not include it.

The NT principle on voluntary fasting periodically for spiritual purposes is paralleled here with sexual abstinence within marriage periodically for spiritual purposes. As fasting focuses the mind on God’s will, so too, can limited sexual abstinence.

“so that Satan will not tempt you” Even married couples need to be extremely careful of Satan’s insidious temptations within marriage. Human sexuality, though a gift from God, is a powerful human drive. Satan uses this aspect of biological need as a tool to alienate fallen mankind from God. This is true both for lost and saved, though at different levels (cf. I Tim. 5:14-15).

In this context there is obviously a problem relating to sexuality in the church. Probably it involved both extremes of asceticism or libertinism.

SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSONAL EVIL

This is a very difficult subject for several reasons
1. The OT does not reveal an archenemy to good, but a servant of YHWH who offers mankind an alternative and accuses mankind of unrighteousness.
2. The concept of a personal archenemy of God developed in the inter-biblical (non-canonical) literature under the influence of Persian religion (Zoroastrianism). This, in turn, greatly influenced rabbinical Judaism.
3. The NT develops the OT themes in surprisingly stark, but selective, categories.

If one approaches the study of evil from the perspective of biblical theology (each book or author or genre studied and outlined separately), then very different views of evil are revealed.

If, however, one approaches the study of evil from a non-biblical or extra-biblical approach of world religions or eastern religions, then much of the NT development is foreshadowed in Persian dualism and Greco-Roman spiritism.

If one is presuppositionally committed to the divine authority of Scripture, then the NT development must be seen as progressive revelation. Christians must guard against allowing Jewish folklore or western literature (i.e. Dante, Milton) to define the biblical concept. There is certainly mystery and ambiguity in this area of revelation. God has chosen not to reveal all aspects of evil, its origin, its purpose, but He has revealed its defeat!

In the OT the term Satan or accuser seems to relate to three separate groups
1. human accusers (I Sam. 29:4; II Sam. 19:22; I Kgs. 11:14,23,25; Ps. 109:6)
2. angelic accusers (Num. 22:22-23; Zech. 3:1)
3. demonic accusers (I Chr. 21:1; I Kgs. 22:21; Zech. 13:2)

Only later in the intertestamental period is the serpent of Gen. 3 identified with Satan (cf. Book of Wisdom 2:23-24; II Enoch 31:3), and not until even later does this become a rabbinical option (cf. Sot 9b and Sanh. 29a). The “sons of God” of Gen. 6 become angels in I Enoch 54:6. I mention this, not to assert its theological accuracy, but to show its development. In the NT these OT activities are attributed to angelic, personified evil (i.e. Satan) in II Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9.
The origin of personified evil is difficult or impossible (depending on your point of view) to determine from the OT. One reason for this is Israel’s strong monotheism (cf. I Kgs. 22:20-22; Eccl. 7:14; Isa. 45:7; Amos 3:6). All causality was attributed to YHWH to demonstrate His uniqueness and primacy (cf. Isa. 43:11; 44:6,8,24; 45:5-6,14,18,21,22).

Sources of possible information focus on (1) Job 1-2 where Satan is one of the “sons of God” (i.e. angels) or (2) Isa. 14; Ezek. 28 where prideful near eastern kings (Babylon and Tyre) are used to illustrate the pride of Satan (cf. I Tim. 3:6). I have mixed emotions about this approach. Ezekiel uses Garden of Eden metaphors not only for the king of Tyre as Satan (cf. Ezek. 28:12-16), but also for the king of Egypt as the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Ezek. 31). However, Isa. 14, particularly vv. 12-14, seems to describe an angelic revolt through pride. If God wanted to reveal to us the specific nature and origin of Satan this is a very oblique way and place to do it. We must guard against the trend of systematic theology of taking small, ambiguous parts of different testaments, authors, books, and genres and combining them as pieces of one divine puzzle.

Alfred Edersheim (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, vol. 2, appendices XIII [pp. 748-763] and XVI [pp. 770-776]) says that Rabbinical Judaism has been overly influenced by Persian dualism and demonic speculation. The rabbis are not a good source for truth in this area. Jesus radically diverges from the teachings of the Synagogue. I think that the rabbinical concept of angelic mediation and opposition in the giving of the law to Moses on Mt. Sinai opened the door to the concept of an arch-angelic enemy of YHWH as well as mankind. The two high gods of Iranian (Zoroastrian) dualism, Ahkiman and Ormaza, good and evil, and this dualism developed into a Judaic limited dualism of YHWH and Satan.

There is surely progressive revelation in the NT as to the development of evil, but not as elaborate as the rabbis proclaim. A good example of this difference is the “war in heaven.” The fall of Satan is a logical necessity, but the specifics are not given. Even what is given is veiled in apocalyptic genre (cf. Rev. 12:4,7,12-13). Although Satan is defeated and exiled to earth, he still functions as a servant of YHWH (cf. Matt. 4:1; Luke 22:31-32; I Cor. 5:5; I Tim. 1:20).

We must curb our curiosity in this area. There is a personal force of temptation and evil, but there is still only one God and mankind is still responsible for his/her choices. There is a spiritual battle, both before and after salvation. Victory can only come and remain in and through the Triune God. Evil has been defeated and will be removed!

"because of your lack of self-control" This is the term kratos, which means “power,” “strength,” “rule,” with the ALPHA PRIVATIVE, which negates the meaning. This lack of self-control is mentioned in

1. Matthew 23:25 in connection with the scribes and Pharisees
2. I Corinthians 7:5 in connection with married couples
3. II Timothy 3:3 in a list of vices.

The related term, egkrateia, has the connotation of self-control, especially related to sexual activity.

1. Acts 24:25 in a list of virtues presented by Paul to Felix
2. I Corinthians 7:9 in Paul’s discussion of marriage rights
3. I Corinthians 9:25 in connection with athletic training
4. Galatians 5:23 in Paul’s list of the fruits of the Spirit
5. II Peter 1:6 in a list of character traits which bring maturity.

Self-control is the developed practice of controlling the natural desires. The domination of the redeemed human spirit over the flesh is possible with the help of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Natural desires are not evil unless they are taken beyond God-given bounds.

7:6
NASB “But this I say by way of concession, not of command”
NKJV “But I say this as a concession, not a command”
NRSV “This I say by way of concession, not of command”
TEV “I tell you this not as an order, but simply as a permission”
NJB “I am telling you this as a concession, not an order”

Does v. 6 refer to (1) vv. 1-5; (2) vv. 3-5; (3) v. 5; or (4) v. 7? Paul is giving his Spirit-led opinion. He expected (1) the Second Coming at any moment; (2) increased persecution at any moment; or (3) continuing famine. His purpose was to help believers cope with current circumstances, not limit them.

7:7 “Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am” This may refer to (1) Paul as a single person; (2) Paul as content; or (3) Paul as self-controlled (cf. v. 9). Paul was probably married at one time because of the cultural pressure from his Jewish background and the implications of Acts 26:10, where Paul seems to be a member of the Sanhedrin (i.e. “I cast a vote”). If he was part of the Sanhedrin, he had to be married.

Paul’s desire that all believers remain as he was needs to be clarified in several ways. First, Paul expected the Second Coming in his lifetime, as did all first century Christians. The any-moment return of Jesus is meant to be a strong motivator towards Christlikeness and evangelism in every age. Second, Paul’s view must be seen in light of God’s command “to be fruitful
and multiply” of Gen. 1:28. If Christians were all single what of the next generation? Third, Paul himself had a high view of marriage (cf. 6:16), how else could he use it as the analogy of Christ and the church compared to husband and wife in Eph. 5:22-33?

- “each man has his own gift from God” This seems to refer to celibacy as one of many spiritual gifts (cf. Matt. 19:12). It is not listed in any of the list of gifts (Rom. 12; I Cor. 12; Eph. 4). It does not seem to be a typical action or function as other gifts.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:8-9**

8But I say to the unmarried and to widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I. 9But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

7:8 “the unmarried and to widows” The first term is MASCULINE and could refer to (1) all unmarried people or (2) to widowers. The second term is FEMININE and relates to (1) those whose spouses had died or (2) widows.

- “if” This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence, which refers to potential action.

- “it is good for them” See note at 7:1 on “good.”

- “they remain even as I” Paul has just mentioned a spiritual gift in v. 7, but this verse mentions a situation in life, not a gift. Possibly “gift” is used in this context in the sense of attitude or perspective.

7:9 “if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL which is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes. Many will want to marry not because they are evil, but because they do not have the gift of celibacy.

- “they do not have self-control” This sounds so negative to modern ears. Is Paul saying marriage is a sign of a believer’s lack of self-control? Is it a less spiritual state? In light of the whole of Scripture this cannot be true. Paul is directing his comments to the current local, temporal situation. This is not a universal comment on marriage and singleness. Marriage is not the lesser of two evils; promiscuous sex, however, is always out of bounds.

- “let them marry” This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. Paul supported marriage (cf. I Tim. 5:14).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:10-11**

10But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband 11(but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife.

7:10 “to the married” This is the third of the groups addressed: “the unmarried,” “the widowed,” and now “the married.”

- “not I, but the Lord” By this phrase Paul is referring to the words of Jesus, many, but not all of them, recorded in the Synoptic Gospels concerning divorce (cf. Matt. 5:32, 19:6; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:8).

This is a good example of the fact that Paul is not dealing with all aspects of the Lord’s teaching on divorce, only one. Paul’s letters are “occasion documents.” He is reacting to the poor theology of both the libertines and ascetics. This situation continues the pattern of Paul affirming some of the statements of the false teachers or factions, but also denoting the limits of their slogans. Half-truths are so hard to correct, especially if there is abuse on both sides of the issue!
“that the wife should not leave her husband” This implies that both are believers (cf. vv. 12-16). Women did not have the right of divorce in Judaism, but they did in Roman society. Just because a given culture allows or disallows something does not mean that believers should avail themselves of the right or turn it into a taboo! Because one can does not mean one should (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13). There are certainly circumstances in which divorce is necessary: (1) the lesser of two wrongs; (2) reconciliation has become impossible; or (3) physical danger to the spouse and children is a real possibility.

At this point I want to reemphasize the biblical seriousness of making vows in deity’s name. Christian weddings are religious vows! God, more than secular society, holds believers accountable for how we treat His name. Marriage was meant to be permanent. Marriage is the norm, not the exception. In 2002 the current percentage of traditional homes in North America (i.e. husband, wife, and children) is down to 23%! Do you see the problem of easy divorce? Marriage is primarily a promise to God and then to another person. Strong Christian homes may be one of the most powerful witnessing tools in our day (so much like ancient Rome).

7:11 “if” This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which implies potential action. NASB puts this clause in parenthesis as a side comment. The SUBJUNCTIVE mood implies that divorces were occurring in the Christian community.

“she must remain unmarried” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. The question of Christian remarriage is a difficult one. Deuteronomy 24 was written by Moses to provide for remarriage. Jesus’ answers, in light of the Pharisees’ questions, do not specifically deal with the subject. One might say, what about Mark 10:11-12. The problem is that this Gospel does not include the exception clause as Matt. 5:32 does. How does the exception clause relate to remarriage? I Timothy 5:14-15 needs to be expanded in our day to a wider group than “young widows.” Surely God’s care for singles who desire to marry in I Cor. 7:9 must relate to our troubled society also. Humans were created by God as sexual creatures. Unless there is a gift of celibacy, and/or self-controlled maturity, there must be an appropriate sexual option for God’s people; sexual immorality is never an option, but a Christian remarriage may be an acceptable alternative. Grace and revelation must both apply here.

“or else be reconciled to her husband” This is an AORIST PASSIVE IMPERATIVE. In this cultural situation the Pauline options for the already married were (1) singleness or (2) reconciliation.

This verse has been used as a hard and fast universal rule by many modern believers. Reconciliation is always a hope unless remarriage of one of the partners has occurred. In that situation it ceases to be a desired result (i.e. it is forbidden in the OT). It is difficult to interpret I Corinthians because

1. there are obviously cultural issues that modern western culture does not directly deal with (i.e. food offered to idols, virgin partners in ministry, etc.).
2. there are two groups of personality types (i.e. ascetics or libertines) or theological factions. Paul’s words are an attempt to affirm the truths involved, but limit the excesses (i.e. dogmatic legalism, do not marry; and no-rules freedom, if it feels good, do it).

It is uncertain if these extremes reflect (1) Jews/Gentiles; (2) legalists/libertines; (3) personality types; or (4) two forms of Greek thought (later seen in Gnostic factions). The confusion comes when modern interpreters do not know

1. what the slogans were
2. the source of the slogans
   a. Paul’s earlier preaching
   b. Judaism
   c. Stoics/incipient Gnostics

Paul addresses both extremes! The difficulty is deciding which words are addressed to true believers and which to factious groups. Modern interpreters hear what they want to hear and condemn what they do not like! Our interpretations say more about our theology than Paul’s letter to a Roman city in first century Achaia.

“and that the husband should not divorce his wife” Remember this context is addressing believers who are married. There are two NT exceptions to this mandate: (1) inappropriate sexual activity (cf. Matt. 5:32, 19:9) and (2) unbelief (cf. vv. 12,13).
7:12 “to the rest” This would refer to previously married pagan couples where one had become a believer. This cannot be used as a prooftext for a believer marrying an unbeliever. This refers to a situation where both were originally unbelievers. One had received Christ and hopefully in time, so would the other (cf. v. 16).

NASB, NRSV “I say, not the Lord”
NKJV “I, not the Lord”
TEV “(I, myself, not the Lord)”
NJB “these instructions are my own, not the Lord’s”

This is not a disclaimer of inspiration by Paul, but simply a recognition that Paul did not know about any teachings of Jesus on this particular issue. Paul asserts his sense of inspiration in vv. 25 and 40 of this chapter.

“if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence. There were mixed couples in Corinth. This shows both the effectiveness of Paul’s preaching and the difficulty involved in being married to an unbeliever.

“he must not divorce her” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE, like the parallel in v. 13.

7:14
NASB, NKJV, NJB “For the unbelieving husband is sanctified”
NRSV “For the unbelieving husband is made holy”
TEV “For the unbelieving husband is made acceptable to God”

This is a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE as is the parallel phrase in v. 14. This does not imply that the unbelieving spouse is saved. This relates to the concern of some in Corinth that being married to an unbeliever might equal their participation in sin. They may have heard Paul’s teaching about one flesh (cf. 6:16-20). This must relate to the godly influence of the believing spouse on the family. This cannot relate to the unbeliever’s position in Christ. There is no way to be spiritually saved except through personal faith and repentance in Christ. Evangelism is the goal (cf. v. 16).

“the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband” There is a Greek manuscript variation in this phrase. Most of the early Greek manuscripts have “the brother” instead of “believing husband” (cf. MSS P46, Ψ, A, B, C, D*, G, and P). Greek scribes changed it to balance it with the previous parallel phrase (cf. MSS N₃, D⁵, K, and L).

“for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy” There have been many interpretations of this phrase; it refers to (1) legitimacy of children (i.e. legal sense); (2) ceremonial cleanliness (i.e. Jewish sense); or (3) the unbelieving spouse and children sharing in the blessings of the one Christian in the home (i.e. spiritual sense). Many have tried to interpret this verse in relation to the practice of infant baptism, but this seems highly improbable since the relationship of the believer to the children is exactly the same as the relationship of the unbeliever to the unbelieving spouse. See Special Topic: Holy at 3:17.

7:15 “if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence. Christianity caused some homes to break up (cf. Matt. 10:34-36; Luke 12:49-53).

NASB, NKJV “is not under bondage in such cases”
NRSV “in such a case the brother or sister is not bound”
TEV “In such cases, the Christian partner whether husband or wife, is free to act”
NJB “In these circumstances the brother or sister is no longer tied”

This is a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE of the term “enslaved.” This implies that Christians in this particular cultural situation may not instigate divorce proceedings, but if the unbelieving partner does, it is permissible. This has no relation to believers marrying non-believers; this situation refers to two married unbelievers of which one has been converted. In context this refers to separation, not remarriage (cf. v. 11), although Paul’s terminology is very similar to the “binding and loosing” of Jewish jurisprudence in which remarriage was assumed following Deut. 24:1-4. James S. Jeffers, The Greco-Roman World, says, “the term translated ‘separation’ in I Cor. 7:15 refers to divorce because the ancients had no equivalent of the modern legal concept of separation” (p. 247).

However, the issue of divorce seems to be settled for Paul in Jesus’ teachings (cf. Mark 10:2-12). Paul advocates “singleness” to those not “bound” and remarriage to those whose spouse has died!

“God has called us to peace” This is a PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE. It refers to peace with God which issues in peace within the believer and within his home. God wants His children to have happy, loving, fulfilling homes. This is often impossible
with an aggressive, unbelieving spouse and sometimes impossible with an immature, selfish, sinful Christian spouse! This lack of peace is the very reason why some “Christian” homes break up. Often one partner may be a believer, but not a mature one. Peace is not present in all “Christian” homes! I just cannot believe that Paul, in this context, is advocating staying together at any cost! There are dangerous physical and emotional situations. This cannot be a hard and fast universal mandate. It must be interpreted in context and with other texts. It is so hard to balance our respect for Scripture and the historical, cultural aspect in revelation (i.e. the Bible).

The UBS text prefers (B rating) “you” PLURAL, which is found in MSS N*, A, C, K, instead of “us” (MSS P46, \( \overline{N} \), B, D, F, G).

7:16 “For how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife” There are two possible interpretations here which are diametrically opposite: (1) this passage probably follows I Pet. 3:1-12 where evangelism is a meaningful reason for continuing the marriage relationship (cf. NRSV, TEV, NJB, NEB, NIV); or (2) marriage is not primarily for evangelism; it is for companionship and fellowship, therefore, a believing partner should not stay with the unbelieving partner in a situation of abuse and unlove, simply for the hope of evangelism (cf. footnote, Phillips translation, and LB).

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:17-20

7:17 NASB “Only”
NKJV “But”
NRSV “However”
TEV - omitted-
NJB “Anyway”
NIV “Nevertheless”

This introduces the expanded implications of Paul’s discussion about sexual issues. The Greek terms \( \epsiloni\, \mu\varepsilon \) can mean “unless,” “except,” or “but.”

N, NASB, NRSV “the Lord has assigned to each one”
NKJV “God has called each”
TEV “the Lord’s gift to you”
NJB “the Lord has allotted to him”

This verb \( \mu\epsilon\varepsilon\zeta\zeta\) means “to divide or distribute.” It is used in the Septuagint for the division of the Promised Land to the Jewish tribes by YHWH (cf. Exod. 15:9; Num. 26:53,55,56; Deut. 18:8), which makes it a metaphor for God’s people as does the next verb, “called.” YHWH “called” His people and they “called” on His name. In this context both verbs refer to God’s special giftedness (cf. 7:7), which allows people to serve Him (cf. 12:7,11). Whatever their life situation when they were called, saved and gifted, they are now to serve (i.e. “stay as you are,” vv. 8,17,20,24,26,40). Bloom where you are planted with God’s help and some exceptions.

N, NASB “in this manner let him walk”
NKJV “so let him walk”
NRSV “let each of you lead the life”
TEV “go on living”
NJB “let everyone continue in the part”

This is literally “walk” (i.e. PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE), which is a biblical metaphor for lifestyle (cf. Eph. 2:2,10; 4:1,17; 5:2,15; Col. 1:10; 2:6). Paul explains what he means in vv. 18-20.

“so I direct in all the churches” This phrase is repeated often in I Corinthians (cf. 4:17; 7:17; 11:16; 14:33; 16:1). The Corinthian church thought of themselves as “special,” “privileged,” and “uniquely gifted.” Paul counteracts this false arrogance by asserting that he teaches the same truths in all his churches.
7:18
NASB “He is not to become uncircumcised”
NKJV “Let him not become uncircumcised”
TEV “he should not try to remove the marks of circumcision”
NJB “If a man who is called has already been circumcised, then he must stay circumcised”

This is a PRESENT PASSIVE IMPERATIVE (the parallel in 7:18b is also PRESENT PASSIVE IMPERATIVE). This refers to someone surgically removing the signs of circumcision (cf. I Maccabees 1:15 and Josephus’ Antiq. 12:5:1).

7:19 “Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing” This shows Paul’s view of the OT rituals and regulations (cf. Acts 15; Rom. 2:28,29; Gal. 5:; 6:15). This was the very issue brought up at the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 and exploited by the Judaizers in the churches of Galatia. Paul’s theology at this point is very clear. Gentiles do not need to perform Jewish rites, rituals, and cultic procedures. Believing Jews must not be proud or ashamed of OT covenant practices they had participated in the past. True circumcision is of the heart (cf. 10:16; Deut. 30:6; Jer. 4:4), not the body, and it issues in “circumcised” ears (cf. Jer. 6:10) to hear God and lips (cf. Exod. 6:12,30) to speak His message, His new message in Christ (cf. Jer. 9:25,26).

“but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God” This is the emphasis of the OT prophets that obedience is more significant than the ritual (cf. I Sam. 15:22; Isa. 1:11-17; Hos. 6:6; Amos 5:21-27; Mic. 6:6-8). God looks at our attitude and motive before He looks at our acts. All of God’s dealings with fallen man, OT and NT, are on a covenantal basis. Obedience is crucial (cf. Luke 6:46), but aspects of the specific covenantal requirements have changed through time.

7:20 “Each man must remain in that condition in which he was called” The NKJV is more literal and keeps the word play “let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called” (cf. Eph. 4:1,4). This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. It is the recurrent theme of Paul throughout this context (vv. 8,17,20,24,26,40). The term “called” refers to when they had received Christ (cf. 1:20). See Special Topic: Called at 1:1.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:21-24

21Were you called while a slave? Do not worry about it; but if you are able also to become free, rather do that. 22For he who was called in the Lord while a slave, is the Lord’s freedman; likewise he who was called while free, is Christ’s slave.

23You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men. 24Brethren, each one is to remain with God in that condition in which he was called.

7:21
NASB “if you are able also to become free, rather do that”
NKJV “but if you can be made free, rather use it”
NRSV “even if you can gain your freedom, make use of your present condition now more than ever”
TEV “but if you have a chance to become free, use it”
NJB “even if you have a chance of freedom, you should prefer to make full use of your condition as a slave”

This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence, some slave will get the chance to be free, followed by an AORIST MIDDLE IMPERATIVE, “do it!” There are two possible interpretations: (1) that a slave should remain in the station in which he is called, vv. 20,24 or (2) that if he has an opportunity to become free, he/she should take advantage of this opportunity (cf. NASB, TEV, JB). This fits the immediate context on the freedom of (1) singles to marry, vv. 9 and 28 (cf. NRSV, NJB) and (2) believing partners to leave unbelieving partners, v. 15. Here is Paul’s personal advice and an individual believer’s choice side by side. All believers struggle with these “gray areas.” When the Lord or Scripture has not clearly addressed an issue, believers are given a “godly flexibility”! In some areas “one size” does not fit all!

SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL’S ADMONITIONS TO SLAVES

1. Be content, but if an opportunity for freedom avails itself, take it (I Cor. 7:21-24)
2. In Christ there is no slave or free (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11; cf. I Cor. 12:13)
3. Work as unto the Lord; He will repay (Eph. 6:5-9; Col. 3:22-25; cf. I Pet. 2:18-20)
4. In Christ slaves become brothers (I Tim. 6:2; Philemon vv. 16-17)
5. Godly slaves bring honor to God (I Tim. 6:1; Titus 2:9)

Paul’s admonition to slave owners:
Christian slaves and slave owners have the same master; therefore, they should treat each other with respect (Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 4:1).

7:22-23 In the Lord all believers are free; in the Lord all believers are servants (cf. 8:1-10:33; Rom. 14:1-15:13). Jesus, acting as our go’el, bought us from the slavery of sin and self. Now we serve Him (cf. 6:20; 7:23; Rom. 6; Col. 2:16-23).

7:23 “do not become slaves of men” Greek is an inflected language. Sometimes the form can have two possible meanings. This IMPERATIVE can be (1) PRESENT MIDDLE, “do not let yourselves be slaves of men” or (2) PRESENT PASSIVE, “do not be enslaved by men”). Both fit the context. Factions in the Corinthian church were trying to control all believers. This is still happening today. There must be freedom within limits; a freedom, not to self and sin, but to Christ (cf. Rom. 6 and 14); a freedom of individual lifestyle choices about how to best serve Christ guided by God’s giftedness and the present circumstances.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:25-31

25 Now concerning virgins I have no command of the Lord, but I give an opinion as one who by the mercy of the Lord is trustworthy. 26 I think then that this is good in view of the present distress, that it is good for a man to remain as he is. 27 Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife. 28 But if you marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Yet such will have trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare you. 29 But this I say, brethren, the time has been shortened, so that from now on those who have wives should be as though they had none; 30 and those who weep, as though they did not weep; and those who rejoice, as though they did not rejoice; and those who buy, as though they did not possess; 31 and those who use the world, as though they did not make full use of it; for the form of this world is passing away.

7:25 “Now concerning” This is a textual marker showing that Paul is moving on to another written question which he received from the Corinthian church (cf. 7:1,25; ;8:1; 12:1; 16:1,12).

“Now concerning virgins I have no command of the Lord, but I give an opinion as one who by the mercy of the Lord is trustworthy.” Some have tried to use Paul’s statement in vv. 6 and 25 to lower his authority as an Apostle or make this a disclaimer of inspiration. It is neither. This is an idiomatic way of admitting that he does not know whether Jesus ever addressed this issue specifically. Verses 25 and 40 show that Paul felt his apostleship and call gave him the authority to address issues that arose in the life of the early Gentile church.

“as on who by the mercy of the Lord is trustworthy” This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. This is an idiomatic way of asserting his apostolic authority and Spirit-led insight.

7:26

NASB, NKJV, NRSV, NIV “virgins”
TEV “unmarried people”
NJB “people remaining virgin”

The major question about this term is how its use in v. 25 is related to its use in v. 36 (see note at v. 36). The context of vv. 25-35 seems to relate to singleness vs. marriage as the preferred state in light of the current situation (the imminent Second Coming, governmental persecution, area-wide famine, or the single person’s ability to focus on serving Christ).

“that it is good for a man to remain as he is” There is a play on the word “good” (cf. 7:1,18,26), meaning “advantageous.” The recurrent theme of “stay in the same condition as when you were saved” (cf. vv. 8,12-13,18,21,24,26,27,37,40) is Paul’s theological standard in this letter.
7:27 “Are you bound to a wife” This is a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE from the tern ἁμαρτάνειν, which means to tie or bind. It is used in a metaphorical sense for marriage (cf. 7:27,39; Rom. 7:2). There is a parallel to this phrase in the same verse, which is also a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE, “Are you released from a wife?” Paul wants his hearers to stay as they are.

☐ “Do not seek to be released. . .do not seek a wife” These are both PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVES with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which usually means stop an act in process. Here again one wonders whether different factions were advocating different family patterns (celibacy, marriage, promiscuity) or if Paul’s purpose is maximum service to Christ. This is a recurrent issue. Paul seems to assert that (1) all should remain as they are; (2) if single, focus on serving Christ; (3) if there is a desire for marriage, no problem, but use your marriage to serve Christ! Believers remain single to serve, marry to serve, live in persecution to serve, live in freedom to serve, live in theological conviction to serve! Believers are saved to serve!

7:28 “if. . .if” These are both THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL sentences, which mean potential action.

☐ “you have not sinned” Paul is addressing a unique situation, not making universal statements. Marriage is the God-given norm (cf. Gen. 1:28).

☐ “if you. . .if a virgin” The question is to whom do these refer? The first relates to v. 27. If so, then this refers to remarriage. The second relates to v. 25, those who have never married. Both categories are addressed again in v. 34.

☐ “Yet such will have trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare you” This does not relate to marriage in general, but to the present crisis (cf. v. 26). Verses 32-34 do address marriage as a general principle.

☐ “trouble” See Special Topic: Tribulation at II Cor. 1:4.

7:29 “the time has been shortened” This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PERIPHRASTIC. There have been several interpretations of this phrase; it seems contextually to relate to v. 26 (“the present distress”). Calvin believed it referred to the brevity of human life; others along the same line believe it refers to the shortness of the opportunity of our Christian service. I believe it refers to the Second Coming (cf. v. 31; Rom. 13:11-12).

Did Paul expect an imminent return of Jesus or a delayed return? There are texts on both sides. I do not think Paul’s theology changed (or matured). In one of his first letters he teaches a delayed Second Coming (cf. II Thess. 2). Paul (as all NT authors) used the hope of the certain return of the Lord as an impetus to godly living and active service. The return of Christ is an expectation of every generation of believers, but the reality of only one!

For an interesting discussion on Apocalyptic eschatology and Paul’s comments in vv. 26,28,29, see Hard Sayings of the Bible, pp. 593-595.

7:29-30 “those who” These parallel phrases are describing normal daily human life. Believers are to remain focused on their ministry tasks, according to their spiritual giftedness (cf. vv. 32,35).

Believers are citizens of two realms, the spiritual and the physical or the church and the world. The physical is not evil, but transitory. Believers must be service-minded, gospel-minded. We use the world and its resources to serve the Kingdom. Otherwise, physical thing, worldly things, use us!

Do not let marriage act as a release from spiritual priorities! Live in both worlds with godly wisdom.

7:30 “as though they did not possess” See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: WEALTH

I. Perspective of the Old Testament as a whole
   A. God is the owner of all things
      1. Genesis 1-2  
      2. I Chronicles 29:11  
      3. Psalm 24:1; 50:12; 89:11  
      4. Isaiah 66:2  
   B. Humans are stewards of wealth for God’s purposes
      1. Deuteronomy 8:11-20  
      2. Leviticus 19:9-18
3. Job 31:16-33
4. Isaiah 58:6-10

C. Wealth is a part of worship
   1. the two tithes
      a. Numbers 18:21-29; Deut. 12:6-7; 14:22-27
      b. Deut. 14:28-29; 26:12-15
   2. Proverbs 3:9

D. Wealth is seen as a gift from God for Covenant fidelity
   1. Deuteronomy 27-28

E. Warning against wealth at the expense of others
   1. Proverbs 21:6
   2. Jeremiah 5:26-29
   3. Hosea 12:6-8
   4. Micah 6:9-12

F. Wealth is not sinful in itself unless it is priority
   1. Psalm 52:7; 62:10; 73:3-9
   3. Job 31:24-28

II. Unique perspective of Proverbs
   A. Wealth placed in arena of personal effort
      2. hard work advocated—Proverbs 12:11,14; 13:11
   C. Wisdom (knowing God and His Word and living this knowledge) is better than riches—Proverbs 3:13-15; 8:9-11,18-21; 13:18
   D. Warnings and admonitions
      1. warnings
         c. beware of borrowing—Proverbs 22:7
         d. beware of fleetingness of wealth—Proverbs 23:4-5
         e. wealth will not help on judgment day—Proverbs 11:4
         f. wealth has many “friends”—Proverbs 14:20; 19:4
      2. admonitions
         b. righteousness better than wealth—Proverbs 16:8; 28:6,8,20-22
         c. prayer for need, not abundance—Proverbs 30:7-9
         d. giving to the poor is giving to God—Proverbs 14:31

III. Perspective of the New Testament
   A. Jesus
      1. wealth forms a unique temptation to trust in ourselves and our resources instead of God and His resources
b. Mark 10:23-31
c. Luke 12:15-21,33-34
d. Revelation 3:17-19
2. God will provide our physical needs
   a. Matthew 6:19-34
3. sowing is related to reaping (spiritual as well as physical)
   a. Mark 4:24
   b. Luke 6:36-38
   c. Matthew 6:14; 18:35
4. repentance affects wealth
   a. Luke 19:2-10
   b. Leviticus 5:16
5. economic exploitation condemned
   a. Matthew 23:25
   b. Mark 12:38-40
6. end-time judgment is related to our use of wealth—Matthew 25:31-46
B. Paul
   1. practical view like Proverbs (work)
      a. Ephesians 4:28
      b. I Thessalonians 4:11-12
      c. II Thessalonians 3:8,11-12
      d. I Timothy 5:8
   2. spiritual view like Jesus (things are fleeting, be content)
      a. I Timothy 6:6-10 (contentment)
      b. Philippians 4:11-12 (contentment)
      c. Hebrews 13:5 (contentment)
      d. I Timothy 6:17-19 (generosity and trust in God, not riches)
      e. I Corinthians 7:30-31 (transformation of things)

IV. Conclusions
   A. There is no systematic biblical theology concerning wealth.
   B. There is no definitive passage on this subject therefore, insights much be gleaned from different passages. Take care not to read your views into these isolated texts.
   C. Proverbs, which was written by the wise men (sages), has a different perspective than other types of biblical genre. Proverbs is practical and individually focused. It balances and must be balanced by other Scripture (cf. Jer. 18:18).
   D. Our day needs to analyze its views and practices concerning wealth in light of the Bible. Our priorities are misplaced if capitalism or communism are our only guide. Why and how one succeeds are more important questions than how much one has accumulated.
   E. Accumulation of wealth must be balanced with true worship and responsible stewardship (cf. II Cor. 8-9).

7:31 “for the form of this world is passing away” The OT prophets (esp. Isa. 56-66) reveal a new heaven and a new earth. The new age will be like the old, but purified, redeemed (cf. II Pet. 3:10-13). Personally I believe heaven will be a transformed garden of Eden—God, mankind, and the animals—perfect fellowship and order restored. Genesis 1-2 parallels Rev. 21-22.

Every generation of believers experiences the passing of this world’s order (i.e. schana) as they mature into Christlikeness. As we see Christ in clearer and clearer ways, the things of this life become duller and duller. We are in the world, but not of the world. We use the things of this world for evangelistic purposes, not personal purposes.
**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:32-35**

32 But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; 33 but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, 34 and his interests are divided. The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband. 35 This I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but to promote what is appropriate and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord.

**7:32-34** This describes the mutual commitment of married people to each other as “one flesh” (cf. Eph. 5:24-31). This is not evil, it is used to describe the relationship between Christ and His church. It is obvious that single people have more time and energy for ministry.

Paul’s concern throughout this context has been the ability to be an active believer without concern. Paul uses the term merimna, four times in two verses. This term can refer to frivolous concerns (cf. Matt. 10:19; Luke 12:25) or genuine concerns (cf. II Cor. 11:28; I Pet. 5:7). In this context it refers to the normal affairs of married life which can compete with the time and energy one has to use for the Lord. It may also relate to the unique pressures of being a believer in a pagan society (cf. v. 26).

Paul wants believers to (1) be active for Christ and (2) live in peace and contentment. Both are valid, but difficult.

**7:34 “The woman who is unmarried, and the virgin”** Paul is referring to two different kinds of unmarried Christian women: (1) one is older, one is younger; (2) the first was previously married (i.e. widows) and the second never married; and (3) the second possibly refers to a special group of celibate women or ministry partners (cf. vv. 36-38).

“that she may be holy both in body and spirit” This is not a disparaging comment about human sexuality being evil. This is how Paul’s teachings were interpreted by those influenced by Greek culture (i.e. Stoics, Gnostics, etc.). His point is that individuals focused on the Lord can spend their quality time, energy, and resources on spiritual things, whereas those married must also be concerned with family issues and responsibilities. See Special Topic: Holy at 3:17.

**SPECIAL TOPIC: BODY AND SPIRIT**

Body and spirit are not an ontological dichotomy in mankind, but a dual relationship to both this planet and to God. The Hebrew word nephesh (i.e. soul) is used of both mankind and the animals in Genesis, while “spirit” (ruah) is used uniquely of mankind. This is not a proof-text on the nature of mankind as a two-part (dichotomous, cf. I Cor. 7:34; Heb. 4:12) or three-part (trichotomous) being (cf. I Thess. 5:23). Mankind is primarily represented in the Bible as a unity (cf. Gen. 2:7; II Cor. 7:1). For a good summary of the theories of mankind as trichotomous, dichotomous, or a unity, see Millard J. Erickson’s Christian Theology (second edition), pp. 538-557 and Frank Stagg’s Polarities of Man’s Existence in Biblical Perspective.

**7:35 “not to put a restraint upon you”** This term was used of an animal halter.

**NASB** “but to promote what is appropriate and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord”

**NKJV** “but for what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord without distraction”

**NRSV** “but to promote good order and unhindered devotion to the Lord”

**TEV** “Instead, I want you to do what is right and proper, and to give yourself completely to the Lord’s service without any reservation”

**NJB** “but so that everything is as it should be, and you are able to give your undivided attention to the Lord”

The Greek phrase is very brief. The two key words are

1. euschēma, a compound from “good” and “form.” It denotes that which is proper, pleasing, and appropriate (cf. 12:23-24; 14:40; Rom. 13:13) similar in meaning to kalos in vv. 1,8,26.

2. amerispastos, an ALPHA PRIVATIVE with a term for turning about and thereby losing focus.

Paul wants all believers to be focused on Kingdom issues, on ministry! I certainly concur with this. My “problem” with this context is its seeming depreciation of marriage as an equal ministry model to celibacy. God instituted marriage; it is the norm. I am a stronger person and minister because of my marriage. This chapter has been used and abused by legalists and ascetics. The goal is focused ministry, not a a dogmatic rule on whether to marry or stay single. Paul had his immediate Spirit-led purposes, but these cannot be turned into universal principles which negate other inspired texts.
NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:36-38

36But if any man thinks that he is acting unbecomingly toward his virgin daughter, if she is past her youth, and if it must be so, let him do what he wishes, he does not sin; let her marry. 37But he who stands firm in his heart, being under no constraint, but has authority over his own will, and has decided this in his own heart, to keep his own virgin daughter, he will do well. 38So then both he who gives his own virgin daughter in marriage does well, and he who does not give her in marriage will do better.

7:36 “if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence which is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes.

NASB “any man. . .towards his virgin daughter”
NKJV “any man. . .towards his virgin”
NRSV “anyone. . .toward his fiancee”
TEV “In the case of an engaged couple who have decided not to marry, if the man. . .toward the young woman”
NJB “someone with strong passions. . .toward his fiancee”

There are three major lines of interpretation of this passage: (1) that this refers to a Christian father and his unmarried daughter (cf. NASB and JB); (2) that this refers to a Christian man and his fiancee (cf. NRSV, TEV, NJB); or (3) that this refers to a type of spiritual marriage which could be translated “partners in celibacy” (cf. NEB). Literally the term is “virgin.” Option #1 is using the phrase “he who gives” (v. 38) as referring to a father giving his daughter to be married. Option #2 picks up on the phrase in v. 36, “if she is past her youth.” This option seems best in light of all the evidence, both textual and historical. Option #3 assumes a particular historical situation. Some first century traveling preachers may have taken Christian virgins as ministry helpers and lived with them, but remained celibate as a sign of their self-control.


7:38 “he who does not give her in marriage will do better” This is not a disparaging comment on marriage, but a practical admonition in light of (1) the current crisis at Corinth; (2) the soonness of the Second Coming; and (3) the normal human sexual passion of the Christians involved.
NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:39-40

39A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. 40But in my opinion she is happier if she remains as she is; and I think that I also have the Spirit of God.

7:39 “A wife is bound as long as her husband lives” This is a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE (cf. v. 27). Verse 39 shows that remarriage after the death of a spouse is not evil (cf. I Tim. 5:14). It also shows how Paul is not trying to make hard and fast universal rules.

“only in the Lord” There are two possible interpretations: (1) a Christian must marry a Christian (cf. II Cor. 6:14) or (2) she must act as a Christian when she remarries. Often II Cor. 6:14 is used as a proof of option number one, but in context it is not specifically addressing this issue. However, by way of principle, it might be.

7:40 “But in my opinion...I think that I also have the Spirit of God” Paul is restating his recurrent theme and his sense of divine inspiration (cf. vv. 12,25).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How do we apply the truth of chapter 7 to today?
2. How much of chapter 7 is cultural and how much is universal?
3. Is celibacy a higher spiritual state for Paul than marriage? If so, why?
4. Does the Bible allow for divorce?  
   If so, does the Bible allow for remarriage? (vv. 28,39)
5. What was the “present crisis” to which Paul refers in v. 26?
6. Is the term “virgin” used differently in vv. 25 and 36?
I CORINTHIANS 8

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

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READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHT TO 8:1-13

A. The literary context runs from 8:1 through 11:1 as the outline above of NJB shows.

B. The question of eating meat offered to idols seems very strange to moderns. But in the context of Paul’s day and the people of Corinth it was a very important issue. Most social gatherings had religious connotations in Paul’s day. Also, the meat that was sold in the marketplaces of Corinth was mostly, if not all, from one of the heathen temples.

C. Theologically chapter 8 is parallel to Romans 14:1-15:13. See Contextual Insights in box at 6:12, which are notes taken from my commentary on Rom. 14:1-15:13. Both of these deal with the complicated and difficult subject of how a Christian balances his freedom in Christ and his responsibility in love to others.

Gordon Fee, To What End Exegesis?, pp. 105-128, thinks that this context refers not to just eating food sacrificed to an idol, but to actually attending and participating in the meal at the idol’s temple (which often involved sexual activity as well, cf. 10:6-22).
D. This chapter also emphasizes that knowledge, even revelatory knowledge, when it is not balanced with love for others, is only partially true (cf. 13:1-13).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:1-3

1Now concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies. 2If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know; 3but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him.

8:1 “Now concerning things sacrificed to idols” This is another question that was asked by the Corinthian church in a letter which they wrote to Paul (cf. 7:1,25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1,12), brought by Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (cf. 16:17).

NASB “things sacrificed to idols”
NKJV “things offered to idols”
NRSV “food sacrificed to idols”
TEV “food offered to idols”
NJB “food which has been dedicated to false gods”

This is a compound term from eiddon, which means a shape, figure, image, or statue; and thuó, which means to kill or to offer a sacrifice. This very term was used to prohibit eating meat offered to an idol in the letter sent to Gentile churches from the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15:29 (cf. Acts 21:25).

“we know that we all have knowledge” Possibly this is (1) a quote from the letter that the Corinthian church wrote to Paul; (2) a slogan of one of the factious groups; or (3) a quote from Paul’s earlier preaching, which the Corinthian church had misunderstood.

“Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies” Paul agrees with the statements contained in the Corinthian church’s letter, but limits the concepts and shows their true meaning and application.

Knowledge was one of the aspects of Greek culture in which some in the Corinthian church prided themselves. The problem with knowledge is that it tends to make one competitive and prideful (cf. 4:6,18,19; 5:2; 8:1; 13:4; II Cor. 12:20). See full note at 4:6. It focuses on the individual, not on the family, the body, the church.

The term “edify” is a building metaphor. Paul often speaks of “building up” or “edifying” the church or individual Christians (cf. Rom. 14:19; 15:2; I Cor. 8:1; 10:23; 14:3,5,12,26; II Cor. 10:8; 12:19; 13:10; Eph. 4:12,29; I Thess. 5:11).

Love is crucial in our Christian freedom. Knowledge will not solve the problem of pride; only self-limiting love can do this. Believers are to pursue that which builds up the church, not that which glorifies gifted individual Christians.

SPECIAL TOPIC: EDIFY

This term oikodomeő and its other forms are used often by Paul. Literally it means “to build a house” (cf. Matt. 7:24), but it came to be used metaphorically for:

1. Christ’s body, the church, I Cor. 3:9; Eph. 2:21; 4:16;
2. building up
   a. weak brothers, Rom. 15:1
   b. neighbors, Rom. 15:2
   c. one another, Eph. 4:29; I Thess. 5:11
   d. the saints for ministry, Eph. 4:11
3. we build up or edify by
   a. love, I Cor. 8:1; Eph. 4:16
   b. limiting personal freedoms, I Cor. 10:23-24
   c. avoiding speculations, I Tim. 1:4
d. limiting speakers in worship services (singers, teachers, prophets, tongue speakers, and interpreters), I Cor. 14:3,4,12

4. all things should edify
   a. Paul’s authority, II Cor. 10:8; 12:19; 13:10
   b. summary statements in Rom. 14:19 and I Cor. 14:26

8:2 “If” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence which is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes (cf. vv. 3,5).

- “anyone supposes that he knows anything” This is a PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE followed by a PERFECT INFINITIVE. This reflects the settled arrogance of the Corinthian church (cf. 3:18).

8:3 “but if anyone loves God” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence. There were those at Corinth who loved God. Notice Paul’s emphasis is on love (i.e. PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE), not on knowledge (cf. 13:1-13).

- “he is known by Him” Our knowledge of God is important, but knowledge about God is no substitute for a personal relationship, initiated by God, that issues in our love for one another which expresses our love for Him (cf. Gal. 4:6; II Tim. 2:19; I John 4:19).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:4-6

‘Therefore concerning the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world, and that there is no God but one. ‘For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, ‘yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.

8:4 “we know that there is no such thing as an idol in the world” There is a word play on the connotations in these verses between the Hebrew concept of “know” as personal relationship (cf. v. 3; Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5) and the Greek connotation of “know” as facts about something or someone (cf. vv. 1,2,4).

In the OT idols were “empty” or “vain.” They were not gods at all (cf. II Chr. 13:9; Isa. 37:19; 41:29; Jer. 2:11; Acts 14:15; Gal. 4:8). Paul, later in I Corinthians, asserts that demons use people’s superstitions and idolatry (cf. 10:20), but there is no reality to idols!

- “there is no God but one” This is the theological affirmation of monotheism (cf. I Tim. 2:5-6). According to biblical revelation there is only one true God (cf. v. 6; Deut. 4:35,39; Ps. 86:8,10). Often the OT speaks of other “elohim” (i.e. spiritual beings), but none like (i.e. in the same category, cf. Exod. 20:2-3; Deut. 32:39) YHWH (cf. Exod. 15:11; Ps. 86:8; 89:6). The Jewish prayer called the Shema from Deut. 6:4 is the Jewish affirmation quoted daily and at every worship service asserting the uniqueness and oneness of YHWH (cf. Mark 12:28-29).

8:5 Paul is asserting the reality of spiritual beings (i.e. good and evil angels and demons) by the use of a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence. This was a common OT understanding. See note at 8:4.

The term “gods” in the OT is elohim. This plural name can refer to Israel’s God (using a singular verb, cf. Gen. 1:1) or the gods of the nations (e.g. Gen. 35:2; Exod. 12:12; Lev. 19:4 Deut. 6:14) or even angelic beings (cf. I Sam. 28:13; ps. 82:1,6; I Cor. 10:19-21).
8:6 “yet for us there is but one God” This is the theological affirmation of monotheism. See note at v. 4.

In the history of religion there have been several categories of beliefs about deity.
1. animism, spiritual beings are related to natural processes or objects
2. polytheism, the existence of many gods
3. henotheism, many gods, but only one god for us (i.e. tribe, nation, geographica area)
4. monotheism, the existence of only one God (not the High God of a pantheon)

This text asserts the existence of many spiritual beings (cf. v. 5), but only one true God (cf. v. 4) and v. 6 is a form of henotheism. For those in the Judeo-Christian tradition there is only one creator/redeemer God who exists in three eternal persons. See Special Topic at 6:11.

“the Father” This is a wonderful intimate, personal, familial title for deity. It emphasizes God’s immanence. This aspect of God can only be known by His self-revelation, not human philosophy or discovery.

Although this familial title appears in the OT sparsely (cf. Deut. 32:5-6; Isa. 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 31:9,20; Hos. 11:3-4; Mal. 1:6; 2:10), it was Jesus, the Son, who fully revealed this astonishing, intimate, metaphorical analogy (cf. “our Father,” Matt. 6:9; 23:9; Eph. 4:6; Abba, Mark 14:36).

“from whom are all things” This is affirmation of God as creator (cf. 11:12; Rom. 11:36; II Cor. 5:18; Col. 1:16; Heb. 2:10).

“and we exist for Him” God made the world as a stage for humankind to have fellowship with Himself. Once the results of human rebellion (cf. Gen. 3) have been overcome in our salvation and restoration through Christ, we understand our intended purpose. Once the image of God in mankind is restored through Christ then the intimate, personal fellowship of Eden is restored.

“one Lord, Jesus Christ” The title “Lord” reflects an OT translation of YHWH, which is from the CAUSATIVE form of the Hebrew verb “to be” (cf. Exod. 3:14). The Jews were afraid to pronounce this holy name lest they take it in vain, therefore, they substituted the Hebrew term Adon or Lord.

Calling Jesus Lord (i.e. kurios is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew Adon) is a way of affirming His deity and oneness with YHWH (cf. Phil. 2:11). The concept of oneness is also significant (cf. Eph. 4:5; I Tim. 2:5).

Although Paul does not use Theos (i.e. God) for Jesus in this context, he does use it of Jesus in Acts 20:28; Rom. 9:5; and Titus 2:13 and Theotitas in Col. 2:9. There can be no doubt that in Paul’s mind Jesus is divine. Paul was a strict monotheist. He never qualifies how one God can eternally exist in three personal manifestations, but that is the obvious conclusion.

“by whom are all things, and we exist through Him” Jesus was the Father’s agent in creation (cf. John 1:3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2). In this passage we see the tension between our affirmation of monotheism and the NT revelation of the Trinity. See Special Topic at 6:11.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:7-13

8:7 “However not all men have this knowledge; but some, being accustomed to the idol until now, eat food as if it were sacrificed to an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. 8But food will not commend us to God; we are neither the worse if we do not eat, nor the better if we do eat. 9But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. 10For if someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol's temple, will not his conscience, if he is weak, be strengthened to eat things sacrificed to idols? 11For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died. 12And so, by sinning against the brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. 13Therefore, if food causes my brother to stumble, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to stumble.

8:7 “However not all men have this knowledge” In context this refers to the “weaker” and “stronger” Christian (cf. Rom. 14:1,2,14,22-23; 15:1). “Weak” in this context refers to superstition or legalism connected with one’s past, unconverted life. This is a sarcastic glance back to v. 1 and the arrogance of certain factions of the church of Corinth and their emphasis on wisdom and knowledge (cf. v. 11).

“and their conscience being weak is defiled” Believers must act in faith on the light we have (cf. Rom. 14:23), even when this knowledge is erroneous or spiritually childish. Believers are only responsible for what they do understand.

Paul uses the term “conscience” often in the Corinthian letters (cf. 4:4; 8:7,10,12; 10:25,27,28,29; II Cor. 1:12; 4:2; 5:11). It refers to that moral inner sense of what is appropriate or inappropriate (cf. Acts 23:1). The conscience can be affected by our past lives, our poor choices, or by the Spirit of God. It is not a flawless guide, but it does determine the boundaries of individual faith. Therefore, to violate our conscience, even if it is in error or weak, is a major faith problem.
The believer’s conscience needs to be more and more formed by the Word of God and the Spirit of God (cf. I Tim. 3:9). God will judge believers by the light they have (i.e. weak or strong), but all of us need to be open to the Bible and the Spirit for more light and to be growing in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. See fuller note on “conscience” at 10:25. See Special Topic: Weakness at II Cor. 12:9.

“defiled” This term originally referred to unclean clothing (cf. Zech. 3:3-4; Jude 23; Rev. 3:4). It came to be used figuratively for moral pollution (cf. Rev. 14:4).

It is surprising that this term is chosen to describe what happens to weak believers who violate their own faith boundaries. God looks at the heart in every situation. Breaking our faith understanding, even if weak or inappropriate, is a serious breach of faith!

8:8 “But food will not commend us to God” This shows the faulty theology, both of those who affirm asceticism, or Jewish legalism, as well as those who affirm radical freedom. Neither eating or not eating will present us acceptable to God (cf. Rom. 14:14,23; Mark 7:18-23). Love for God expressed in self-limiting love for other brothers and sisters in Christ is the key to peace and maturity within the Christian fellowship.

If...if There are two THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL phrases in v. 8, which show potential action.

8:9

NASB, NRSV “But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow becomes a stumbling block to the weak”

NKJV “But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours becomes a stumbling block to those who are weak”

TEV “Be careful, however, not to let your freedom of action make those who are weak in the faith fall into sin”

NJB “Only be careful that this freedom of yours does not in any way turn into an obstacle to trip those who are vulnerable”

This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. Christian freedom (i.e. exousia) must be controlled by love or it becomes a license (cf. 10:23-33; 13:1-13; Rom. 14:1-15:13). We are our brother’s keeper!

This subject of Christian freedom and responsibility is also discussed in Rom. 14:1-15:13. See the Contextual Insights from my commentary on Romans, chapters 14 and 15 at 6:12.

8:10 “if” This is another THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL, which means potential action.

NASB, NKJV “someone sees you, who have knowledge, dining in an idol’s temple”

NRSV “others see you who possess knowledge, eating in the temple of an idol”

TEV “Suppose a person whose conscience is weak in this matter, sees you, who have so-called ‘knowledge’ eating in the temple of an idol”

NJB “Suppose someone sees you who have the knowledge, sitting in the temple of some false god”

This phrase is translated ambiguously in NASB and NKJV. The idiomatic, dynamic equivalent translations of TEV and NJB capture the thought.

The knowledge Paul is referring to goes back to vv. 1-4. Strong believers know that there is only one God (cf. v. 4). Weak believers are still influenced by the past. Strong believers bend over backwards so as not to offend their weak brothers or sisters in Christ or sincere seekers (cf. v. 1).

True spiritual strength is not in knowledge only, but in loving actions toward other believers, even weak ones, superstitious ones, legalistic ones, ascetic ones, baby ones! True knowledge makes one a humble steward of the undeserved grace of God in Christ!

“dining in an idol’s temple” See notes at 10:14-22.

“be strengthened”

“be emboldened to eat”

“be encouraged to the point of eating”

“will not this encourage him to eat”

“may be encouraged to eat”

This is the term “build up” or “edify” as in verse 1. Here is is used in (1) a sarcastic sense about the destructive influence of the stronger brother’s actions or (2) a possible quote from the Corinthian letter related to how to help those with weak faith.
8:11
NASB  “For through your knowledge he who is weak is ruined, the brother for whose sake Christ died”
NKJV  “And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died”
NRSV  “So by your knowledge those weak believers for whom Christ died are destroyed”
TEV   “And so this weak person, your brother for whom Christ died, will perish because of your ‘knowledge’”
NJB   “And then it would be through your knowledge that this brother for whom Christ died, vulnerable as he is, has been lost”

The order of the Greek sentence emphasizes “your” (i.e. this so called superior knowledge you possess). When one Christian’s freedom destroys another Christian, that freedom is a disaster (cf. Rom. 14:15,20).

This is a sarcastic comment as in v. 10. The Corinthian church was proud of their knowledge (8:1). Here Paul shows knowledge can be a disaster. Paul always admonishes the “stronger” brother to have patience and concern for the “weaker” brother, because of Christ’s love for them both.

The terms “ruined,” “perish,” or “destroyed” must be interpreted in light of Rom. 14:22-23, where it means “causing another to sin,” which is analogous to the use of the term here. This is not ultimate destruction, but a temporary, yet serious, set-back in spiritual growth.

SPECIAL TOPIC: DESTRUCTION (APOLLUMI)

This term has a wide semantic field, which has caused great confusion in relation to the theological concepts of eternal judgment vs. annihilation. The basic literal meaning is from apo plus ollumi, to ruin, to destroy.

The problem comes in this term’s figurative usages. This can be clearly seen in Louw and Nida’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Based On Semantic Domains, vol. 2, p. 30. It lists several meanings of this term:

2. fail to obtain (ex. Matt. 10:42, vol. 1, p. 566)
5. die (ex. Matt. 10:39, vol. 1, p. 266)

Gerhard Kittel, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. 1, p. 394, tries to delineate the different usages by listing four meanings:

1. to destroy or kill (ex. Matt. 2:13; 27:20; Mark 3:6; 9:22; Luke 6:9; I Cor. 1:19)
2. to lose or suffer loss from (ex. Mark 9:41; Luke 15:4,8)
4. to be lost (ex. Matt. 5:29-30; Mark 2:22; Luke15: 4,6,24,32; 21:18; Acts 27:34)

Kittel then says,

“in general we may say that #2 and #4 underlie statements relating to this world as in the Synoptics, whereas #1 and #3 underlie those relating to the next world, as in Paul and John” (p. 394).

Herein lies the confusion. The term has such a wide semantic usage that different NT authors use it in a variety of ways. I like Robert B. Girdlestone, Synonyms of the Old Testament, pp. 275-277. He relates the term to those humans who are morally destroyed and waiting eternal separation from God versus those humans who know Christ and have eternal life in Him. The latter group is “saved,” while the former group is destroyed.

I personally do not think that this term denotes annihilation. The term “eternal” is used of both eternal punishment and eternal life in Matt. 25:46. To depreciate one is to depreciate both!

8:12 “by sinning against the brethren. . .you sin against Christ” This is a powerful statement. Our love for God is shown in our love for one another. Several times in the NT, people’s actions against believers are seen as actions against Christ (cf. Acts 9:4,5) and people’s actions for believers are seen as actions for Christ (cf. Matt. 25:40,45).

8:13 “if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence. Food issues were causing some believers to violate their personal faith assumptions.

“stumble” This is the Greek term that was used of trapping animals. Literally it referred to “a baited trap-stick.”

“I will never eat meat again” This verse has a very strong TRIPLE NEGATIVE construction (cf. Rom. 14:21). Freedom in Christ should edify, not destroy. The unstated implication is that Paul will not eat meat sacrificed to an idol or in an idol’s temple. This does not imply that Paul became a vegetarian.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. It is obvious that this particular problem in not a contemporary one; however, the universal principle here is very significant. State that principle in your own words.
2. How does one relate demon activity to world religions in our day?
3. If there is only one God, how can Jesus be divine?
4. Explain the relationship between Christian freedom and Christian responsibility.
5. Define “weak” and “strong” believers.
6. Should all believers be vegetarians?
# I CORINTHIANS 9

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

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## READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. vii)

**FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

## CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 9:1-27

A. This chapter is related to chapter 8 in the sense of seeking a balance between Christian rights and responsibility in love (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13 and I Cor. 8:1-11 and 13:1-13).

B. It is obvious from the context that Paul’s leadership was being attacked by some group or groups in the church at Corinth, apparently rhetorically trained Jewish itinerant teachers.
C. There is a variety of personal pronouns (and verb forms) used in this chapter.
   1. FIRST PERSON SINGULAR, in vv. 1-3,6,8,15-23,26-27
   2. FIRST PERSON PLURAL, in vv. 4-5,10-11,25
      a. since Barnabas is mentioned specifically in v. 6 he is probably to be assumed in v. 4-5
      b. in vv. 10-11 Paul seems to include Apollos and possibly other visiting preachers, even Peter
      c. often Paul used the editorial plural “we” to speak of himself
   3. SECOND PERSON PLURAL, in vv. 13,24 refers to the Corinthians who claims such “full” knowledge of the
      things of God
   4. Paul’s use of pronouns is notoriously difficult and the source of many Greek manuscript variants

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:1-2**

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

9:1 “*Am I not free*” There is a series of questions in this context. USB4 has fourteen, NASB has sixteen, NKJV has fifteen, NRSV has sixteen, TEV has fourteen, and NJB has twelve. It is uncertain if these are statements or questions (cf. Ellingworth and Hatton, *A Handbook on Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians*, p. 193). The questions in vv. 1-2 all expect a “yes” answer. The question in vv. 6,7,10, and 11 are stated so as to expect a “no” answer.

This is the use of “free” in the sense of spiritual freedom in Christ (cf. 9:19; 10:29), not Roman freedom (i.e. political rights).

**“Have I not seen Jesus our Lord”** This is PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE, which implies that a past action has resulted in a current state of being. Paul’s apostleship was being attacked because he was not one of the original Twelve. The qualifications for an apostle were that he had been with Jesus during His earthly life and had seen the resurrection (cf. Acts 1:15-26). Paul asserts that he had seen the resurrected Christ (cf. Acts 9:3,17,27; 22:14; I Cor. 15:8). Paul’s call was by a special act of Christ for a special mission to the Gentiles, which demanded special revelation (cf. Acts 18:9; 23:11).

Paul not only encountered Jesus personally on the road to Damascus, but several times during his ministry Jesus appeared to him to encourage him (cf. Acts 18:9-11; 22:17-21), or an angel as Jesus’ representative in Acts 27:23.

**“Are you not my work in the Lord”** The evidence of Paul’s apostleship was the numerous churches he had formed, of which Corinth was one (cf. 4:15; II Cor. 3:1-3).

9:2 “*If*” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence which shows that Paul’s authority was rejected by several different factions in the early church (cf. Acts 15 and Galatians).

**“for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord”** A seal in the ancient world was a warm blob of wax into which a signet ring was pressed to seal a letter or package. It was an assurance that the contents had not been opened; it showed who owned the contents; and it showed the genuineness of the contents, that it was sent by the right person. This type of seal became a metaphor of Christian certainty (cf. John 3:33; Rom. 4:11).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:3-7**

3. *My defense to those who examine me is this: 4Do we not have a right to eat and drink? 5Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? 6Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working? 7Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock?*

9:3 “*My defense*” This term (i.e. *apologia*) was used of a “legal defense” (cf. Acts 19:33; 22:1; 25:16; Phil. 1:7,17; I Pet. 3:15). Syntactically v. 3 may go with v. 2 or v. 4. The USB4, NRSV, and TEV show it to go with v. 4, while the NKJV and NJB do not break the paragraph at either point.

**“to those who examine me”** Paul was being criticized by some group or theological faction at Corinth (cf. 2:15; 4:3). They were claiming (1) that he was not a true apostle; (2) that he changed the Jerusalem apostles’ message; or (3) that he only preached for money. These charges are not specifically stated, but assumed from the historical setting and from the subjects Paul chose to address.
This begins a series of questions (cf. vv. 4-7) where Paul asserts his right as an Apostle to be supported by the local churches. However he personally chose not to exercise his rights (cf. 9:15,18; I Thess. 2:6), but he affirms the rights of other Christian workers.

“to take along...even as the rest of the apostles” The context is not directly asserting the right of the Apostles to have wives, although this is surely implied, but the right of the Apostles to have the church support them and their wives. The term “apostles” can refer to the Twelve or the wider usage of the term (cf. Acts 14:4,14; Rom. 16:6-7; I Cor. 4:9; Gal. 1:9; Eph. 4:11; Phil. 2:25; I Thess. 2:6). Because Peter is named separately, the latter group is implied. It is also possible that a group (i.e. one of the factions) in this church was elevating Peter’s Apostleship (cf. 1:12; 3:22).

NASB, NKJV, NRSV, NIV “a believing wife”
TEV, NJB, NEB “a Christian wife”

In Greek there is a double pair of nouns, “a sister, a wife,” which was idiomatic for “a believing wife.” The historical problem is how is this related to
1. the women who accompanied Jesus and the Apostolic group and helped them (cf. Matt. 27:55; Mark 15:40-41)
2. the woman discussed in 7:36-38 (i.e. a daughter or a virgin companion or a fiancee)
3. the ministry of the wives of church leaders similar to deaconesses of Rom. 16:1 or the “widows roll” of the Pastorals (cf. I Tim. 3:11; 5:9-10)

Probably all of the original Twelve were married because singleness among Jews was very rare. Jews would marry because of the commandment in Gen. 1:28; 9:1,7.

“even as the rest of the apostles” The term “apostle” has several connotations in the NT.
1. those who were called by Jesus and followed Him during His earthly life
2. Paul called in a special vision on the road to Damascus
3. an ongoing gift in the church (cf. Eph. 4:11), which included several people

The textual issue here is what do we make of Paul’s list.
1. the rest of the apostles
2. the brothers of the Lord
3. Cephas
4. Barnabas and Paul

“the brothers of the Lord” Jerome (A.D. 346-420) believed these were Jesus’ cousins; Epiphanius (A.D. 310-403) said they were children from Joseph’s previous marriage. Both of these interpretations are obviously related to the developing Roman Catholic presuppositions about Mary and not to the NT. Mary had further children after Jesus (cf. Matt. 12:26; 13:55; Mark 6:3; John 2:12; 7:3,5,10; Acts 1:14; Gal. 1:19).

It does imply that Jesus’ half brothers, who were active in the church, were considered leadership. As a matter of fact, one of Jesus’ relatives was the leader of the Jerusalem Church for several generations during the first century, starting with James.

“Cephas” This is the Aramaic form of the Greek Petros. It meant a large boulder or rock (cf. Matt. 8:14; John 1:42). Cephas was married (cf. Mark. 1:30).

Paul calls Peter “Cephas” in I Cor. 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:5 and Gal. 1:18; 2:9. But in Gal. 2:7,8,11,14 he calls him Peter. There seems to be no theological distinction, rather, probably literary variety. He is called Peter everywhere in the Gospels except John 1:42.

It is interesting that the church has made so much of the connection between Peter (i.e. Petros) and “this rock” (i.e. petra) in Matt. 16:18. Jesus spoke Aramaic and there is no distinction at all between the two terms in that language.

“Barnabas” Barnabas is also called an apostle, which shows a wider use of the term (cf. Eph. 4:11) than simply the initial Twelve (cf. Acts 14:14, 18:5).

SPECIAL TOPIC: BARNABAS
I. The Man
A. born in Cyprus (Acts 4:36)
B. of the tribe of Levi (Acts 4:36)
C. nicknamed “son of encouragement” (Acts 4:36; 11:23)
D. a member of the Jerusalem church (Acts 11:22)
E. he had the spiritual gifts of a prophet and teacher (Acts 13:1)
F. called an apostle (Acts 14:14)

II. His Ministry
A. in Jerusalem
   1. sold his property and gave all the money to the Apostles to help the poor (Acts 4:37)
   2. leader in the Jerusalem church (Acts 11:22)
B. with Paul
   1. He was one of the first to trust Paul’s conversion (Acts 11:24).
   2. He went to Tarsus to find Paul and get him to help with the new church in Antioch (Acts 11:24-26).
   5. Barnabas was the team leader on Cyprus (his home island), but soon Paul’s leadership was recognized (cf. Acts 13:13).
   6. They reported to the church in Jerusalem to explain and document their mission work among the Gentiles (cf. Acts 15, called the Jerusalem Council).
   7. Barnabas and Paul had their first disagreement about Jewish food laws and Gentile fellowship recorded in Gal. 2:11-14.
   8. Barnabas and Paul planned a second missionary journey, but a dispute broke out over Barnabas’ cousin, John Mark (cf. Col. 4:10), who deserted the work on the first mission trip (cf. Acts 13:13). Paul refused to take him on the second mission trip, so the team broke up (cf. Acts 15:36-41). This resulted in two teams (i.e. Barnabas/John Mark and Paul/Silas).

III. Church Tradition (Eusebius)
A. Barnabas was one of the seventy sent out by Jesus (cf. Luke 10:1-20).
B. He died as a Christian martyr on his home island, Cyprus.
C. Tertullian says he wrote the book of Hebrews.
D. Clement of Alexandria says he wrote the non-canonical book of the Epistle of Barnabas.

NASB “not have a right to refrain from working”
NKJV “who have no right to refrain from working”
NRSV “who have no right to refrain from working for a living”
TEV “the only ones who have to work for our living”
NJB “the only ones who have no right to stop working”

The rabbis asserted the dignity of manual labor. All rabbis had to have a secular job because it was considered sinful to receive money for teaching YHWH’s truths (cf. Pirke Abot 1:13; 4:7). Paul chose not to take advantage of his rights as a preacher of the gospel (v. 18), possibly because of (1) his Jewish heritage or (2) the attacks of those who claimed he manipulated people for money (cf. Acts 20:33; II Cor. 11:7-12; 12:14-18).

9:7-14 In these verses there are several examples from everyday life used as analogies to show the appropriateness of gospel workers receiving a living wage from the churches they served (cf. Rom. 15:27): (1) a soldier, v.7; (2) a vineyard owner, v. 7; (3) a shepherd, v. 7; (4) the ox, v. 8; (5) a plowman and thresher, v. 10; (6) a sower, v. 11; and (7) a priest, v. 13.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:8-14

*I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things? *For it is written in the Law of Moses, “YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING.” God is not concerned about oxen, is He? *Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought
to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops.  

11 If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?  

12 If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ.  

13 Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar?  

14 So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.

9:8 NASB “according to human judgment”  
NKJV “as a mere man”  
NRSV “on human authority”  
TEV “to limit myself to these everyday examples”  
NJB “merely worldly wisdom”  

The Greek text has “not according to man” (i.e. anthropos, which refers to humans). Paul uses these contrasting phrases several times (cf. 3:3; 9:8; 15:32; Rom. 3:5; Gal. 1:11; 3:15). It was his idiomatic way of contrasting earthly human ways with his new Spirit-led (i.e. Jesus’ teaching or Spirit’s insight) way of thinking and acting.

9:9 “it is written in the Law of Moses” The Jewish way of settling the question was with an authoritative quote, if possibly from the writings of Moses (i.e. Gen. - Deut.); therefore, Paul quotes Deut. 25:4 (cf. I Tim. 5:18).

SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL’S VIEWS OF THE MOSAIC LAW

A. It is good and from God (cf. Rom. 7:12,16).  
B. It is not the way to righteousness and acceptance by God (it can even be a curse, cf. Gal. 3).  
C. It is still God’s will for believers because it is God’s self-revelation (Paul often quotes the OT to convict and/or encourage believers).  
D. Believers are informed by the OT (cf. Rom. 4:23-24; 15:4; I Cor. 10:6,11), but not saved by the OT (cf. Acts 15; Rom. 4; Gal. 3; Hebrews).  
E. It functions in the new covenant to:  
   1. show sinfulness (cf. Gal. 3:15-29)  
   2. guide redeemed mankind in society  
   3. inform Christian ethical decisions  

It is this theological spectrum from cursing and passing away to blessing and permanency that causes the problem in trying to understand Paul’s view of the Mosaic Law. In A Man in Christ, James Stewart shows Paul’s paradoxical thinking and writing:

“...You would normally expect a man who was setting himself to construct a system of thought and doctrine to fix as rigidly as possible the meanings of the terms he employed. You would expect him to aim at precision in the phraseology of his leading ideas. You would demand that a word, once used by your writer in a particular sense, should bear that sense throughout. But to look for this from Paul is to be disappointed. Much of his phraseology is fluid, not rigid... The law is holy” he writes, ‘I delight in the law of God after the inward man’ (cf. Rom. 7:12,22) but it is clearly another aspect of nomos that makes him say elsewhere, ‘Christ had redeemed us from the curse of the law (cf. Gal. 3:13)” (p. 26).

“YOU SHALL NOT MOUNT THE OX” This is a quote from the Septuagint of Deut. 25:4. The term “muzzle” is phimásies, which occurs in the Greek manuscripts P⁴⁶, Æ, A, B⁵, C, D⁸⁵, K, L, P, and most later minuscule manuscripts. This is also the term used in Paul’s quote of the same text in I Tim. 5:18.  

However, the UBS³ editors preferred the variant kamásaís, which also means “muzzle,” found in MSS B’, D’, F, and G. Their reasoning was that the less-used word (possibly a slang term) was probably original because the other one was expected from the Septuagint and the quote in I Timothy so why would a scribe have changed it? The uncial term chosen as original makes no interpretive difference, but it does illustrate the textual principles by which modern textual critics evaluate Koine Greek manuscripts in an attempt to recover the original wording of the autograph.
SPECIAL TOPIC: TEXTUAL CRITICISM

Brief explanation of the problems and theories of “lower criticism” or “textual criticism.”

A. How the variants occurred

1. inadvertent or accidental (vast majority of occurrences)
   a. slip of the eye
      (1) in hand copying which reads the second instance of two similar words and thereby omits all of the words in between (homoiooteleuton)
      (2) in omitting a double letter word or phrase (haplography)
      (3) mental error in repeating a phrase or line of a Greek text (dittography)
   b. slip of the ear in copying by oral dictation where a misspelling occurs (itacism). Often the misspelling implies or spells a similar-sounding Greek word.
   c. the earliest Greek texts had no chapter or verse divisions, little or no punctuation and no division between words. It is possible to divide the letters in different places forming different words.

2. intentional
   a. changes were made to improve the grammatical form of the text copied
   b. changes were made to bring the text into conformity with other biblical texts (harmonization of parallels)
   c. changes were made by combining two or more variant readings into one long combined text (conflation)
   d. changes were made to correct a perceived problem in the text (cf. Bart Ehrman, The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture, pp. 146-50, concerning Heb. 2:9)
   e. some additional information as to the historical setting or proper interpretation of the text was placed in the margin by one scribe but placed into the text by a second scribe (cf. John 5:4)

B. The basic tenets of textual criticism (transcriptional probabilities)

1. the most awkward or grammatically unusual text is probably the original because scribes tended to make the texts smoother
2. the shortest text is probably the original because scribes tended to add additional information or phrases from parallel passages
3. the older text is given more weight because of its historical proximity to the original, everything else being equal
4. manuscripts that are geographically diverse usually have the original reading
5. attempts to explain how variants could have occurred (this is considered the most important tenet by most scholars)
6. analysis of a given biblical author’s literary style, vocabulary, and theology is used to decide probable original wording

The UBS4 Greek text used in most academic settings is an eclectic text pieced together from many ancient Greek manuscripts. Most scholars assume that more than 97% of the original wording of the Autographs has been achieved.

NASB  “God is not concerned about oxen, is He”
NKJV  “Is it oxen God is concerned about”
NRSV  “Is it about oxen God is concerned”
TEV   “Now, is God concerned about oxen”
NJB   “Is it about oxen that God is concerned here”

Verses 9 and 10 show how an OT text was expanded (i.e. to draw out the significance or application) to meet the needs of a new day (cf. Rom. 4:23-24; 15:4; I Cor. 9:10; 10:6,11). The OT exhibits special care for animals (cf. Exod. 21:33,35; 27:10-13; 23:5,12; Duet. 5:14; 22:4). Jesus alludes to this care of animals (cf. Luke 13:15; 14:5, where He applies the “light and heavy” rabbinical principle). This is not to imply that God does not care about animals, but that He also cares about people, and in this context, gospel workers (cf. I Tim. 5:18). This is similar to Matt. 6:26-34. Jesus uses God’s provisions for nature as a way of asserting God’s provision for humanity made in His image. This was a typical rabbinical technique known as “lesser to greater” or “light and heavy,” which was one of Hillel’s principles (cf. Aboth. de Rab. Nathan XXXVII and Tosefta Sanhedrin c. 7). Remember, Gamaliel was Paul’s rabbinical teacher (cf. Acts 5:34; 22:3).
9:10
NASB “Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written”
NKJV “Or does He say it altogether for us? For our sakes no doubt, this is written”
NRSV “Or does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was indeed written for our sake”
TEV “Didn’t he really mean us when he said that? Of course that was written for us”
NJB “or is it not said entirely for our sake? Clearly it was written for our sake”

Several times Paul asserts that the OT was written as an example for NT believers (cf. Rom. 4:23-24; 15:4; I Cor. 9:10; 10:6,11). Paul’s rabbinical training taught him to apply the Law to current situations. Here he is using the rabbinical argument called “light and heavy” or the “lesser to the greater.”

In the context of Deut. 25:4 this application would have been unknown and unnecessary. The hermeneutical question is, “Was Paul using the original intent of the inspired writer?” The answer is clearly, no! But is he using a valid application of a principle? Paul is inspired! He sees truth at a level we cannot! However, we are not inspired, but illumined by the Spirit. Modern interpreters cannot reproduce the hermeneutical method of the NT authors. Therefore, it is best to let them speak, but restrict ourselves to the historical-grammatical approach, which seeks the intent of the original author as the determinant meaning but allowing many applications which are related to the original intent!

9:11 “if . . . if” These are two FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentences, which are assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes.

The real question is who are the others who claimed the right to have the Corinthian church support them? Was it traveling false teachers or those who were part of the local leadership? It probably refers to the other local leaders who would not allow the church to support them (cf. J. B. Phillips translation).

“sowed . . . reaped” The OT agricultural setting of harvest becomes a spiritual principle (cf. Job. 4:8; Prov. 22:8; Hos. 8:7; Hag. 1:6; John 4:37; I Cor. 9:11; II Cor. 9:6,10; Gal. 6:7-9).

“material things” This is literally \( \text{ta sarkika} \), “the fleshly things,” but not in a sinful sense, but rather in a physical sense as that which humans need to survive in this world (i.e. water, food, shelter, clothing, etc. cf. Rom. 15:27).

9:12 “if” This is another FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence. Other leaders were exercising the right (i.e. \( \text{exousia} \)) to be materially compensated.

“do we not more” This is an allusion to the fact that Paul started this church. He was their spiritual father (cf. 4:15). Now they were rejecting his spiritual rights (vv. 11,14; Rom. 15:27), but allowing others to demand material compensation.

“but we endure all things” This is a metaphorical use of the Greek word for “roof,” meaning “to cover,” “to conceal,” or “to endure” (cf. 13:7).

“hindrance” This was a strong military term. The word was used for breaking up a road to keep an enemy from using it.

“the gospel of Christ” The term “gospel” is literally “good news.” It involves several aspects.
1. the initial bad news of mankind’s sin and rebellion
2. God’s gracious provisions to deal with human sin (i.e. the death of Christ)
3. the open invitation for any or all to accept God’s provision by repentance and faith

This good news about Jesus involves three aspects.
1. It is a person to welcome (i.e. Jesus).
2. It is truths about that person to believe (i.e. the NT).
3. It is a life which emulates that person (i.e. the Christlike life).

If any one of these three aspects is depreciated the gospel is damaged!

9:13 “those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple” This refers to OT priests and Levites (cf. Lev. 7:6,8-10,14,28-36; Deut. 18:1). Paul used a term that was used in the Septuagint for priestly work (cf. Num. 3:7; 8:15) as well as work in general (cf. Gen. 2:5,15; 3:23; 4:2,12; 29:27). Paul saw his gospel ministry as priestly service (cf. Rom. 15:16).

9:14 “So also the Lord directed” This must refer to Jesus’ words in Matt. 10:10 and Luke 10:7. Paul always tried to allude to Jesus’ teachings on a subject when possible.
But I have used none of these things. And I am not writing these things so that it will be done so in my case; for it would be better for me to die than have any man make my boast an empty one. For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion; for woe is me if I do not preach the gospel. For if I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me. What then is my reward? That, when I preach the gospel, I may offer the gospel without charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.

9:15 “But I have used none of these things” This is a PREFECT MIDDLE INDICATIVE. Paul never received compensation from Corinth, probably because there were those in this church who used anything to attack him. He did accept money from Philippi (cf. 4:15) and Thessalonika (cf. II Cor. 11:9), but only later, not while he was there.

“for it would be better for me to die” What a strong statement related to accepting or refusing compensation. There is also a grammatical problem at this point that caused several Greek manuscript variants. Paul is very emotional about this subject. He took money and help from Philippi (cf. Phil. 4:15) and Thessalonika (cf. II Cor. 11:9), why not Corinth? Obviously because of this he is being personally attacked by some group, faction, or false teacher.

It is so hard to interpret Paul’s letter when we do not have (1) the letter the church wrote to him or (2) specific knowledge about the local situation.

9:16 “if . . if” These are both THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL sentences, which mean potential action.

“I am under compulsion; woe is me if I do not preach the gospel” Paul felt compelled to preach because of Christ’s special call on the road to Damascus (cf. Acts 9:15; Rom. 1:14). He was like Jeremiah of old (cf. Jer. 20:9). He had to share the gospel (cf. Acts 4:20).

9:17 “if . . . if” These are both FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentences which are assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes.

“I have a stewardship entrusted to me” This is a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE. Gospel workers have both a covenant privilege and an awesome responsibility (cf. 4:1; Gal. 2:7; Eph. 3:2; Col. 1:25). See fuller note on stewardship at 4:1.

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.

9:19 “For though I am free from all men” This is the emphasis on proper Christian freedom (cf. 9:1; 10:29; Gal. 5:13). Martin Luther has said, “A Christian man is free lord over all things and subject to nobody. A Christian man is a ministering servant in all things, subject to everybody.” See notes from Romans 14 and 15 at 6:12.

“I have made myself a slave to all” This is the emphasis on proper Christian responsibility (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13; II Cor. 4:5). Because Paul was a slave of Christ, he was a slave of all who Christ came to serve and save, both the believer and the unbeliever. See Special Topic: Servant leadership at 4:1.

“so that I may win more” This is the term “gain” (i.e. kerdaino). It is used in a variety of senses in the NT. In this context Paul uses the term in an evangelistic sense (cf. 9:19,20,21,22 and I Pet. 3:1). This is the proper evangelistic goal of all of our actions (cf. vv. 22-23). Evangelistic intentionality in every area of our lives, not a particular methodology, is the key to a proper balance between Christian freedom and Christian responsibility.

9:20 This verse expresses Paul’s intentionality. Paul’s main concern was evangelism (cf. vv. 20-23; 10:31-33). Therefore, he circumcised Timothy so as to work with Jews (cf. Acts 16:3), but would not circumcise Titus (cf. Gal. 2:3-5) so as not to compromise the freedom of the gospel among Gentiles.
“though not being myself under the Law” It is interesting that the Textus Receptus (i.e. known as the Western Text), which is known for its expansionist tendencies, does not include this obviously original phrase. It is found in the Greek manuscripts P46, ε, A, B, C, D*, F, G, P and the Vulgate, Syriac, Coptic, and Armenian translations. We must relate Paul’s words here to Jesus’ words in Matt. 5:17-20. Paul is not doing away with the Mosaic Law, but seeing its true fulfilling in Christ. The Law is not the means of salvation, but it is still (1) a true revelation and (2) a reflection of God’s will for humanity in society. It functions in progressive sanctification, but not justification.

9:21 “but under the law of Christ” This is a NT way of referring to the New Covenant of Jer. 31:31-34. There are several different ways it is phrased by Paul and James (“the law of the Spirit of Life,” Rom. 8:2; “the law of Christ,” Gal. 6:2; “the perfect law, the law of liberty,” James 1:25 and 2:12; ‘‘the royal law,’’ James 2:8).

9:22 “To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak” The meaning of “weak” is uncertain here because it has been used in this context for over-scrupulous or superstitious Christians (cf. 8:7,10). It possibly relates to superstitious pagans (cf. v. 21). The Williams’ translation even translates it as “the over-scrupulous,” which is a good rendering. See Special Topic: Weakness at II Cor. 12:9.

“I have become all things to all men so that I may by all means save some” Notice the number of “alls” (i.e. forms of pas) in this phrase. Paul’s inner self has been transformed from self-centered to gospel-centered. He is free to serve Christ, to serve the gospel, to serve the Kingdom (cf. Rom. 6:11; 7:4). Flexibility, intentionality, and love are crucial aspects of Paul’s life and ministry!

Paul’s mind was always on evangelism (cf. Rom. 11:14; I Cor. 1:21; 7:16; 10:31-33; I Tim. 1:15). However, it is sad to say that the last phrase gives a hint that most who heard him did not respond in faith to his message. Why some hear (with spiritual ears) and some do not, is the mystery of election and free will!

9:23 This is a summary verse, a transition verse. It can go with vv. 19-22 or 24-27 or stand alone. This verse is not advocating a salvation by works. Paul is not saved because he evangelizes. He does it because he has accepted the gospel and knows its peace and urgency.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:24-27

24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. 25 Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. 26 Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; 27 but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

SPECIAL TOPIC: DEGREES OF REWARDS AND PUNISHMENT

A. Appropriate and inappropriate response to God is based on knowledge. The less knowledge one has the less responsible one is. The opposite is also true.

B. Knowledge of God comes in two basic ways.
   1. creation (cf. Ps. 19; Rom. 1-2)
   2. Scripture (cf. Ps. 19, 119; the gospel)

C. OT evidence
   1. rewards
      a. Gen. 15:1 (usually associated with earthly reward, land and sons)
      b. Deut. 27-28 (covenant obedience brings blessing)
   2. punishment - Deut. 27-28 (covenant disobedience brings cursing)
   3. The OT pattern of reward for personal, covenantal righteousness is modified because of human sin. This modification is seen in Job and Ps. 73. The NT changes the focus from this world to the next (cf. the Sermon on the Mount, Matt. 5-7).
D. NT evidence

1. rewards (beyond salvation)
   a. Mark 9:41

2. punishment
   a. Mark 12:38-40
   d. James 3:1

E. For me the only analogy that makes sense is from the opera. I do not attend opera presentations so I do not understand them. If I knew the difficulty and intricateness of the plot, music, and dance I would appreciate the performance much more. I believe heaven will fill our cups, but I think our earthly service determines the size of the cup.

Therefore, knowledge and a response to that knowledge results in rewards and punishments (cf. Matt. 16:7; I Cor. 3:8,14; 9:17,18; Gal. 6:7; II Tim. 4:14). There is a spiritual principle—we reap what we sow! Some sow more and reap more (cf. Matt. 13:8,23).

F. “The crown of righteousness” is ours in the finished work of Jesus Christ (cf. II Tim. 4:8), but notice, “the crown of life” is connected to perseverance under trial (cf. James 1:12; Rev. 2:10; 3:10-11). The “crown of glory” for Christian leaders is connected to their lifestyle (cf. I Pet. 5:1-4). Paul knows he has an imperishable crown, but he exercises extreme self-control (cf. I Cor. 9:24-27).

The mystery of the Christian life is that the gospel is absolutely free in the finished work of Christ, but as we must respond to God’s offer in Christ, we must also respond to God’s empowerment for Christian living. The Christian life is as supernatural as is salvation, yet we must receive it and hold on to it. The free-and-cost-everything paradox is the mystery of rewards and sowing/reaping.

We are not saved by good works, but for good works (cf. Eph. 2:8-10). Good works are the evidence that we have met Him (cf. Matt. 7). Human merit in the area of salvation leads to destruction, but godly living which results from salvation is rewarded.

9:25 “Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things” Paul is using athletic metaphors from the Isthmian games held in Corinth every two years. The emphasis here is on the supreme effort used by competing athletes, not half-hearted attempts (cf. Heb. 12:1-3). The Christian does not compete to win salvation, but because he has experienced salvation. We have won the race in Christ, now run the race for Christ!

“a perishable wreath” The winners of the Corinthian’s athletic contest received wreaths of pine (at Athens an olive wreath; at Delphi a laurel wreath), which soon withered. Believers receive the crown of (1) rejoicing (cf. I Thess. 2:19); (2) righteousness (cf. II Tim. 4:8); (3) life (cf. James 1:12; Rev. 2:10); and (4) glory (cf. I Pet. 5:4). These are wreaths that never fade.

9:26-27 “I run. . .I box. . .I beat” These are athletic metaphors to illustrate the need for rigid self control and discipline. The Christian life does have some rules and requirements. These relate to rewards, not salvation. Paul must have enjoyed the sporting events of his day, since he uses them often as metaphors for the Christian life.

9:27 “I discipline my body” This term, discipline, literally refers to being hit in the face just below the eyes. It is used figuratively in Luke 18:5.

Paul was serious about self-control in the Christian life. The body is not evil, but it is the battleground of temptation. If believers do not control the flesh/body it will control them (cf. Rom. 8:1-11). This is not an easy one-time victory, but a long-term marathon of self-discipline for the cause of Christ. Self-control is the final virtue of the fruit of the Spirit in Gal. 5:23.

The term “body” (soma) refers to Paul’s entire person. It is not one of three aspects of mankind. It often stands for the whole person (cf. 7:4; 13:3; Rom. 12:2; Phil. 1:20). The Bible presents mankind as a unity (cf. Gen. 2:7), not a dichotomy or trichotomy (cf. George E. Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament, pp. 464-466. See fuller note at 7:34.
This term “disqualified” is a metaphor related to breaking the rules of the athletic games and thereby being unable to win the contest (cf. I Tim. 6:12; II Tim. 4:7). It is from the root “to test” with a view toward approval (i.e. dokimazo), but with the ALPHA PRIVATIVE, which negates it (cf. II Cor. 13:5).

This does not refer to Paul’s salvation (although it is used in this sense in II Tim. 3:8); even though the previous paragraph seems to (cf. vv. 19-23). This would violate too many other doctrinal passages by Paul, especially in Romans and Galatians. He is discussing in this paragraph his fear of being undisciplined and being rejected as a proclaimer of the gospel. The NT records several who were disqualified (cf. I Cor. 15:12; I Tim. 1:20; II Tim. 4:10). Paul wanted evangelistic fruit from converts and churches.

The training of young men for Greek games is mentioned in (1) Ars Poetica, 412 and (2) Ad Martyres, 3. It entailed ten months of strenuous physical, dietary, and social restrictions and regimens. Yet there is another valid way of viewing this text (cf. Hard Sayings of the Bible, by Kaiser, Davids, Bruce and Branch):

“In so writing the author strikes the balance found throughout the New Testament. The New Testament authors write out of an experience of the grace of Christ and a firm conviction that they are on their way to a greater inheritance in heaven. At the same time, they write with a concern that they or their readers could apostatize and thus lose what they already have. So long as people are following Christ, then the New Testament authors never express any hope that without repentance such people will enter heaven. This is a sobering, but not a fear-producing, type of tension seen in Paul (I Cor 9:27; Gal 5:2, 7-10; Phil 3:12; 2 Tim 4:7, sometimes speaking of the tension in his own life and sometimes speaking of his concern for others), James (James 5:20, the purpose of the letter being to “save [a sinner, meaning a believer who has turned to the world] from death”), Jude (Jude 23) and John (I Jn 5:16-17 KJV, the emphasis being on praying for people before they commit the “sin unto death”). The call to the modern reader is to pay attention to the warning and “to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised” (Heb 6:12) so that the author would say of us as well, “We are confident of better things in your case—things that accompany salvation” (p. 683).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How is chapter 9 related to chapter 8?
2. Is it proper for a preacher to receive support from the church?
   If so, why did Paul not allow this church to support him?
3. How can Paul act differently toward different groups and not be considered a hypocrite?
4. In verses 24-27 the athletic metaphor is emphasized. How does this metaphor apply to our Christian lives?
# I CORINTHIANS 10

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>UBS⁴</th>
<th>NKJV</th>
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### READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. vii)

**FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.
CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 10:1-11:1

A. Chapters 8 through 10 are integrally related in their attempt to bring balance to the discussion of Christian freedom versus Christian responsibility in love. Paul does not focus on hard and fast rules, but on the priorities of interpersonal relationships that strengthen believers and draw unbelievers to Jesus.

B. Paul’s discussion of the Lord’s Supper, beginning in v. 14 and continuing through v. 22, is a foreshadowing of the fuller discussion in 11:17-34.

C. Paul possibly addresses the “weak” believers in vv. 14-22 and the “strong” believers in vv. 23-33. If this is not the structure, one wonders how these two paragraphs do not contradict each other: vv. 14-22, don’t eat sacrificial food; vv. 23-38, eat if it is not questioned. Possibly the first refers to a public meal at a pagan temple and the second a private meal at home.

D. The United Bible Societies’ Handbook on Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians, by Ellingworth and Hatton has an interesting outline of vv. 1-13.

“The general structure is as follows:

I. Introduction—verse 1a.

II. Positive aspects.
   A. Four positive examples from the Old Testament—verses 1b-4a—the last example being expanded in verse 4b.
   B. Conclusions drawn from the positive examples—verse 5.
   C. Application to the readers—verse 6a.

III. Negative aspects.
   A. Five negative Old Testament examples—verses 6b-10.
   B. Application to the readers—verses 11-13.

The word all is repeated five times in verses 1-4, giving great emphasis to the fact that all the people of Israel shared God’s protection and blessings during the exodus and the following years of wandering in the desert. All contrasts with most of them in verse 5 and with some of them, which is repeated four times in verses 7-10” (p. 214).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:1-5

1For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; 2and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3and all ate the same spiritual food; 4and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. 5Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.

10:1 “For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren” This phrase is a literary technique used often by Paul to introduce a conclusion (cf. Rom. 1:13; 11:25; I Cor. 10:1; 12:1; II Cor. 1:8; I Thess. 4:13).

“our fathers” This reflects (1) a believing Jewish element in the Church or (2) NT Gentiles becoming grafted into the natural olive tree, Israel (cf. Rom. 10; Gal. 6:16), and are now one in Christ (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13).

“all...all” This inclusive term (i.e. pantes) is used twice in v. 1 and once in vv. 2,3, and 4. It is a way to emphasize the unity of all Israelites in the experience of God’s grace and judgment, called the Wilderness Wandering Period (i.e. Numbers).

“the cloud” This refers to the unique symbol of the presence of YHWH. It was called by the rabbis the Shekinah cloud of glory (cf. Exod. 13:21-22, 14:19). The Hebrew shekinah meant “to dwell with.” YHWH was with His people during this period of judgment in such intimate and caring ways that the rabbis began to call this the “honeymoon” period between YHWH and Israel.

“all passed through the sea” This is an allusion to YHWH’s splitting of the Red (literally “reed” or “weed”) Sea. Today scholars are uncertain as to which specific body of water this refers. The same term, yam suph is used in the OT to refer to (1) the Gulf of Aqaba (cf. Exod. 21:4; Deut. 2:1; I Kgs. 9:26; Jer. 49:21) or (2) the Indian Ocean. Apparently it referred to the
mysterious waters to the south. It is interesting that “water” is not said to have been created by God in Genesis 1. Often the Mesopotamian creation myths speak of the waters (i.e. salt and fresh) as gods who desired human destruction. YHWH delivers His people from watery chaos and defeat.

10:2 “were baptized into Moses” The Greek manuscripts vary between PASSIVE VOICE (i.e. MSS N, A, C, D) and MIDDLE VOICE (i.e. MS B). It seems to me the MIDDLE VOICE is contextually appropriate in emphasizing the volitional decision of the Israelites to follow Moses and the historical fact the Jewish proselyte baptism was self administered. This is an unusual phrase, found only here in the NT. It implies a parallel between the responsibility and privilege of the Mosaic covenant, and our new covenant in Christ; both are from God and in some ways are similar. Here baptism is used as a symbol for one who follows.

10:3 “spiritual food” This refers both to manna (cf. Exod. 16) and quail (cf. Exod. 16:13; Num. 11:31-32), which were God’s supernatural provisions during the wilderness wandering period.

10:4 “same spiritual drink” This refers to the miraculous provision of water (Exod. 17:6; Num. 20:8ff).

10:5 “Nevertheless” This is the Greek alla, which shows a strong contrast. See Contextual Insights, D.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:6-13

Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, “THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY.” Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall. No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

10:6 “Now” Both the NRSV and TEV (as well as JB) mark a paragraph division at this point to show the transition from historical analogies to present application.

“these things happened as examples for us” The Greek term tupoi, “examples,” (singular tupos) has a wide semantical field. It was the mark left by a blow. This can refer to a physical beating (cf. Matt. 24:49; 27:30) or a metaphor for it (cf. I Cor. 8:12).
It came to be used for an imprint left by a blow of a hammer (cf. John 20:25). This imprint could refer to a physical image—an idol (cf. Acts 7:43) or a printed image (cf. Acts 23:35; Rom. 6:17). From this it came to stand for a pattern (cf. Acts 7:44; Phil. 3:17; I Thess. 1:7; II Thess. 3:5; I Tim. 4:12; Heb. 8:5; I Peter 5:3).

The best parallels to this term’s use in this text (i.e. “type” I Cor. 10:6) are I Cor. 10:11 and Rom. 5:14, where it refers to (1) a foreshadowing type; (2) a figurative counterpart; or (3) a symbolic example.

Verses 6 and 11 remind NT believers that the OT has spiritual relevance for them (cf. Rom. 4:23-24; 15:4; I Cor. 9:10; 10:6,11). The revelations of God are eternal and the principles are relevant.

“so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved” Notice that Paul is comparing OT covenant people and NT covenant people. Evil is a recurrent problem. It can rob a human of eternal life, of intimate fellowship with God. Evil corrupts every level of mankind’s existence. Salvation does not free us of the struggle (cf. Rom. 7). The Corinthian church was in danger in the areas of both orthodoxy and orthopraxy! Godliness, not information, is the goal!

The term “crave” (used twice) reflects the strong compound Greek term epithumeō, which is made up of the preposition “upon” and “to rush.” It refers to a strong feeling or emotion overtaking and controlling the mind and heart of a person. It can be used in a positive sense as in Phil. 1:23, but usually is used in a negative sense (cf. II Tim. 2:22). Paul may be reflecting the strong desire and disobedience of the Israelites recorded in Num. 11:31-35, because he alludes to Num. 25:9 in v. 8 and Num. 16:4-5; 17:5,10 in v. 10.

10:7 “Do not be idolaters” This is a PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which usually means stop an act already in process. This OT quote refers to the idolatrous orgy of Exodus 32.

The exact idolatrous practice that Paul is referring to in Corinth is uncertain. Somehow the believers were in danger of offending God. From chapter 7 and the historical situation at Corinth it might have been pagan sexual worship practices or from chapter 8 pagan idolatrous sacrifices.

“The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play” This is an allusion to Aaron’s making the golden calf in Exodus 32 and the children of Israel feasting before it and committing sexual acts (cf. Exod. 32:6,19). The sexual aspect of the term “dancing” is seen in the same Hebrew word used in Gen. 26:8 of Isaac making love to Rebekah.

10:8 “Nor let us act immorally” This shows the pagan setting of Corinth and also the tendency of pagans, even redeemed pagans, to be prone to immorality in the name of religion.

“twenty-three thousand fell in one day” This is a reference to Num. 25:1-9. There is an obvious discrepancy between this and the Hebrew text of Num. 25:9, which has twenty-four thousand. This does not seem to be a copyist error. This discrepancy is in all Greek manuscripts. It could be a lapse of memory on Paul’s part. This does not mean to imply a lack of inspiration or trustworthiness, but the ancient world was not as precise in their use of numbers as modern western people.

In Archer’s Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties, pp. 141, 401, he asserts that the OT passage Paul is referring to is not Num. 25:1-9, but Exod. 32. He makes a good point in that 10:7 quotes from Exod. 32:4 and that Exod. 32:35 mentions the Lord’s smiting of the people apparently even beyond the 3,000 of v. 28. This is surely a viable contextual option.

10:9 “Nor let us try the Lord” This is the term peirazō with the preposition ek, which intensifies it (cf. Matt. 4:7; Luke 4:12; 10:25). See Special Topic: Greek Terms for Testing at 3:13. The Corinthian Church was acting in a similar manner to the Israelites in the wilderness (cf. Num. 21:5-6). God does use temporal judgment to correct His people.

The term “Lord” (cf. NASB, TEV, NJB, and NIV) is found in the ancient Greek manuscripts !, B, C, P, and the Armenian translation. It would fit the OT allusion best, referring to YHWH in Num. 21.

The term “Christ” (cf. NKJV, NRSV) is found in manuscripts P46, D, F, G, and the Vulgate and Peshitta translations. It fits Paul’s immediate audience best.

While the UBS3 favors “Christ” with a “B” rating (i.e. almost certain), a strong argument for “Lord” is made by Bart D. Ehrman in The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture, pp. 89-90.

See Special Topic: Greek Terms for “Testing” and Their Connotations at 3:13.

“were destroyed by the serpents” This is a reference to Num. 21. See Special Topic: Apollumi at 8:11.

10:10 “Nor grumble, as some of them did” The first phrase is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which usually means stop an act in process. This refers to Num. 16:41-50, which is referred to in Num. 17:5,10. The Corinthian church was grumbling just like Israel of old.
This alludes to the plague in Num. 16:49. It was a theological way of showing that death was in the hands of YHWH (cf. Exod. 12:23,29; II Sam. 24:16; I Chron. 21:15; Heb. 11:28). There is no “grim reaper”! There is no chance, fate, or luck! There is God, the God of Israel, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. He and He alone is in control of life and death!


10:12 “let him who thinks he stands take heed” The self assurance and arrogant pride of the Corinthian factions were a major problem, as the same attitude is today (cf. Rom. 11:20; II Pet. 3:17). God has and will judge His own people (cf. Jer. 25:29; I Pet. 4:17).

10:13 “temptation” This word is used three times in this verse and means to tempt with a view toward destruction (see Special Topic at 3:13). There are three sources of temptation in the NT: (1) fallen human sin nature; (2) personal evil (i.e. Satan and the demonic); and (3) the fallen world system (cf. Eph. 2:1-3; James 4:1,4,7).

NASB “but such as is common to man”
NKJV “except such as is common to man”
NRSV “that is not common to everyone”
TEV “the kind that normally comes to people”
NJB “none. . .is more than a human being can stand”

Other humans have faced the same temptation as the Corinthian believers. Jesus also has experienced all temptation which is common to human beings (cf. Heb. 4:15).

10:14-22

14Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. 15I speak as to wise men; you judge what I say. 16Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? 17Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread. 18Look at the nation Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar? 19What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? 20No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not
to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons. 21You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of
demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. 22Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?
We are not stronger than He, are we?

10:14 “Therefore” Paul is concluding the previous discussion and moving on to a conclusion.

NASB, NKJV “my beloved”
NRSV, TEV, NJB “my dear friends”

Paul’s Corinthian letters (and Galatians) are his hardest words to churches. Therefore, he wants to remind them how precious
they are to him even when he speaks so harshly to them (cf. 4:14; 10:14; 15:58; II Cor. 7:1; 12:19).

This term was used by God the Father of Jesus (cf. Matt. 3:17; 12:18; 17:5). Paul, Peter, Jude, and John, in their letters, use
this adjective to denote the followers of Jesus. They are beloved because of their relationship to Christ; beloved by God, by
Christ, and by the writers of the NT letters.

“flee from idolatry” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. Notice “idolatry” has the DEFINITE ARTICLE. God
provides a way, but believers must choose to take advantage of it (cf. 6:18). One way to handle temptation is to flee its presence.
Believers must not put themselves into the arena of temptation.

“Idolatry” in the OT was the image and worship of pagan gods. In our day it is anything that replaces God in our priority
structure (cf. 10:7,14). As Jesus said, where your treasure is there will your heart be (cf. Matt. 6:21). Moderns reveal their
priorities by time, money, and thought life. Religion is often a significant appendage, but not the core priority. True faith does
not deal with excess, but with the essence of life. The book of I John closes with “guard yourselves from idols” (cf. I John 5:21).

10:15 This shows Paul’s approach to leadership. He was an Apostle of Christ, yet he admonishes these prideful believers to judge
his words for themselves (cf. 14:39-40). It is surely possible that Paul is being sarcastic. He used this same word (i.e. wise man)
in 4:10 and II Cor. 11:19 in a sarcastic sense.

10:16 This verse is constructed as two rhetorical questions (although TEV translates it as INDICATIVE statements).

“the cup of blessing” This probably refers to the third cup in the Jewish Passover service. It was what Jesus used to inaugurate
the Lord’s Supper.

The term “blessing” is eulogia, which means “to praise,” “to flatter,” “to bless,” or “to benefit.” We get the English term
eulogy from this Greek root. When Jesus enacted this ordinance he took both the cup and bread and gave thanks to God. The
Greek term for thanks or thanksgiving is eucharistia, from which we get the term Eucharist. Both of these Greek terms are used
in a synonymous way in 14:16.

It is interesting, but not theologically significant, that the normal order of the cup and bread (cf. 11:24-27) is reversed here.
The order is not the issue, rather fellowship with Christ at His communal meal versus fellowship with pagan deities at their
communal meals.

“sharing” This is the Greek work koinonia, which means “joint participation with.” This is the origin of the English word
“communion,” used for the Eucharistic symbolic meal, which emphasizes fellowship now, but a more intimate fellowship in the
future.

“in the blood of Christ” This is an emphasis on the death of Christ in its sacrificial OT context (cf. Lev. 1-7). The blood
symbolized the life (cf. Lev. 17:11,14).

“the bread which we break” This is the source of the English phrase we use for the Lord’s Supper, “breaking bread” (cf. Acts
2:42). This was the symbol Jesus chose to represent the New Covenant in His broken body on the cross. He purposely did not
choose the Passover Lamb, which was a symbol of the old covenant experience (cf. Exod. 12).

“sharing in the body of Christ” The symbol of the “body of Christ” is twofold: (1) His physical body was sacrificed for
human sin and (2) His followers became His spiritual body, the church (which also has two aspects in I Corinthians: [a] local
church and [b] the universal church).

10:17 This is an emphasis on the unity of Christ and His church expressed in the Lord’s Supper symbolism (i.e. one bread). This
same unity of Christ’s body is in 12:12-13 in relation to spiritual gifts.
10:18 “the nation Israel” This is literally “Israel according to the flesh.” This is another symbolic way (i.e. historical allusion) to show the unity of those who partake of the Lord’s Supper.

10:19 “What do I mean then” Paul’s writings are some of the easiest biblical texts to interpret because he logically develops his thought. Logical markers such as this phrase allow modern interpreters to outline Paul’s thoughts at paragraph level, which is a key in interpreting his books.

Paul develops his thought throughout this context by a series of rhetorical questions (cf. NASB, v. 16 (two); v. 18 (one); v. 19 (two or three); v. 22 (two); v. 29 (one); v. 30 (one).

10:20 “sacrifice to demons” Paul, going back to the OT, understood idolatry as related, not to the reality of the image, but to the reality of spiritual forces in the physical creation (cf. Lev. 16:8; 12:7; Deut. 32:17; Ps. 96:5; 106:37; Isa. 65:11; Rev. 9:20; 16:14). Behind all human activity is the spiritual realm (cf. Dan. 10; Eph. 6:10-18). Although it is never stated specifically that the fallen angels of the OT are the demonic of the NT, these fallen spiritual forces are referred to by Paul by other terms in Rom. 8:38-39; I Cor. 15:24; Eph. 1:21; 3:10; Col. 1:16; 2:10,15. Paul only uses the term “demon” here and in I Tim. 4:1. See Special Topic: Personal Evil at 7:5.

10:21 This phrase refers to the pagans’ sacrifices and rituals in the pagan temples of Corinth. A believer cannot affirm the exclusiveness of Christianity (i.e. one and only one true God and Jesus His Messiah) and still spiritually participate in pagan worship. If they do, it is spiritual idolatry!

10:22 “provoke the Lord to jealousy” This seems to be an allusion to Deut. 4:25; 32:16,21; Ps. 78:58; or Isa. 65:3. The term Lord in v. 21 obviously refers to Jesus, but in v. 22 to YHWH. This type of transfer is one of the ways that NT authors assert the deity of Jesus of Nazareth.

The term jealousy is a powerful love work. One is only jealous about someone they love. YHWH is emotionally involved with His people, who reflect His character and take His name to the world. Idolatry destroys this fellowship and the evangelistic purpose.

10:23 This is a return to the subject begun in chapter 6:12 about how to balance Christian freedom and responsibility (cf. Rom. 14:19). Verses 23-33 address the strong brother.

10:24 “All things are lawful” This phrase is repeated twice. Some translations put this phrase in quotes (cf. NRSV, TEV, NJB) because they think it was a slogan of one of the factious groups at Corinth or a cultural proverb. This is the emancipated world view of the “strong” Christian (cf. 6:12; 10:26; Rom. 14:14,20).
SPECIAL TOPIC: CHRISTIAN FREEDOM vs. CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY (taken from my Commentary on Romans 14)

A. Romans 14 tries to balance the paradox of Christian freedom and responsibility. The literary unit runs through 15:13.

B. The problem which precipitated this chapter was possibly the tension between Gentile and Jewish believers in the church of Rome. Before conversion the Jews tended to be legalistic and the pagans tended to be immoral. Remember, this chapter is addressed to sincere followers of Jesus. This chapter does not address carnal believers (cf. I Cor. 3:1). The highest motive is ascribed to both groups. There is danger in the extremes on both sides. This discussion is not a license for nit-picking legalism or flaunting liberality.

C. Believers must be careful not to make their theology or ethics the standard for all other believers (cf. II Cor. 10:12). Believers must walk in the light they have, but understand that their theology is not automatically God’s theology. Believers are still affected by sin. We must encourage, exhort, and teach one another from the Scriptures, reason, and experience, but always in love. The more one knows the more one knows he does not know (cf. I Cor. 13:12)!

D. One’s attitude and motives before God are the real keys in evaluating his/her actions. Christians will stand before Christ to be judged on how they treated one another (cf. vv. 10,12 and II Cor. 5:10).

E. Martin Luther said, “A Christian man is a most free Lord of all, subject to none; the Christian man is a most dutiful servant of all, subject to all.” Biblical truth is often presented in a tension-filled paradox.

F. This difficult but crucial subject is dealt with in the entire literary unit of Romans 14:1-15:13 and also in I Corinthians 8-10 and Colossians 2:8-23.

G. However, it needs to be stated that pluralism among sincere believers is not a bad thing. Each believer has strengths and weaknesses. Each must walk in the light he/she has, always open to the Spirit and the Bible for more light. In this period of seeing through a glass darkly (I Cor. 13:8-13) one must walk in love (v. 15), and peace (vv. 17,19) for mutual edification.

H. The titles “stronger” and “weaker” which Paul gives to these groups prejudices them to us. This was certainly not Paul’s intent. Both groups were sincere believers. We are not to attempt to mold other Christians into ourselves! We accept one another in Christ!

I. The entire argument could be outlined as:
   1. accept one another because God accepts us in Christ (cf. 14:1,3; 15:7)
   2. do not judge one another because Christ is our only Master and Judge (cf. 14:3-12)
   3. love is more important than personal freedom (cf. 14:13-23)
   4. follow Christ’s example and lay down your rights for others’ edification & good (cf. 15:1-13)

“but not all things edify” The practical, spiritual test is, “Does it edify the body (i.e. the believing community)ivent? (cf. 6:12; 14:3-4,26; II Cor. 12:19; Rom. 14:19; 15:2). This must be the test in all believers do or say. One’s freedom in Christ must not hurt another for whom Christ died. (cf. Rom. 14:15).

Just a personal word, this is not to imply that spirituality must float at the lowest level of the weakest believer, but that mature believers must not flaunt their freedom at the expense of fellow-believers. Some believers are dogmatic, Pharisaic legalists. I do not have to succumb to their rules, but I must love them, pray for them, fully accept them, and not publicly embarrass them or flaunt my freedom. I am spiritually responsible for my fellow believers! See Special Topic: Edify at I Cor. 8:1.

10:24 “Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. Mature Christianity puts the welfare of others to the forefront (cf. v. 33; 12:7; 13:5; Rom. 14:7; 15:2; Phil. 2:1-5,21).

10:25,27 This is the voice of emancipated faith. But “strong” faith publicly yields to “weak” faith (cf. vv. 28-29).

10:25 “conscience” There is not an OT counterpart to the Greek term “conscience” unless the Hebrew term “breast” implies a knowledge of self and its motives. Originally the Greek term referred to consciousness related to the five senses. It came to be used of the inner senses (cf. Rom. 2:15). Paul uses this term twice in his trials in Acts (i.e. 23:1 and 24:16). It refers to his sense that he had not knowingly violated any known religious duties toward God (cf. I Cor. 4:4).

Conscience is the developing understanding of believers’ motives and actions based on (1) a biblical world-view; (2) the indwelling Spirit; and (3) a lifestyle knowledge based on the word of God. A Christian conscience is made possible by the personal reception of the gospel. See fuller note at 8:7.
10:26 “FOR THE EARTH IS THE LORD’S AND ALL IT CONTAINS”  This is the affirmation of the goodness of all created things (cf. 6:12; 10:26; Rom. 14:14,20), taken from a combination of Ps. 24:1 and 50:12, which was used by the OT Jews as a blessing at meals.

The Textus Receptus repeats v. 26 at the end of v. 28. This is not original. It is missing in the Greek manuscripts Β, A, B, C, D, F, G, H*, and P, also it is not included in the Vulgate, Syriac, or Coptic translations.

10:27 This verse is crucial in making a distinction between participation in public idolatrous feasts versus common daily socializing with unbelievers. Paul does not have hard and fast rules. He prioritizes personal relationships (i.e. evangelism and discipleship). People are priority. People are eternal. People are the purpose of Christ’s death, not food! Verses 29-33 show us Paul’s summary on this issue.

10:27,30 “if” Both of these are FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentences, which are assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes.

10:28 “if” This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence, which means potential action.

“do not eat it” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE which usually means stop eating it. If the Christian is informed he/she must not eat because the very fact the issue is brought up shows the presence of weak faith or a seeking faith (cf. v. 29).

10:29 NASB “why is my freedom judged by another’s conscience”
NKJV “why is my liberty judged by another man’s conscience”
NRSV “why should my liberty be subject to the judgment of someone else’s conscience”
TEV “why should my freedom to act be limited by another persons’ conscience”
NJB “why should my freedom be governed by somebody else’s conscience”

The NRSV punctuates this as if these were Paul’s words. The TEV translates this as if they were another question asked by a supposed objector. This is the literary technique called diatribe (cf. 6:12,13).

This is the crucial question you must answer for yourself. Each of us, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, must define the boundaries of our self-limitation for others, out of love and respect for Christ.

10:30 This refers to a meal for which the believer has given thanks and eaten. The question sets the stage for the universal principle about how to exercise our Christian rights, which follows in v. 31.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:31-33**

31Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 32Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; 33 just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so that they may be saved. 34Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.

10:31 “do all to the glory of God” This is the universal principle applicable in every area of the believer’s life (cf. Eph. 6:7; Col. 3:17,23; I Pet. 4:11). See Special Topic: Glory at I Cor. 2:7.

10:32 “Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God” This seems to refer to three groups. The first two are related to evangelism; the last group to fellowship in the church.

The term “church” is obviously being used in a universal sense as in Matt. 16:18. The term is used in the NT in (1) a local sense (most occurrences); (2) a regional sense (cf. Acts 9:31; Gal. 1:2); (3) a universal sense (cf. Phil. 3:6; Heb. 12:23); and possibly even (4) a cosmic sense of all the saints of all ages alive and dead (cf. Eph. 1:22; 5:23,24,25,27,29,32; Col. 1:18,24).

10:33 “just as I also please all men in all things. . .so that they may be saved” Evangelism, not self-rights, is the priority of mature believers (cf. 9:19-22).

“the many” In English this might be understood as a large part of the whole group. However, in Hebrew thought it is just a literary variation of “the all.” This parallelism can be seen in

1. Isaiah 53:1, “of the many”
2. Isaiah 53:1, “of many”
3. Isaiah 53:6, “of us all”
2. Romans 5:18, “to all men...to all men”
   Romans 5:18, “the many. . .the many”
3. In Corinthians 10:17, “we who are many” (here Paul uses the term “many” to refer to the whole group of believers)

“so that they may be saved” This is the goal of gospel preaching and Christian living (cf. 9:19-22). God’s promise of Gen. 3:15; 12:3 has now been fulfilled. The broken fellowship (i.e. the marred image of God in mankind) has been restored through Christ. “Whosoever will” may come (cf. Ezek. 18:23,32; John 1:12; 3:16; I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9).

11:1 This verse seems to go with chapter 10, not 11. Paul’s evangelistic motives and actions parallel the life and teachings of Jesus. As Paul mimicked Him the believers at Corinth were to focus on (1) the good of the body (the church) and (2) the salvation of the unbelieving world.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Were the Israelites who died in the wilderness spiritually lost?
2. What is the major purpose of the Lord’s Supper?
3. How does one balance Christian freedom and Christian responsibility?
4. What should be the main goal of our freedom?
## I CORINTHIANS 11

### PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

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### READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. vii)

*FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.
CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 11:2-34

A. Chapters 11 through 14 deal with matters about public worship. They form a unified literary unit.
   1. men’s and women’s attire and actions (11:2-16)
   2. observance of the Lord’s Supper (11:17-34)
   3. the exercise of spiritual gifts (12-14)

B. There have been several ways to understand vv. 2-16.
   1. This context primarily deals with proper decorum (cf. v. 13) in worship, not the relationship between men and women (cf. vv. 11-12).
   2. This context deals with the new freedom in Christ which the Roman men and women in the church at Corinth were using to flaunt their social status (men) and independence from tradition and culture (women).
   3. This context deals with the creation relationship between husbands and wives (cf. Eph. 5:22-31; I Tim. 2:9-15). The proper relationship is based on Genesis 2-3, which shows the priority of men because of the original creation of Adam and the initial rebellion of Eve.
   4. Paul’s discussion of head coverings is not limited to women, but is also addressed to men. As usual in Corinth the problem is from two directions. As a sign of their elite social status some men were covering their heads when they led in public worship in the house churches as they had done in paganism. As a sign of their social emancipation women were removing their marriage veils when they led in public worship in the house church meetings (cf. Bruce W. Winter, After Paul Left Corinth, pp. 121-141). This text uniquely suits Roman Corinth. In Jewish life and Greek life women did not normally wear head coverings.
   5. It seems that this ambiguous context is open to multiple interpretations. These interpretations say more about the interpreter’s biases than Paul’s intent. A text which has been and can be understood in so many ways by sincere believers must surely not be used in a definitive, dogmatic way to restrict or advocate the place and function of women in the church or the relationship between men and women in all ages and cultures. It amazes me that some believers relegate the chapter 11 discussion of head coverings for men and women to a cultural issue (even though Paul appeals to Genesis 1-3), while at the same time, demanding Paul’s limits on women in church as a principle for all ages. It is this lack of consistency that causes so much trouble in interpretation. The best brief discussion of this complicated and emotional issue is in How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth by Fee and Stuart, pp. 61-77 or Gospel and Spirit, by Gordon Fee.

C. This chapter helps us see that some theological symbols and privileges must be limited or expanded in relationship to the culture in which the mature Christian finds himself/herself.

D. This is the earliest written account of the Lord’s Supper/Eucharist/Communion.

E. The purposes of the Lord’s Supper
   1. unity and fellowship of the church
   2. expression of Jesus’ presence
   3. expression of Jesus’ historical sacrifice
   4. expression of our new relationship to God through Christ
   5. an act of proclaiming the past event and the future coming of Christ
   6. a serious act of worship

From 10:16-17 it is certain that Paul viewed this experience as more than merely symbolic or memorial (cf. vv. 24-25). However, this concept is not developed. Possibly John 6:41-71 (although nothing in the immediate context relates to the Lord’s Supper) is an aspect of this spiritual unity. Christianity is primarily a personal faith relationship with the Triune God.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:2-16

2Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you. 3But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ. 4Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying disgraces his head. 5But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head, for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved. 6For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it
is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her cover her head. 7 For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. 8 For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; 9 for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake. 10 Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. 11 However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. 12 For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God. 13 Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? 14 Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him, 15 but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering. 16 But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God.

11:2 In light of the previous chapters, one wonders if this verse is irony or sarcasm. This church was not remembering Paul’s words and was not following his teaching (cf. 11:17,22).

NASB “hold firmly to the traditions”
NKJV “keep the traditions”
NRSV “maintain the traditions”
TEV “follow the teachings”
NJB “maintaining the traditions”

This is a PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE. Believers are to continue to cling to the truths that Paul preached (cf. II Thess. 2:15). This is the covenantal balance to election.

The term “traditions” (pardoσis) is used in several senses: (1) in I Cor. 11:2,23; 15:3 for gospel truths; (2) in Matt. 15:6; 23:1ff; Mark 7:8; Gal. 1:14 of Jewish traditions; (3) in Col. 2:6-8 of gnostic speculations; and (4) Roman Catholics use this verse as a biblical proof-text for Scripture and church traditions being equal in authority. However, in this context it refers to Apostolic truth, either spoken or written (cf. II Thess. 3:6).

“to the traditions” Much of the information about Jesus was passed orally from individual to individual until it was written down some 30 to 70 years after His death.

“just as I delivered them to you” There is a Greek wordplay between “traditions” (pardoσis) and “delivered” (pareidɔka), which are both forms of paradidɔmi. Paul was not the originator, but simply a link in the chain of revelation. The term “traditions” was used of Christian truths being passed from one person to another (cf. 11:23; 15:3).

Paul received information about the gospel from several sources.
1. Stephen’s sermon (cf. Acts 7)
4. His time in Arabia with Christ (cf. Gal. 1:11-17)
5. His time in Jerusalem with Peter and James (cf. Gal. 1:18-19)

11:3 “Christ is the head” There has been extensive theological discussion over the meaning of “head” (kephalē). The term can be understood as
1. its OT Hebrew equivalent is rosh, which can mean
   a. head
   b. chief
   c. beginning
   d. total amount
2. in the LXX rosh is translated by the Greek word
   a. archē (beginning, cf. Ps. 137:6)
   b. prɔtɔtokos (first, cf. I Chr. 5:12)
   c. kephalē (head)
      (1) head of a human
      (2) head of an animal
      (3) top of a mountain
      (4) top of a tower (cf. Matt. 21:42)
3. in the NT *kephalē*
   a. head of a human (cf. I Cor. 11:4,5,7)
   b. head of an animal
   c. idiomatic of the whole person
   d. beginning or source (cf. I Cor. 11:3)
   e. sum (cf. Rom. 13:9)
   f. leader
   g. husband (cf. Eph. 5:23)


In his commentary *1 and 2 Corinthians*, p. 103, F. F. Bruce asserts that in this context *kephalē* follows the Hebrew *rosh* in the sense of origin or source. This meaning of *kephalē* is not documented in the Greek Lexicons by
1. Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, Danker
2. Moulton, Milligan
3. Louw, Nida
4. Moulton

This shows how the context (i.e. I Cor. 11) determines the definition, not a dictionary. In this context “source” or “origin” fits best in v. 3 in relation to Gen. 1:26-27; 2:18 (cf. Kaiser, Davids, Bruce, and Brauch, *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 599-602).

Jesus was the Father’s agent in creation (cf. John 1:3,10; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2). Humans, male and female, were created by Him, in His image. However, the Son is submissive to the Father (cf. I Cor. 3:23; 11:2; 15:28). This appropriate submission extends to man and woman. They are both created in the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27), but there is an order, man first, then woman (cf. Gen. 2:18).

“man is the head of a woman” The terms “man” and “woman” can mean husband and wife (cf. NRSV, TEV). In this context this is not the intended emphasis, but the order of creation reflected in Genesis 2.

“and God is the head of Christ” This is a repeated truth in I Corinthians (cf. 3:23; 11:3; 15:28). The order within the Trinity has nothing to do with inequality, but is a division of emphasis or function. This truth can also be implied from the discussion of male and female. Mutuality was surely the model before the Fall in Gen. 3. This mutuality is reinstated in believers’ restored relationship with the Father through the Son (i.e. Jesus has restored the image in both male and female believers).

11:4

NASB “Every man who has something on his head while praying . . . disgraces his head”

NKJV “Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head”

NRSV “Any man who prays or prophesies with something on his head disgraces his head”

TEV “So a man who prays or proclaims God’s message in public worship with his head covered disgraces Christ”

NJB “For any man to pray or prophesy with his head covered shows disrespect for his head”

This is a word play on “head.” The second use of the word head refers to Christ (cf. TEV). Paul is dealing with a Roman culture whose forms and symbols are exactly opposite of Jewish culture (i.e. men cover their heads). The real issue is not who covers whose head, but the symbol of (1) origin or (2) submission, which are both theologically significant.

It has been suggested that the historical situation in Corinth: (1) the social, political, and financial leaders led worship with a head covering to differentiate themselves from the common man or (2) that Jews in the synagogue in Corinth had women wear a veil and believing Jews expected the same in the church.

There is a theological tension between this verse, which seems to affirm women in leadership roles in public worship with the socially acceptable covering compared to 14:34-35, where women (or at least “wives,” v. 35) are forbidden to speak in church.

Some groups prooftext chapter 11, while others use chapter 14. It must be admitted that the key to this passage is the first century cultural setting of Corinth, but which specific aspect is not clear to us today. The first century church knew of women’s leadership in the OT and was aware of Paul’s use of women in his ministry (cf. Rom. 16). They understood the issue in Corinth and the Roman culture as we do not. Dogmatism is inappropriate!


With these new documented insights from first century Roman Corinth, it is possible to begin to see the cultural issues Paul faced in this book.
1. Paul is not addressing Jewish culture nor Greek culture at all in this context.
2. Paul is addressing two groups with elite social status.
   a. Wealthy, socially elite, male believers were showing off their positions by covering their heads while leading public worship, as was customary for this social class, while leading civic Greco-Roman religious worship. They were flaunting themselves.
   b. The wealthy, elite wives were removing their culturally expected veil to flaunt their equality, not only in Christ, but also as a social statement, as were other Roman women of the period.
3. The citizens of Roman Corinth, who were curious about the Christian faith and worship practices, would send a “messenger” (i.e. angels of vv. 10 may refer to servants or representatives sent on behalf of masters) to check out the meeting.

This historical/cultural/social information makes good sense of a very difficult and disputed text. It also fits other texts in I Corinthians, which obviously reflects a unique first century, Corinthian setting!

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### SPECIAL TOPIC: WOMEN IN THE BIBLE

#### I. The Old Testament

A. Culturally women were considered property
   1. included in list of property (Exodus 20:17)
   2. treatment of slave women (Exodus 21:7-11)
   3. women’s vows annulable by socially responsible male (Numbers 30)
   4. women as spoils of war (Deuteronomy 20:10-14; 21:10-14)

B. Practically there was a mutuality
   1. male and female made in God’s image (Genesis 1:26-27)
   2. honor father and mother (Exodus 20:12 [Deut. 5:16])
   3. reverence mother and father (Leviticus 19:3; 20:9)
   4. men and women could be Nazarites (Numbers 6:1-2)
   5. daughters have right of inheritance (Numbers 27:1-11)
   6. part of covenant people (Deuteronomy 29:10-12)
   7. observe teaching of father and mother (Proverbs 1:8; 6:20)
   8. sons and daughters of Heman (Levite family) led music in Temple (I Chronicles 25:5-6)
   9. son and daughter will prophesy in new age (Joel 2:28-29)

C. Women were in leadership roles
   1. Moses’ sister, Miriam, called a prophetess (Exodus 15:20-21)
   2. women gifted by God to construct Tabernacle (Exodus 35:25-26)
   3. a woman, Deborah, also a prophetess (cf. Jdg. 4:4), led all the tribes (Judges 4:4-5; 5:7)
   4. Huldah was a prophetess whom King Josiah asked to read and interpret the newly-found “Book of the Law” (II Kings 22:14; II Chr. 34:22-27)
   5. Queen Esther, a godly woman, saved Jews in Persia

#### II. The New Testament

A. Culturally women in both Judaism and the Greco-Roman world were second class citizens with few rights or privileges (the exception was Macedonia).

B. Women in leadership roles
   1. Elizabeth and Mary, godly women available to God (Luke 1-2)
   2. Anna, godly woman serving at the Temple (Luke 2:36)
   3. Lydia, believer and leader of a house church (Acts 16:14,40)
   4. Philip’s four daughters were prophetesses (Acts 21:8-9)
   5. Phoebe, deaconess of church at Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1)
   6. Prisca (Priscilla), Paul’s fellow-worker and teacher of Apollos (Acts 18:26; Rom. 16:3)
   7. Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, Julia, Nereus’ sister, several women co-workers of Paul (Rom. 16:6-16)
III. How does a modern believer balance the divergent biblical examples?

A. How does one determine historical or cultural truths, which only apply to the original context, from eternal truths valid for all churches, all believers of all ages?

1. We must take the intent of the original inspired author very seriously. The Bible is the Word of God and the only source for faith and practice.

2. We must deal with the obviously historically conditioned inspired texts.
   a. the cultus (i.e. ritual and liturgy) of Israel
   b. first century Judaism
   c. Paul’s obviously historically conditioned statements in I Corinthians
      (1) the legal system of pagan Rome
      (2) remaining a slave (7:20-24)
      (3) celibacy (7:1-35)
      (4) virgins (7:36-38)
      (5) food sacrificed to an idol (8:10:23-33)
      (6) unworthy actions at Lord’s Supper (11)

3. God fully and clearly revealed Himself to a particular culture, a particular day. We must take seriously the revelation, but not every aspect of its historical accommodation may apply to us today. The Word of God was written in human words, addressed to a particular culture at a particular time.

B. Biblical interpretation must seek the original author’s intent. What was he saying to his day? This is foundational and crucial for proper interpretation. But then we must apply this to our own day. Now, here is the problem with women in leadership (the real interpretive problem may be defining the term “leadership”). Were deaconesses seen as leaders? It is quite clear that Paul, in I Cor. 14:34-35 and I Tim. 2:9-15, is asserting that women should not take the lead in public worship! But how do I apply that today? I do not want Paul’s culture or my culture to silence God’s Word and will. Possibly Paul’s day was too limiting, but also my day may be too open. I feel so uncomfortable saying that Paul’s words and teachings are conditional, first century, local situational truths. Who am I that I should let my mind or my culture negate an inspired author?!

   However, what do I do when there are biblical examples of women leaders (even in Paul’s writings, cf. Rom. 16)? A good example of this is Paul’s discussion of public worship in I Cor. 11-14. In 11:5 he seems to allow women’s preaching and praying in public worship with their heads covered, yet in 14:34-35 he demands they remain silent! It is this diversity that allows me freedom to identify Paul’s comments (as relates to restrictions on women) as limited to first century Corinth and Ephesus. In both churches there were problems with women exercising their newfound freedom (cf. Bruce Winter, Corinth After Paul Left, which could have caused difficulty for their church in reaching their society for Christ. Their freedom had to be limited so that the gospel could be more effective.

   My day is just the opposite of Paul’s. In my day the gospel might be limited if trained, articulate women are not allowed to share the gospel, not allowed to lead! What is the ultimate goal of public worship? Is it not evangelism and discipleship? Can God be honored and pleased with women leaders? The Bible as a whole seems to say “yes”!

   I want to yield to Paul; my theology is primarily Pauline. I do not want to be overly influenced or manipulated by modern feminism! However, I feel the church has been slow to respond to obvious biblical truths, like the inappropriateness of slavery, racism, bigotry, and sexism. It has also been slow to respond appropriately to the abuse of women in the modern world. God in Christ set free the slave and the woman. I dare not let a culture-bound text resackle them.

   One more point: as an interpreter I know that Corinth was a very disrupted church. The charismatic gifts were prized and flaunted. Women may have been caught up in this. I also believe that Ephesus was being affected by false teachers who were taking advantage of women and using them as surrogate speakers in the house churches of Ephesus.
C. Suggestions for further reading
   *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth* by Gordon Fee and Doug Stuart (pp. 61-77)
   *Hard Sayings of the Bible* by Walter C. Kaiser, Peter H. Davids, F. F. Bruce and Manfred T. Branch (pp. 613-616; 665-667)

11:5 “But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying” This implies strongly that with her head covered she may pray and prophesy in public meetings. The term “prophesying” in this book is “sharing the gospel” or “preaching publicly” (cf. 14:39). Verses 4 and 5 are parallel relating to what men and women do while participating in group worship. See Special Topic: New Testament Prophecy at I Cor. 14:1.

“disgraces her head” Corinth was a Roman colony and reflected Roman culture. Roman women were marriageable in their early teens. The veil was a cultural aspect of the marriage service. It was expected to be worn outside the home by Roman women. Its absence would be seen as (1) a shamed woman; (2) a prostitute; (3) a dominant lesbian partner; or (4) a “new” woman (i.e. a social movement of equality and freedom active among Roman society in the first century).

A woman flaunting herself in this manner would have publicly shamed her husband and given the wrong impression about the church. Christ makes males and females free, but each has an obligation to limit freedom for the cause of Christ. Women and men, wives and husbands who are believers are called on to live for the Kingdom. This is the theme of I Cor. 8-10 and is continued in chapter 11.

“she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved” This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. There are several possibilities for understanding this phrase: (1) it refers to the common attire of local prostitutes; (2) it is a cultural act of an adulterous woman’s public shaming; (3) it showed that shamed women were characteristic in the Mediterranean world for followers of the “Mystery Religions”; or (4) it refers to the culturally unexpected act of Christian women cutting their hair extremely short to show their new freedom (i.e. a cultural trend in first century Rome and its colonies).

In many commentaries option #1 is stressed. It is asserted that this must refer to the temple prostitutes of Diana. However, this temple on the Acropolis was destroyed by an earthquake 150 years before Paul’s time and there is no historical evidence that it still functioned. There is also no evidence that prostitutes in Greece shaved their heads.

The key question is “What topic is Paul is addressing?”
1. appropriate or culturally expected worship attire and actions
2. abuse of personal freedoms
3. the appropriate relationship between
   a. men and women
   b. husbands and wives
   c. angels and women (v. 10)
   d. culture and women (v. 13)
I have come to understand #1 as the best option, addressing both husbands and wives not being led by their new freedom in Christ, but by their dogged refusal to put aside their cultural privileges and work toward the unity and growth of the church.

11:6 “If...if” There are two FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL phrases in this verse which are assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purpose. There were Christian women in the church who refused to cover their heads, but still wanted to be active in public worship. It was socially unacceptable.

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<th>NASB</th>
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<td></td>
<td>NKJV</td>
<td>“is not covered”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>NRSV</td>
<td>“will not veil herself”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TEV</td>
<td>“does not cover her head”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>NJB</td>
<td>“go without a veil”</td>
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Historical data on the use of face coverings (i.e. veils) or shoulder-length head coverings by ancient Mediterranean people is very helpful. I have documented the latest evidence in the notes at 11:4. Roman women who were married, not widowed, and not a prostitute, were culturally expected to wear a veil in public as a sign that they were married. There were very few single women in the ancient Mediterranean world.

In Jewish culture the facial veil was used as a sign of (1) leprosy, Lev. 13:45; (2) mourning for the dead, Ezek. 24:17,22; (3) embarrassment, Micah 3:7; (4) marriage, Gen. 24:65; and (5) prostitution, Gen. 38:14-15. However, remember Paul is not referring to Jewish culture at all because in that culture men cover their heads in worship.
“let her also have her hair cut off” This is an AORIST MIDDLE IMPERATIVE. This is not meant to be taken literally. Paul is not advocating a public shaming of Christian women, but he is asserting the cultural consequences for inappropriate activity!

“let her cover her head” This is a PRESENT MIDDLE IMPERATIVE. Christian women for Christ’s sake conform to the expected culture in order to reach people for salvation and church membership.

11:7 “he is the image and glory of God” This refers to Gen. 1:26-27, yet in the context of this verse Gen. 1:26 the word “man” is generic. Theologically it is uncertain exactly to what “image and likeness” in Gen. 1:26-27 refers. Most scholars would relate them to personality, self-consciousness, moral perspective, ability to choose, ability to relate to other “selves.” There is an obvious mutuality between men and women in both Gen. 1:26-27 and 2:18. The problem comes in Gen. 3:16! See Special Topic: Glory at I Cor. 2:7.

11:8
NASB “For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man”
NKJV “For man is not from woman, but woman from man”
NRSV “indeed, man was not made from woman, but woman from man”
TEV “for man was not created from woman, but woman from man”
NJB “for man did not come from woman; no woman came from man”

The term “originate” is not in the Greek text. It is only the PREPOSITION ek (i.e. out of) as is v. 12. Paul is asserting the order of creation in vv. 7 and 9 from Gen. 2 (i.e. Adam first, then Eve). However in vv. 8-9,11, Paul asserts their mutual dependance (which alludes to Gen. 1:27 and 2:18).

11:9 “man was not created for the woman’s sake” We must remember that Paul’s statement in Gal. 3:28 on the equality of women does not minimize the created distinctions between the sexes, at least in this age. The full equality of men and women in Christ does not automatically remove all cultural/traditional role expectations. Believers (male and female) do not flaunt personal freedoms, which may damage the reputation of the church among the unbelieving culture. Mature believers limit their freedom in Christ for the sake of His Kingdom. Believers have a corporate responsibility to (1) the body of Christ and (2) the unbelieving community!

11:10 “Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head” This text, as all the others in this context, can be understood in several ways. The key issue is what does “authority” (i.e. exousia) represent?

First, it should be noted that exousia is often related to dunamis. Otto Betz has an interesting article on exousia in New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, vol. 2, pp. 606-611. Here are four examples.

“It is characteristic for the NT that exousia and dunamis are both related to the work of Christ, the consequent new ordering of cosmic power-structures and the empowering of believers” (p. 609).

“The exousia of believers. The authority of a Christian believer is founded on the rule of Christ and on the disarming of all powers. It implies both freedom and service” (p. 611).

“He is free to do anything (I Cor. 6:12; 10:23 exestin); this assertion, which was made initially by the sectarian enthusiasts at Corinth, was taken up by Paul who acknowledged it to be correct” (p. 611).

“In practice, however, this theoretically unrestricted freedom is governed by consideration of what is helpful to other individual Christians and the congregation as a whole in view of the fact that complete redemption is still to come (I Cor. 6:12; 10:23)” (p. 611).

“All things are lawful [exestin] for me, but not all things are helpful. ‘All things are lawful [exestin],’ but not all things build up. Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor” (I Cor. 10:23ff). The quotation within these quotations are probably the slogans of the libertines at Corinth. Paul counters them by admitting their truth, but by showing that it is not the whole truth” (p. 611).

Paul uses these two terms often in his letters to the church at Corinth.

1. exousia, I Cor. 7:37; 9:4,5,6,12 (twice),18; 11:10; II Cor. 13:10
2. dunamis, I Cor. 1:18; 2:4,5; 4:19,20; 5:4; 15:24,43; II Cor. 4:7; 6:7; 8:3 (twice); 12:9; 13:4 (twice)

Rights and power were major issues for both the legalists and the libertines. Paul tries to walk a fine line between both extremes. In this context Christian women are encouraged to accept the God-given order of creation (i.e. Christ-man-woman) for the purpose of the furtherance of the Kingdom. Paul asserts the original mutuality (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 2:18) in verses 11-12. It is very dangerously to (1) isolate one verse in this context; (2) apply a rigid systematic denominational grid on the
issue of the relationship of men and women/husbands and wives of the first century to every culture in every century; and (3) to miss Paul’s balance between Christian freedom and Christian corporate covenant responsibility.

Where did Christian women get the freedom to participate as a leader in public (i.e. house-church) worship? Surely not from the synagogue. Was it a cultural trend from first century Roman society? This is surely possible and in my opinion helps explain many aspects of this chapter. However, it is surely possible that the power of the gospel, the restoration of the original “image of God” lost in the Fall is the source. There is a shocking new equality in all areas of human life and society. But this equality can be turned into a license for personal abuse. This inappropriate extension is what Paul is addressing.

“because of the angels” There are three lines of interpretation of this passage that relate to angels: (1) that the reference is to angels as representatives of God that are present in our worship services as observers, I Cor. 4:9; I Tim. 5:21; Ps. 138:1; and also the Dead Sea Scrolls; (2) that these are evil angels with sexual desires similar to the angels in Gen. 6:2; II Pet. 2:4; and Jude 6. Angels are mentioned often in I Corinthians (cf. 4:9; 6:3; 11:10; 13:1).

The third option translates angelous as “messengers” instead of “angels.” The terms for messenger and angel are the same in both Hebrew (i.e. malak) and Greek (i.e. angelos). This theory is based on first century social customs (cf. Bruce W. Winter, After Paul Left Corinth, pp. 133-138). A person of status would not visit a house church without sending someone to check out the meeting first. This makes more sense than trying to link v. 10 to lustful angels or angels concerned with appropriate decorum (cf. Ps. 138:1) in worship.

11:11-12 “in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman” These verses emphasize the mutuality between men and women (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 2:18; Gal. 3:26-29).

This freedom (i.e. return to the initial creation model of Gen. 1:26-27) must be expressed in appropriate ways within one’s fallen culture. There is no doubting Paul’s affirmation of Jesus’ redemption totally changing every believer’s status! We are all one in Christ. Our goal now is helping our fallen neighbors and citizens find this same redemption. There are still societal issues in every culture. Because believers can, does not mean believers should!

The use of “from” (i.e. ek, literally “out of”) in this context (twice) seems to reinforce the use of “head” as “origin.” Woman is out of man; man is out of God. The Genesis narrative also provides the basis for “head” as a proper order of creation. Both freedom in Christ and submission (cf. Eph. 5:21) are appropriate when the good of the church is the ultimate goal.

11:13-15 Paul uses this same approach in 10:15 where it could be sarcastic, based on his use of “wise men” (cf. 4:10; II Cor. 11:10), but here it does not seem sarcastic rather in the sense of “thinking culturally.” Paul uses Corinthian/Greco-Roman/first century etiquette.

1. Married women should be veiled in public or in worship acts (v. 13).
2. Young men in Corinth cut their long hair at the transition to manhood (i.e. at ten years old). To keep the long hair was a cultural sign of femininity or homosexuality (v. 14).
3. Women with short hair were identified as either
   a. one who had been publicly shamed
   b. a prostitute (v. 15).
These are not spiritual insights nor biblical insights (i.e. they do not fit Jewish customs), but cultural insights.

11:13 “yourselves” This is EMPHATIC.

11:14 “if. . .if” These are both THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL sentences, which speak of potential action.

11:16 “if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL which is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes. There were contentious Christians in the church at Corinth.

The verb is a PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE, which implies continual action. This contentiousness is a continuing attitude for them. They love strife and contention!

The term “contentious” is a compound of philos (i.e. love) and veikos (i.e. strife). It is used of the Apostles at the Last Supper in Luke 22:24.
“we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God” (cf. v. 4:17). Paul is not giving them something special (cf. 4:17; 7:17; 11:16; 14:36). This church was glorying in its wisdom and freedom. They thought they had the right to live differently from other Christian churches. Paul asserts they do not!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:17-22**

17But in giving this instruction, I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse. 18For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part I believe it. 19For there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you. 20Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord’s Supper, 21for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk. 22What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you.

11:17 Paul is starting a new subject, but the prideful attitudes of some Corinthian believers are still in focus. The subject changes, but the basic problem does not change: (1) their elitism; (2) their emphasis on personal freedom; and (3) their assumption of wisdom! All of the subjects Paul addresses (cf. 7:1,25; 8:1; 16:1), which were sent to him by letters, revolve around these same issues.

Even their collective love feast was turned into a “more for me” feast! Right, ability, and status trumped love, service, and the health of the body.

“Do not praise you” Paul has affirmed them in 11:2, but in this area he can only scold them.

“come together” This is the Greek compound term sunerchomai. Paul is very fond of sun compounds. The PREPOSITION basically means “together with.” This term expresses the same idea as synagogue, which refers to the collective meeting of believers. Chapters 11-14 deal with gathered worship (cf. 11:17,18,20,33,34; 14:23,26).

I wonder how this “coming together” worked. There apparently were several different house churches in Corinth, possibly the source of some of the factious groups. Does Paul imply here that all the house churches meet jointly for the Lord’s Supper?

11:18 “divisions exist among you” These divisions are first mentioned in 1:10-17 and 3:3-4, but their presence is assumed throughout the book. In this context the division is not over leaders, but is characterized by socio-economic factors. This may define the factions as representing social classes as well as theological emphases.

11:19

NASB, NKJV “For there must also be factions among you”

NRSV “Indeed there have to be factions among you”

TEV “(No doubt there must be divisions among you”

NJB “that there should be differing groups among you”

The term is “faction” (v. 19, i.e. hairesis), from which we get the English word heresies. Its basic etymology is “to choose” or “select,” but with the added connotation of showing special favor, choosing one and rejecting other choices (cf. Acts 24:14; I Cor. 11:19; Gal. 5:20). It can be used to describe (1) a person who believes false teaching (cf. Titus 3:10) or (2) the false teaching itself (cf. II Pet. 2:1).

There is a different term used in v. 18, “divisions” (i.e. schisma), from which we get the English word schism. Its basic etymology is “to split” (cf. Matt. 27:51). It was used of groups dividing over an issue (cf. John 7:43; 9:16; 10:19; Acts 14:4; 23:7; I Cor. 1:10; 11:18).

Paul mentions a theological purpose (i.e. hina) and necessity (i.e. dei) for the presence of these differing groups. They were necessary for the true spiritual leaders to be clearly revealed. Mature leaders will become evident in times of crisis.

The other option is that some groups and their leaders will show by their actions that they are not Christians at all (cf. I John 2:19; Mark 4:16-19).

“that those who are approved” See Special Topic: Greek Terms Used for Testing at 3:13.

11:20 “it is not to eat the Lord’s Supper” These privileged socially elite faction(s) were acting in a manner totally alien to the communal, self-giving precedent of Jesus’ last meal with His disciples. The verses that follow clarify his point (cf. v. 22).

“the Lord’s Supper” This is the only occurrence of this phrase in the NT. This is another possible example of sarcasm. Nothing about their attitudes and actions compares with Jesus’ attitudes and actions in giving Himself for sinful mankind!
The worship event goes by several names: (1) the Lord’s Supper; (2) “the table of the Lord”; (I Cor. 10:21); (3) “breaking bread” (Acts 2:42; 20:7; I Cor. 10:16; 11:24 [cf. Luke 24:30]); (4) thanksgiving (i.e. eucharist) or blessing (i.e. eulogia, Matt. 26:26-27; I Cor. 10:16; 11:24).

11:21 “each one takes his own supper first” The early church combined the Lord’s Supper and a fellowship meal called “the Agape” (cf. I Pet. 2:13; Jude 12, and possibly Acts 20:7).

It is possible to understand this phrase in several ways.
1. The wealthy came early and ate their meal quickly so that when the poor arrived there was nothing, or hardly anything, left to eat.
2. Each person was to bring his own meal. The wealthy ate theirs quickly in the presence of the poor, or slave members of the church, who brought little or nothing.

The problem was selfishness and gluttony based on social distinctions instead of self-giving love, as Jesus’ actions and precedent clearly taught. The Corinthian church did not believe that they were one in Christ. There was a radical dichotomy between
1. social haves vs. have nots
2. wealthy vs. poor
3. men vs. women
4. freedmen vs. slaves
5. Romans vs. all others

These distinctions are clearly spelled out in vv. 21 and 22.

“one is hungry and another is drunk” Whether this was caused by Roman societal distinctions or selfishness, an unacceptable situation is clearly shown. The purpose of the memorial meal and the communal fellowship had been forgotten. This was a serious matter (cf. v. 23). This verse cannot be used to advocate total abstinence. It is obvious that wine was a part of this experience. It is the abuse that is condemned.

“Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink” Some legalists and literalists have tried to use this as a proof-text for not eating in the church. History and context are always crucial in the interpretation of ancient literature.

11:22 There is a series of rhetorical questions which reveal the emotion with which Paul is writing. He is shocked at the actions of some of the church (cf. James 2:6).

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:23-26

> 23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” 25 In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.

11:23 “For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you” Paul was not present at the Lord’s Supper. He claims in Gal. 1:11-17 to have received revelation directly from Jesus and in Gal. 2:18-19, not to have received it from other Apostles or Jerusalem leaders. However, his words here reflect a knowledge of the Synoptic Gospels’ traditions.

“took bread” It is significant that Jesus did not use the Passover lamb as a symbol. It was linked too strongly with the Old Covenant (cf. Exod. 12). The loaf became a symbol of unity (10:16-17).

11:24 “and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said” This points toward a specific historical act (i.e. the Passover meal in the upper room the night before Jesus was betrayed). Many Christians call the ordinance the Eucharist, which is from the Greek term for “thanks” (i.e. eucharisteò, cf. Matt. 26:27; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19).

### NASB

“This is my body, which is for you”

### NKJV

“Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you”

### NRSV

“This is my body, that is for you”

### TEV, NJB

“This is my body, which is for you”

This is obviously metaphorical. Cannibalism would be a horror to any Jewish person. Jesus is using the broken bread as a symbol of His broken body on Calvary. As bread gives physical nourishment and life to those who eat it, so Jesus’ actions give spiritual life to those who receive it.
There has been much theological debate about the meaning of Jesus’ words. Much of the discussion is based on (1) the nature of the event and (2) the way God provides grace. Those who see this as a sacrament rely heavily on John 6, which in context, has nothing to do with the Lord’s Supper.

There are several Greek manuscript variations in this phrase: (1) the Textus Receptus adds, “take, eat.” This is found in the Greek MSS C, K, L, and P. It is not original; and (2) Paul’s short phrase “for you” (cf. MSS P*, A, B, C*) has been expanded by the early scribes in several ways: (a) “broken for you” (cf. MSS A², C, D², F, G); (b) “shed for you” (cf. MS D); (c) “given for you” (cf. Luke 22:19).

11:24-25  “do this in remembrance of Me” This is either a PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE or a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. The IMPERATIVE fits the context best. This symbolic meal is to be repeated regularly until Jesus returns.

It is interesting that in the record of the Lord’s Supper in Matthew and Mark’s Gospel the phrase “do this in remembrance of Me” is not included. However, it does appear in Luke 22:19 and I Cor. 11:24-25. It is so surprising that an obviously significant event in Jesus’ life, which was to be repeated, is recorded with such variety in the Gospels and Paul’s writings.

The NT does not specify how often this is to be repeated. Some groups of believers never do it (i.e. Quakers), others do it every week. Those Christian groups that have a sacramental view of the Supper obviously make it a recurrent (i.e. weekly) and central event. Those Christians who are nervous about repeated rituals losing their impact and significance and do not see it as a channel of grace, usually observe the Supper less often.

11:25 “This cup is the new covenant” This new covenant is specifically mentioned in Jer. 31:31-34. The Greek term for covenant originally meant “a will” or “last testament,” but the meaning here reflects the Septuagint’s use of the term as “covenant.”

The concept of a “new covenant” must have been shocking to Jewish people. They were trusting in the permanency of the Mosaic covenant. Jeremiah had to remind them that YHWH’s covenants were conditional on a faith-repentant response.

SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT

The OT term berith, covenant, is not easy to define. There is no matching verb in Hebrew. All attempts to derive an etymological definition have proved unconvincing. However, the obvious centrality of the concept has forced scholars to examine the word usage to attempt to determine its functional meaning.

Covenant is the means by which the one true God deals with His human creation. The concept of covenant, treaty, or agreement is crucial in understanding the Bible. The tension of God’s sovereignty and human free-will are clearly seen in the concept of covenant. Some covenants are based exclusively on God’s character and actions:

1. creation itself (Gen. 1-2)
2. the call of Abraham (Gen. 12)
3. the covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15)
4. the preservation and promise to Noah (Gen. 6-9)

However, the very nature of covenant demands a response:

1. Adam must obey God and not eat of the tree in the midst of Eden
2. Abraham must leave his family, follow God, and believe in future descendants by faith
3. Noah must build a huge boat far from water and gather the animals
4. Moses received specific guidelines for religious and social life with promises of blessings and cursings (cf. Deut. 27-28)

This same tension involving God’s relationship to humanity is addressed in the “new covenant.” The tension can be clearly seen in comparing Ezek. 18 with Ezek. 36:27-37. Is the covenant based on God’s gracious actions or mandated human response? This is the burning issue of the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. The goals of both are the same: (1) the restoration of fellowship lost in Gen. 3 and (2) the establishment of a righteous people who reflect God’s character.

The new covenant of Jer. 31:31-34 solves the tension by removing human performance as the means of attaining acceptance. God’s law becomes an internal desire instead of an external performance. The goal of a godly, righteous people remains the same, but the methodology changes. Fallen mankind proved themselves inadequate to be God’s reflected image. The problem was not the covenant, but human sinfulness and weakness (cf. Rom. 7; Gal. 3).

The same tensions between OT unconditional and conditional covenants remain in the NT. Salvation is absolutely free in the finished work of Jesus Christ, but it requires repentance and faith (both initially and continually). It is both a legal pronouncement and a call to Christlikeness; an indicative statement of acceptance and an imperative to holiness! Believers are not saved by their performance, but unto obedience (cf. Eph. 2:8-10). Godly living becomes the evidence of salvation, not the means of salvation. This tension is clearly seen in Hebrews.
“in My blood” This refers to the Hebrew concept of Jesus’ sacrificial death (cf. II Cor. 5:21). The blood in OT Hebrew understanding refers to the life given by God (cf. Lev. 17:11,14; Deut. 12:23). The first covenant was also ratified with shed blood (cf. Exod. 24:8).

11:26
NASB, NKJV
RSV “For as often as you eat. . .drink it”
TEV “That every time you eat. . .drink”
NJB “Whenever you eat. . .drink”

Notice that there is no specific times given here, or elsewhere, in the NT. In Acts the characteristic phrase to describe the Lord’s Supper, “broke bread,” is used of (1) a daily experience (2:42,46) or (2) Sunday worship (20:7,11). However, the phrase is also used of a regular meal (27:34-35).

“you proclaim the Lord’s death” This clearly shows the sacrificial aspect of Christ’s death. The Lord’s Supper is a backwards look at the death of Christ.

“until He comes” The Lord’s Supper is a forward look to the Second Coming (cf. 1:7; 4:5; 11:26; Mark 14:25).

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:27-32

> 27Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. 28But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. 30For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. 31But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. 32But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.

11:27
NASB, NKJV
RSV “whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord”
KJV “whoever eats this bread and drinks this cup of the Lord”
TEV “that if one of you eats the Lord’s bread or drinks from his cup”
NJB “therefore anyone who eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord”

“And” is not in the original text. “Or” is in the Greek text. The King James Version translators were afraid of the Roman Catholic understanding where the priest drinks the wine and the laity the bread, and intentionally mistranslated this verse! The NKJV has corrected this intentional mistranslation.

11:28 “But a man must examine himself” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. The term “examine” has the connotation of “to test with a view toward approval.” See Special Topic: Greek Terms for “Testing” at 3:13. In one sense all Christians are unworthy because they all have and continue to sin. In this context it refers specifically to the disunity and factious spirits of some in the church at Corinth (cf. Heb. 10:29).

11:29
NASB “if he does not judge the body rightly”
NKJV “not discerning the Lord’s body”
RSV “without discerning the body”
TEV “if you do not recognize the meaning of the Lord’s body”
NJB “without recognizing the body”

“His body” seems to refer not to (1) the physical body of Jesus nor (2) the participants, but to the Church as a group (cf. 10:17; 12:12-13,27). Disunity is the problem. A spirit of superiority or class distinctions destroys the fellowship.
11:30 Paul is asserting in plain language that believers who violate the unity of the church may suffer temporal physical consequences, even death (cf. 3:17). This is directly connected to a lack of respect for the body of Christ, the church, the people of God (cf. Acts 5; I Cor. 5:5; I Tim. 1:20).

11:31 “if” This is a SECOND CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence, which is called “contrary to fact.” It should be translated “if we had judged ourselves rightly, which we did not, then we should not be judged, which we are.”

11:32 “disciplined by the Lord” It is difficult to know when Christians are suffering because (1) they live in a fallen world; (2) they are reaping the consequences of their sinful acts; or (3) they are being tested by the Lord for spiritual maturity (cf. Heb. 5:8). God does test and discipline (cf. Heb. 12:5-11). It is an evidence of His love and our family status.

“so that we will not be condemned along with the world” The temporal judgment of believers who are hurting God’s church may be an act of love in sparing them a more severe judgment related to destroying the church (cf. 3:10-17).

I like a quote from George Ladd in A Theology of the New Testament.

“The world also has its religion that holds men in a bondage of asceticism and legalism that may have the appearance of wisdom and promote a kind of devotion and self-discipline, but it ultimately fails to provide a solution for the moral dilemma with which man is faced (Col. 2:20ff). Viewed from this point of view the world stands under the judgment of God (I Cor. 11:32) and is in need of reconciliation (II Cor. 5:19; Rom. 11:15” (p. 399).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:33-34

33So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. 34If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you will not come together for judgment. The remaining matters I will arrange when I come.

11:33 “when you come together to eat, wait for one another” This refers to v. 21. They were acting like selfish individuals, not a family, a body. They were acting in exactly the opposite way from Jesus’ self-giving act of love.

11:34 “if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence, which is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes.

“let him eat at home” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. If believers are so hungry that they act in an aggressive, selfish way at the Lord’s Supper, then they should satisfy their hunger before they join a fellowship meal.

NASB “The remaining matters I will arrange when I come”
NKJV “And the rest I will set in order when I come”
NRSV “About the other things I will give instructions when I come”
TEV “As for the other matters, I will settle them when I come”
NJB “The other matters I shall arrange when I come”

Notice that God has not seen fit to pass on all the detailed description that Paul gave to this church. It is uncertain if this relates only to the Lord’s Supper or other matters. The structure of I Corinthians (answering many unrelated questions) implies that it does. The essence of the Lord’s Supper is not found in a rule book of liturgy, but in a relationship with Jesus Christ. The details of religious rituals are not as significant as a good heart toward God, which issues in a love for the church.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Are modern Christians to duplicate all of the rituals and forms of the NT church?
2. What does 11:2-16 say about female participation in leadership roles in public worship?
3. What does the veil correspond to today?
4. Explain the problem of unveiled women and veiled men in a Roman first century culture.
5. What is Paul’s major purpose in discussing the Lord’s Supper in chapter 11?
6. How do you explain v. 30?
I CORINTHIANS 12

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UBS⁴</th>
<th>NKJV</th>
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Spiritual Gifts  
Spiritual Gifts: Unity in Diversity  
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READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. vii)
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.
A. Chapters 11-14 form one literary unit which deals with public worship. There were many problems in the Corinthian house churches. Paul addresses many of these issues, which apparently the church had written to him about (cf. 7:1,25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1,12). The issues related to public worship were:

1. how to pray and prophesy
   a. man uncovered
   b. woman covered
2. pride and abuse related to spiritual gifts
3. how to implement gifts into worship
   a. tongue speakers and interpreters
   b. singers
   c. prophets

B. There are three tests related to spiritual gifts.

1. chapter 12 - do they motivate unity?
2. chapter 13 - do they motivate love?
3. chapter 14 - do they build the body?

C. There are several lists of spiritual gifts in the NT (cf. Rom. 12; I Cor. 12-14; Eph. 4:11; and I Pet. 4:10-11). The lists are not the same, nor is the order of gifts the same. They are representative samples, not definitive lists. Some of the gifts function in public worship, but others focus outside corporate worship meetings.

The emphasis which Paul places on spiritual giftedness is surprising, but he says little about how one finds or identifies his/her gift. I am reluctant to affirm many of the tests that have been developed in our day. They test only for the gifts listed in the NT. Many of the gifts listed are not clearly defined (i.e. the gifts of leadership in Eph. 4:11). The most helpful guide I have found in this area is the IVP booklet entitled *Affirming the Will of God* by Paul Little.

The same Christian wisdom that helps us find God’s will also helps us identify our effective gift for ministry.

1. pray specifically
2. ask mature Christians who know you what strengths they see in you
3. look for open doors of opportunity to try different areas
4. follow the desires of your heart

**WORD AND PHRASE STUDY**

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1. Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware. 2. You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the mute idols, however you were led. 3. Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus is cursed”; and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.

12:1 “Now concerning” This is a recurring phrase in I Corinthians that shows Paul is answering specific questions from the church (cf. 7:1,25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1,12).

**| NASB, NKJV | “spiritual gifts” |
| NRSV (footnote) | “spiritual persons” |
| TEV | “the gifts from the Holy Spirit” |
| NJB | “gifts of the Spirit” |

The Greek term is a GENITIVE PLURAL of pneuma. This can refer to persons, gifts, or spiritualities (i.e. spiritual matters, cf. 14:1).
SPECIAL TOPIC: SPIRIT (PNEUMA)

I. The Greek terms
   A. pneô, to blow
   B. pnoê, wind, breath
   C. pneuma, spirit, wind
   D. pneumatikos, pertaining to the spirit
   E. pneumatikos, spiritually

II. Greek philosophical background (pneuma)
   A. Aristotle used the term as the life force that develops from birth until self-discipline
   B. The Stoics used the term as synonymous to psuchê, (soul) even nous (mind) in the sense of the five physical senses and the human intellect
   C. Greek thought - the term became equivalent to divine action (i.e. divination, magic, occult, prophecy, etc.)

III. Old Testament (ruah)
   A. The actions of the monotheistic God (i.e. Spirit, used about 90 times in the OT)
      1. positive, Genesis 1:2
      2. negative, I Sam. 16:14-16,23; I Kgs. 22:21-22; Isa. 29:10
   B. The God-given life force in humanity (i.e. God’s breath, cf. Gen. 2:7)
   C. The Septuagint translates ruah by pneuma (used about 100 times in the LXX)
   D. In later rabbinical writings, apocalyptic writing and the Dead Sea Scrolls, influenced by Zoroastrianism, pneuma is used of angels and demons

IV. New Testament (pneuma)
   A. God’s special presence, power, and equipping
   B. The Spirit is connected to God’s activity in the church
      1. prophecy
      2. miracles
      3. boldness to proclaim the gospel
      4. wisdom (i.e. the gospel)
      5. joy
      6. bring in the new age
      7. conversion (i.e. wooing and indwelling)
      8. Christlikeness
      9. special gifts of ministry
      10. prays for believers

      The Spirit awakens mankind’s desire for fellowship with God, for which they were created. This fellowship is possible because of the person and work of Jesus, God’s Messiah. The new spiritual awakening leads to Christlike living, serving, and trusting.
   C. Best understood as a spiritual continuum with the Holy Spirit on one end and mankind as a physical creature of this planet, but also a spiritual creature in God’s image, at the other end.
   D. Paul is the NT author who develops a theology of the Spirit/spirit.
      1. Paul uses Spirit to contrast flesh (i.e. sin nature)
      2. Paul uses spirit to contrast the physical
      3. Paul uses Spirit/spirit to contrast human thinking, knowing, and being
   E. Some examples from I Corinthians
      1. the Holy Spirit, 12:3
      2. the power and wisdom of God conveyed through the Holy Spirit, 2:4-5
3. God’s actions in the believer
   a. new mind-set, 2:12; 14:14,32
   b. new temple, 3:16; 6:19-20
   c. new life (i.e. morality), 6:9-11
   d. new life symbolized in baptism, 12:13
   e. one with God (i.e. conversion), 6:17
   f. God’s wisdom, not the world’s wisdom, 2:12-15; 14:14,32,37
   g. spiritual giftedness of every believer for ministry, chapters 12 and 14

4. the spiritual in contrast to the physical, 9:11; 10:3; 15:44

5. spiritual realm in contrast to physical realm, 2:11; 5:5; 7:34; 15:45; 16:18
   a. a way of referring to a human’s spiritual/inner life as distinct from one’s physical body, 7:34

6. Humans live in two realms by creation (i.e. the physical and the spiritual). Mankind fell from intimacy with God (Gen. 3). Through Christ’s life, teachings, death, resurrection, and promised return, the Spirit woos fallen humans to exercise faith in the gospel, at which point they are restored to fellowship with God. The Spirit is that personal part of the Trinity which characterizes the New Age of righteousness. The Spirit is God the Father’s agent and the Son’s Advocate in this “age.” A problem exists because the new age has occurred in time, while the old age of sinful rebellion still exists. The Spirit transforms the old into the new, even while they both exist.

“brethren” Paul often uses “brethren” to signal a change of subjects. This first verse has three of Paul’s contextual markers of a subject change: (1) now concerning; (2) brethren; and (3) I do not want you to be unaware. Chapters 11-14 deal with different aspects of gathered worship.

The messages that Paul sent to Corinth were so difficult that he often used “brethren” to remind them of their unity in God’s family (cf. 1:10,11,26; 2:1; 3:1; 4:6; 6:5,8; 7:24,29; 5:12; 9:5; 10:1; 11:2,33; 12:1; 14:6,20,26,39; 15:1,6,50,58; 16:11,12,15,20; II Cor. 1:8; 8:1,23; 9:3,5; 11:9; 13:11).

“I do not want you to be unaware” This is a recurrent phrase in Paul’s writings (cf. Rom. 1:13; 11:25; I Cor. 10:1; 11:3; 12:1; II Cor. 1:8; I Thess. 4:13). It was one of his ways of introducing a significant new topic.

12:2 “you were pagans” This is an IMPERFECT INDICATIVE. These believers were once pagans, but now they must shed this mind-set and related activity. The church at Corinth was deeply influenced by (1) pagan worship practices and (2) Roman culture. Both were coloring the gospel in inappropriate ways.

NASB “you were led astray”
NKJV “carried away. . .however you were led”
NRSV “you were enticed and led astray”
TEV “you were led astray in many ways”
NJB “you were irresistibly drawn”

This phrase has two related verbals from the root “to lead.” The first is a PERIPHERASTIC IMPERFECTIVE PASSIVE INDICATIVE and the second is a PRESENT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE, “you were and continue to be led.” The second term is also intensified by the preposition apo, which implies “to lead as a prisoner” (cf. Mark 14:44; 15:16). These former pagans had been continuously controlled by the demonic (cf. 10:20) before their conversion.

“to mute idols” This refers to gods who could not speak or help (cf. Isa. 46:5-7; Jer. 10:5; Hab. 2:18-19) in contrast to the Holy Spirit.

12:3 “no one speaking by the Spirit of God” This is a Hebrew idiom for inspiration (cf. I Sam. 10:10; 19:23-24). This reminds believers that not everyone who claims to speak for God does so. Every believer must evaluate those who claim to speak God’s message (cf. 12:10; I John 4:1-3).

NASB “Jesus is accursed”
NKJV “calls Jesus accursed”
“Let Jesus be accursed”  “a curse on Jesus”

This is a shocking statement. Why would anyone who claims to speak for God say this? The term (i.e. *anathema*) itself had an OT background (i.e. Hebrew, *herem*). It related to the concept of Holy War, where a city was devoted to God and, therefore, it became holy. This meant that everything in it that breathed, man or animal, had to die (cf. Josh. 6:17; 7:12).

The theories of how this term was used in Corinth are (1) that it has a Jewish setting relating to the synagogue oaths (cf. Acts 26:11, i.e. later, rabbinical curse formulas were used to remove Christians from the synagogue). To remain a member one had to reject or curse Jesus of Nazareth; (2) that it has a Roman setting relating to Emperor worship where only Caesar could be called “Lord”; (3) that it has a pagan worship setting where the curses were called on people by the use of a god’s name. This could then be translated, “May Jesus curse ______” (cf. 16:22); or (4) that someone related the phrase to the theological concept of Jesus bearing the OT curse for us (cf. Deut. 21:22; Gal. 3:13).

Recent studies from Corinth (cf. footnote #1 p. 164 in Bruce Winter’s *After Paul Left Corinth*) document the curse tablets found on the ancient acropolis at Corinth. Biblical scholars have assumed that a linking verb “is” should be provided in the phrase, “Jesus is accursed,” but this archaeological evidence clearly shows that these first century Roman period curses from Corinth lack the verb (as do some of the curses in the LXX of Deut. 22:15-20), as does v. 3. There is further archaeological evidence that Christians in first century Roman Corinth used curse formulas in burial curses (i.e. Byzantine period), found on Christian graves (J. H. Kent, *The Inscriptions*, 1926-50. Princeton: American School of Classical Studies, 1966, vol. 8:3, no. 644).

Some segments of the church were reverting to pagan curses in Jesus’ name against other members of the church. Not only is the method a problem, but also the hateful motive. This is another example of the tension within this church. Paul wants them to build up the church, edify the church. They want to curse part of the church!

“Jesus is Lord” This was the early church’s confession of faith (cf. Rom. 10:9-13; Phil. 2:11). It was a way of affirming Jesus’ deity and Messiahship.

“except by the Holy Spirit” The Holy Spirit’s task is to convict the world of sin and draw people to Christ (cf. John 16:8-14). No fallen humans can turn to God or Christ unaided (cf. John 6:44,65). This is the mystery of a sovereign God who loves all humanity made in His image yet His covenant mandate is that they must respond (and continue to respond) in repentance, faith, obedience, service, and perseverance!

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:4-11**

4Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. 6There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. 7But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; 9to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. 11But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

12:4-6

**NASB, NRSV “varieties”**

**NKJV “diversities”**

**TEV “different kinds”**

**NJB “different”**

This term means (1) to distribute or (2) variety (cf. 12:4,5,6). There is an obvious literary parallel between vv. 4,5, and 6, which unites the work of all three persons of the Trinity.

12:4-6 “Spirit. . .Lord. . .God” Note the action of the Trinity which emphasizes unity amidst diversity, not uniformity. The church is a group of gifted individuals. We need each other! Each one is important. Each one is gifted for ministry. The term “Trinity” is not a biblical term, but the concept is. See Special Topic: Trinity at 2:10.

12:4 “gifts” This is a different word than the one used in v. 1. This is the Greek term *charisma*. This is from the root term “chaira” which means to rejoice, or be full of joy (cf. 7:30; 13:6; II Cor. 2:3; 6:10; 7:7,9,16 and the compound with *sun* in 12:26 and 13:6). From this develops several concepts.

1. chara - joy, rejoicing
2. charis - generous gift (cf. 16:3; II Cor. 8:4,6)
   a. grace (cf. 1:4; 15:10)
   b. thanks (cf. 15:57)
3. charizomai
   a. give generously
   b. forgive (cf. II Cor. 2:7-10; 12:13)
   c. cancel a debt

4. charisma - a free gift (cf. Rom. 5:15,16; 6:23; II Cor. 1:11) or divinely conferred adornment (cf. 12:4,9,28,30,31)
   God has freely gifted His church. The gifts are for building up and growing the body of Christ. In reality they are the work
   of Christ divided among His followers. Believers must unite their giftedness with love and cooperate with each other so that
   the church may win and disciple a lost world (cf. Matt. 28:19-20).

12:5 “ministries” This is the Greek term diakonos. It has several uses in the NT.
   1. diakonos
      b. a minister/preacher (cf. 3:5; II Cor. 3:6; 6:4; 11:15[twice],23)
   2. diakoneō
      a. to serve (cf. I Pet. 4:11)
      b. deacon (cf. Rom. 16:1; I Tim. 3:8,10,13)
      c. administer (cf. Acts 6:2; II Cor. 3:3; 8:19,20)
   3. diakonia
      a. rendering aid (cf. Acts 6:1; II Cor. 8:4; 9:1,12,13)
      b. ministry for the gospel (cf. 12:5; 16:15; II Cor. 4:1; 5:8; 6:3; 11:8)
      c. a revelation from God (cf. II Cor. 3:7,8,9)

The key idea is serving and helping others in need (i.e. spiritual or physical). God equips His church to serve—serve themselves
and serve a lost and needy world.

12:6
NASB “effects. . .works”
NKJV “activities. . .works”
NRSV “activities. . .activates”
TEV “abilities. . .ability”
NJB “activity. . .work”

This is a play on the term energēs from which we get the English term energy. Its basic meaning is to effectively accomplish
a task. This sentence has the NOUN and the matching PARTICIPLE (PRESENT ACTIVE). Paul used this term often in his
Corinthian letters.
   1. energēs, energeia, energeō, energēma, I Cor. 4:12; 9:6; 12:6,10,11; 16:9,10; II Cor. 1:6; 4:12
   2. ergon and sunergea I Cor. 3:13,14,15; 9:1; 15:58; 16:10; II Cor. 6:1; 9:8; 11:15

God’s work is effective work. It accomplishes its purpose. Believers are called to active service, but the energy and effectiveness
is of God.

12:7
NASB “But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good”
NKJV “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all”
NRSV “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good”
TEV “The Spirit’s presence is shown in some way in each person for the good of all”
NJB “The particular manifestation of the Spirit granted to each one is to be used for the general good”

This truth is so important for the life and ministry of the church.
   1. Every believer has a freely-given grace gift given by the Spirit for ministry.
      a. Every believer is important.
      b. Every believer is gifted.
      c. Every believer is a minister.
   2. The purpose of God’s gift is not the elevation of the individual, but for the health of the whole body. We need each
      other!

This truth was desperately needed by the factious, arrogant, assertive believers at Corinth (and in every age). The “common
good” or “profit” (sumpheron, cf. 6:12; 7:35; 10:33; II Cor. 8:10) is for the body and not the individual. Believers must take
personal responsibility to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (cf. Eph. 4:3). This is so radically different from
western individualism.
SPECIAL TOPIC: CHRISTIANITY IS CORPORATE

A. Paul’s plural metaphors
   1. body
   2. field
   3. building
B. The term “saint” is always PLURAL (except Phil. 4:21, but even there it is also corporate)
C. The Reformation emphasis of Martin Luther on the “priesthood of the believer” is not truly biblical. It is the priesthood of believers (cf. Exod. 19:6; I Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6).
D. Each believer is gifted for the common good (cf. I Cor. 12:7)
E. Only in cooperation can the people of God be effective. Ministry is corporate (cf. Eph. 4:11-12).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>12:8</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NASB, NKJV “word of wisdom. . .the word of knowledge”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRSV “the utterance of wisdom. . .the utterance of knowledge”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEV “a message full of wisdom. . .a message full of knowledge”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NJB “the gift of utterance expressing wisdom. . .the gift of utterance expressing knowledge”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These are two different Greek terms, “wisdom” (i.e. sophia) and “knowledge” (i.e. gnōsis). They reflect the Hebrew distinction between “wisdom” and “knowledge.” The first is practical and the second, more academic. The first relates to living the Christian life and the second to a proper explanation of Christian doctrine.

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<th>12:9 “faith”</th>
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This refers not to saving faith like Mark 1:15; John 1:12, because the gifts are only given to believers, but to miracle working faith, which is made clear from 13:2 (cf. Matt. 17:20; 21:21).

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<th>“healing”</th>
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This term (iaomai) is PLURAL (cf. II Cor. 12:7-9,28,30), which is literally “gifts of cures.” Healing is a gift from the Spirit in this context and a ministry of the elders in James 5:14. Physical healing was/is an evidence of the love and care of God and a sign of spiritual healing (i.e. forgiveness of sins, salvation). For the Jews there was a connection between sin and sickness, righteousness and health (cf. Deut. 27-28). However, Job and Ps. 73 clarify the issue as does John 9. The mystery is why some are healed and some are not. One’s faith cannot be the key ingredient, but God’s will. It is never how much faith we exercise, but the object of our faith (faith the size of a mustard seed moves mountains, cf. Matt. 17:20).

Thank God for healing, healers, and caring churches!

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<th>12:10 “the effecting of miracles”</th>
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This seems to be parallel to v. 9a (i.e. miracle-working faith). Since this is a list, they cannot be completely synonymous. The exact distinction is uncertain.

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<th>“prophecy”</th>
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There are at least two ways to understand this term: (1) in the Corinthian letters this refers to sharing or proclaiming the gospel (cf. 14:1); (2) the book of Acts mentions prophets (cf. 11:27-28; 13:1; 15:32; 21:10, even prophetesses, 21:9).

The problem with this term is, how does the NT gift of prophecy relate to OT prophets? In the OT prophets are the writers of Scripture. In the NT this task is given to the original twelve Apostles and their helpers. As the term “apostle” is retained as an ongoing gift (cf. Eph. 4:11), but with a changed task after the death of the Twelve, so too, the office of prophet. Inspiration has ceased, there is no further inspired Scripture (cf. Jude 20). New Testament prophets’ primary task is proclamation of the gospel, but also a different task, possibly how to apply NT truths to current situations and needs. See Special Topic: NT Prophecy at 14:1.

<table>
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<th>“distinguishing of spirits”</th>
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There are three sources of human giftedness: (1) by nature (i.e. natural talents); (2) by the Spirit; and (3) by the devil. This gift is the ability to differentiate among these sources (cf. I Tim. 4:1; I John 4:1-3).
“various kinds of tongues” This is the Greek term for tongue (i.e. glōssa). It was used in the OT as a synonym for “nation.” In Greek it was used for speaking a language of a nation. This would imply that it had the connotation of a known human language. However, the need for an interpreter, which also is a spiritual gift, instead of a translator, along with Paul’s fuller discussion in chapter 14, leads one to think this was an ecstatic utterance at Corinth.

Exactly how the “tongues” of Corinth are related to the tongues at Pentecost recorded in Acts is uncertain. The miracle in Acts 2 is of the ear (cf. 2:6), not the tongue. The tongues experiences of Acts communicated the gospel directly to the Jews of the Diaspora who were present. It also functioned as a way to recognize the presence, power, and will of God for the inclusion of other groups, like the Samaritan (cf. Acts 8) and Cornelius, a Roman army officer (cf. Acts 10). The tongues in Acts were a sign to the believing Jews that God had opened the door for Gentiles to be included.

Tongues at Corinth are similar to the ecstatic speech of the Greek religions (e.g. Delphi). Corinthian tongues were apparently being misused or over-glorified (cf. 13:1 and 14:1-33).

Tongues were a way for an individual believer to intimately commune with God, but without understanding. It is a valid gift (cf. 14:39), but it is not for all believers (cf. 12:29-30, which has a series of questions that expect a “no” answer). It is not a gift that proves one is saved or shows one is a spiritual person. Tongues plus interpretation was another means of communicating the gospel and its relevance.

“interpretation of tongues” Corinth was a cosmopolitan city, Roman in culture, Greek in geography. The city’s location combined with the danger of sailing around the cape of Greece in the winter combined to make it a commercial crossroads of the eastern empire and the western empire. Every nationality would be in Corinth, but tongues needed a spiritual gift to communicate its message for the church, not just a translator. Tongues in Corinth was not a known language.

12:11 This verse emphasizes the truth that the Spirit gives to each believer a ministry gift (cf. vv. 7,18). Also, which gift is the Spirit’s choice, not the believer’s. There is no hierarchy of gifts. All the gifts are to serve the body of Christ, the church (cf. v. 7). They are not merit badges, but servant towels.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:12-13

12For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. 13For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

12:12 This starts a new paragraph that uses the inter-relationships of the human body as a metaphor for the church (cf. Eph. 4:4,16). It emphasizes unity amidst diversity. The focus is not on any part, but on the functioning whole; not the individual, but the family.

The OT and NT have a corporate emphasis. This is not meant to depreciate the fact that people become Christians on an individual basis, but that once one is a Christian, the focus is always the health, unity, and well-being of the whole!

12:13 “by one Spirit” This PREPOSITION (en) can mean “in,” “with,” or “by means of.” Be careful of using Koine Greek PREPOSITIONS to make doctrinal affirmations. This is parallel to Eph. 2:18; 4:4.

The Spirit is the means by which God convicts people of sin, draws them to Christ, baptizes them into Christ, and forms Christ in them (cf. John 16:8-14). This is the age of the Spirit. His activity is the sign that the new age of righteousness has come. The gift is the Spirit and the Spirit gives gifts which reflect His task of revealing Christ, drawing the lost to Christ, and forming Christlikeness in believers.

“were all baptized into one body” Water baptism is a metaphor of a previous spiritual experience that occurred at conversion (cf. Eph. 4:5). In several ways Eph. 4:4-6 parallels this passage. This baptism refers to initial salvation, which incorporates believers into the body of Christ, the Church. The often-used contemporary phrase “the baptism of the Holy Spirit” is confusing because biblically it refers to one trusting Christ as savior, but it is used today of an empowering, yielding, later experience in the lives of believers. I do not deny the reality of this subsequent experience, but I prefer the term “Lordship experience.” In reading the biographies of great Christians a pattern emerges: (1) trusting Christ; (2) trying to serve Him; (3) failing to produce lasting fruit; (4) frustration at personal efforts; (5) yielding to the need for God to do His own work; (6) empowering for ministry; and (7) all glory to God, not the human vessel.

“whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free” There are no more worldly human distinctions and barriers between those who trust Christ (cf. Joel 2:28 quoted by Peter in Acts 2:14-36; Gal. 3:27-28; Col. 3:11). This truth surely asserts the equality of all human believers. However, it does not necessarily remove all distinctions. All believers are called, gifted servants, but a Christian may still be a slave.
This equality would have been shocking to Roman society in Corinth, where the man was the supreme authority over (1) his wife; (2) his children; and (3) his domestic slaves. There was a rigid social hierarchy. Paul’s radical theology, based on Jesus’ teachings and actions, was a drastic paradigm shift and shocking new world-view which had to be lived out in the fellowship of the church. It is specifically in this area that the church at Corinth was deviant.

“we were all made to drink of one spirit” This term was used of irrigating water. It literally meant “saturated.” This was interpreted as referring to the Lord’s Supper by Augustine, Luther, and Calvin, but because of John 7:37-39 it may refer to the Spirit. It is a metaphor of unity and community brought about by one agent, the Spirit.

Both “baptized” and “made to drink” are AORIST PASSIVE INDICATIVES, which imply a finished work in past time. The tense and parallelism show they do not refer to Christian water baptism and the Lord’s Supper, but one past complete event (i.e. conversion by the Spirit, i.e. the PASSIVE VOICE, or by Christ, cf. Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16; Acts 1:5, or by the Father, cf. Acts 2:33).

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:14-19

| 14For the body is not one member, but many. 15If the foot says, “Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body,” it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. 16And if the ear says, “Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body,” it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. 17If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? 18But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. |

12:14-26 Paul uses the physical body as an analogy to show the mutual relationship between the individual parts of the body necessary for the functioning of the whole. Each individual part is needed for the health and effectiveness of the whole.

12:14 This is the summary truth repeated several times in this chapter (cf. vv. 12,13,14,20,25,27).

12:15-16 “if. . .if” These are both THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL sentences, which denote potential action. These verses show the tension that existed between not only the factious groups, but their over-evaluation of certain spiritual gifts. All gifts are from God and He chooses which one for each believer (cf. vv. 11,18).

12:17,19 “if. . .if” These are incomplete SECOND CLASS CONDITIONAL sentences (i.e. no verb in v. 17 and no concluding clause in all three). The first part is false (i.e. the whole body is not an eye, v. 17; the whole body is not an ear, v. 17; and the whole body is not one member, v. 19, cf. A. T. Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament In Light of Historical Research, pp. 1015,1023 and Short Grammar of the Greek New Testament, p. 166).

12:18 “God has placed” This is an AORIST MIDDLE INDICATIVE, which implies a complete and personal action. In v. 11 the Spirit is said to distribute the gifts. This is an obvious identification of the Spirit as divine!

“God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired” The reference is to creation but the analogy is to spiritual gifts (cf. v. 27). We don’t choose; God places.

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:19-25

| 19If they were all one member, where would the body be? 20But now there are many members, but one body. 21And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; or again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” 22On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; 23and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. |

12:22-24 “weaker. . .less honorable. . .less presentable. . .that member which lacked” This may refer to those parts of the human body which are covered by clothing. This discussion reveals that some of the less obvious, less culturally desired, less “showy” gifts were still necessary for a healthy, happy body. God/Spirit gave the gifts, all gifts are needed, all gifts have honor. See Special Topic: Weakness at II Cor. 12:9.

12:25 This verse expresses Paul’s main point (i.e. a hina clause, purpose clause). The church is to be one, not divided. Believers are to care for one another (cf. 12:7), not do their own thing!
The verbs are SUBJUNCTIVE, which introduces a contingency. This is what they should do, but there is some doubt about their doing it.

The term “care” usually means anxiety or worry (cf. Matt. 6:25,27; 10:19; 13:22; II Cor. 11:28; Phil. 4:6). It can also express legitimate concern, as in this text and 7:32,33,34 and Phil. 2:20.

“divisions” This is the Greek term schisma, from which we get the English term schism and schismatic. Paul has mentioned these “divisions” before (cf. 1:10; 11:18). They are the basic problem in Corinth. The divisions were related to (1) certain leaders; (2) certain theological emphases; (3) Roman social standing; (4) magnification of certain gifts; or (5) residue of a pagan mind set.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:26-33

26And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. 27If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and one must interpret; 28but if there is no interpreter, he must keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God. 29Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. 30But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent. 31For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; 32and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets; 33for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:27-31a

27Now you are Christ’s body, and individually members of it. 28And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. 29All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? 30All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they? 31But earnestly desire the greater gifts.

12:26 “if...if” These are FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentences (eite with PRESENT INDICATIVE, cf. II Cor. 1:6; with no verb, cf. Rom. 12:6-8; I Cor. 3:22; 8:5; 14:27; II Cor. 5:10) which express Paul’s desire as to how believers should treat each other (cf. Rom. 12:15).

12:28 “God has appointed” This is an AORIST MIDDLE INDICATIVE. This is theologically parallel to 12:18.

“apostles” The Greek term is from one of the Greek verbs “to send.” It was used by the rabbis for someone sent as an official representative of another. In the Gospel of John it takes on the implication of Jesus the Messiah who was sent by God. The Sent One sends His followers (cf. John 20:21).

Originally this referred to the Twelve, but later it was used of others: (1) Barnabas (cf. Acts 14:4,14); (2) Andronicus and Junia (cf. Rom. 16:7); (3) Apollos (cf. I Cor. 4:9); (4) James the half brother of Jesus (cf. Gal. 1:19); (5) Epaphroditus (cf. Phil. 2:25; (6 & 7) Silas and Timothy (cf. I Thess. 2:6). The gift is mentioned in Eph. 4:11 as an ongoing gift.

“prophets” See Special Topic: NT Prophecy at I Cor. 14:1.

“teachers” This gift is mentioned in Acts 13:1 in combination with prophecy, but in Eph. 4:11 it is linked with pastors. In II Tim. 1:11 Paul says he is a preacher, apostle, and a teacher. Here it seems to stand independent as it does in Rom. 12:7. It is also discussed separately in James 3:1ff. This implies that these leadership gifts can be combined in different ways in different believers to meet the need of the church in that day or area. Each of these gifted leaders proclaimed the gospel, but with different emphases.

“miracles” Notice in vv. 9 and 10 this gift is mentioned twice, here but once. Miracles were a way to confirm the gospel. They are prominent in the Gospels and Acts and mentioned in the Apostolic letters. They are still common in areas where the gospel is new.

“healings” This gift functions both to reveal the love of God and confirm the gospel. The question is not does God still heal, but why some and not others? James 5:13-18 give further guidelines about how this should be dealt with in a local church. In James it is a ministry of the local elders, not a spiritual gift.
NASB, NKJV  “helps”
NRSV  “forms of assistance”
TEV  “power to...help others”
NJB  “helpful acts”

This term is used of “helpful deeds.” It is a general term and may refer to the regular ministry of deacons (cf. Phil. 1:1 and M. R. Vincent, Word Studies, vol. 2, p. 793).

NASB, NKJV  “administrations”
NRSV  “forms of leadership”
TEV  “those who are given the power...to direct them”
NJB  “the gifts of...guidance”

This term was originally used of a ship’s pilot (cf. Acts 27:11; Rev. 18:17). It was used metaphorically for church leaders who function as guides. This is the ability to lead others to accomplish spiritual tasks.


“various kinds of tongues” See v. 10.

12:29-30 This series of questions all begin with a NEGATIVE PARTICLE (i.e. Me), which denotes that the questions expect a “no” answer. This is an important passage in refuting the theological overstatement that “tongues” is a gift for every believer, a sort of confirming sign of salvation and/or a special mark of true spirituality. It is a valid gift, but not for everyone. The other extreme is to reject “tongues” as passing away in the Apostolic era. This is also a theological overstatement (cf. 14:39).

The whole point of this chapter is that there is one body, but many parts. No one part (i.e. gift) is pre-imminent.

12:31a
NASB, NIV  “But earnestly desire the greater gifts”
NKJV  “But earnestly desire the best gifts”
NRSV  “But strive for the greater gifts”
TEV  “Set your hearts, then, on the more important gifts”
NJB  “Set your mind on the higher gifts”

This is either (1) a PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE (i.e. a statement of fact) or (2) a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE (i.e. a continuing command). W. Randolph Tate, Biblical Interpretation, prefers the INDICATIVE, “you are striving for the better gifts” as another of Paul’s sarcastic comments (p. 22). The second part of this verse should go with chapter 13. The greater gifts would refer to (1) faith, hope, and love of 13:13, with love being greatest or (2) the gifts which edify the whole body, 14:1ff, which would be preaching and teaching (cf. v. 28).

This admonition seems to refer to the church as a whole, not the individual. Focusing on the individual is a common western predisposition. The focus of this chapter is corporate. The church should ask the Spirit for more of His giftedness (i.e. believers) that proclaims the gospel and builds up the body.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why was there such a problem over spiritual gifts at Corinth?
2. When does the believer receive his/her spiritual gift? Does everyone have one?
   Can one have more than one spiritual gift? Can one ever choose his/her gift?
3. What is the purpose of spiritual gifts?
SOME PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR HOW BELIEVERS CAN KNOW THEIR GIFTS

1. Ask God specifically to show you.
2. Ask other mature believers who know you what they think your gift might be.
3. Explore your natural desires.
4. Move in the direction of the best light you have and your desire.
5. Give it a try and look for personal contentment and spiritual fruit.

These are taken from a wonderful booklet by Paul Little, Affirming the Will of God, published by IVP. It gives Christian wisdom, not Scripture, on how to know God’s will, which is analogous to how to know one’s spiritual gift.

However, believers need to remember that the lists of gifts are not the same. Being able to name our gift is not as important as recognizing that we have one. Believers, all believers, are called and gifted to ministry (cf. Eph. 4:11-12).
I CORINTHIANS 13

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

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<td>Love</td>
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<td>Love</td>
<td>Decorum in Public Worship (11:2-14:40)</td>
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READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 13:1-13

A. This chapter forms an integral part of Paul’s discussion of spiritual gifts. This “love chapter” is set right in the midst of the conflict over spiritual gifts.

B. The church at Corinth had tried to prioritize the gifts. Paul sets the bounds on their function and purpose in chapters 12-14.

C. The second major test of spiritual gifts is, “Are they exercised in love?”

BASIC OUTLINE

A. The necessity of love as the motive for exercising spiritual gifts (vv. 1-3).
B. The character of love is expressed in relationships with people (vv. 4-7).
C. The ultimacy of love as a characteristic of God’s family (vv. 8-13).
And I show you a still more excellent way. If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

12:31b “a still more excellent way” The term “excellent” is a Greek term made up of huper (i.e. over or beyond) and balló (i.e. to throw). It is metaphorical for that which goes beyond. Paul uses this metaphor often in II Corinthians (cf. 1:8; 3:10; 4:7; 9:14; 11:23; 12:7).

The term “way” is an OT metaphor for godly lifestyle. OT faith, like NT faith, was not simply a correct creed (orthodoxy), but a life of obedience (orthopraxy). God’s best is a life of self-giving love, modeled by Himself and His Son.

For the term “excellent” (huperbolé) see Special Topic: Paul’s Use of Huper Compounds at 2:1.

13:1 “If” This is a series of THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL sentences, which mean potential action, in vv. 1, 2, and 3 (twice).

NASB, NKJV “I speak with the tongues of men and of angels”
NRSV “I speak with the tongues of mortals and of angels”
TEV “I may be able to speak the languages of human beings and even of angels”
NJB “though I command languages both human and angelic”

This is obviously a reference to the gift of tongues mentioned in 12:10,28-29, a gift which the Corinthian church magnified and Paul possessed (cf. 14:1,5,6,18-19).

Since I think that “tongues” in Acts were different from “tongues” in Corinth, this dual reference makes me wonder if possibly Paul also understood tongues to be human languages (i.e. Pentecost) and an ecstatic utterance (i.e. language of heaven). For sure, he affirms that a complete linguistic ability alone is inadequate unless energized by love! Christianity is more than a message; it is a person, a self-giving, loving, obedient person—Jesus.

“love” This is the Greek term agapé. It was one of several words for “love” in Classical Greek, but was used infrequently (i.e. the noun form). The early church seems to have chosen this term and infused it with a new Christian connotation (i.e. God and Christ’s self-giving love, cf. I John 4:10) because of its use in the Septuagint (e.g. Gen. 22:2,12,16) and Rabbinical Judaism. In the OT God’s covenant love and loyalty to His promises and covenants was expressed by hesed. In many ways agapé expresses this concept of “covenant love” by paralleling it with “the Kingdom of God.” It becomes the NT’s term for God’s character, which He wishes His followers to emulate (cf. I John 4:7-21).

Just a note about the relationship of agapé to philos. In some contexts there seems to be a distinction (cf. John 21:15-19). However, in Koine Greek they are almost synonymous (cf. John 3:35 and 5:20).

NASB, NRSV “a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal”
NKJV “as sounding brass or a clanging cymbal”
TEV “no more than a noisy gong or a clanging bell”
NJB “a gong booming or a cymbal clashing”

Historically in the first century Roman world this was used by the cults of Dionysus and Cybele in worship to attract their deities. In the context of the Corinthian abuse it may mean metaphorically “a fanfare of trumpets” (cf. Matt. 6:2), which brought attention to a speaker as did men covering their hair in gathered worship or women uncovering their short hair in public worship.

The city of Corinth was known in the ancient world for its bronze ware. One use of this material was for “resonance enhancers” in theaters (cf. Dictionary of Paul and His Letters, p. 172).

Paul’s parallelism shows the intensity of his feelings about spiritual activities without love.

1. “I have become a noisy gong” (PERFECT tense), v. 1
2. “I am nothing” (PRESENT tense), v. 2
3. “it profits me nothing” (PRESENT tense), v. 3

13:2 “gift of prophecy” In this book this term is best understood as “sharing the gospel message” (cf. 11:4,5; 14:39). The first three terms of v. 2 relate to the gifts of wisdom and knowledge (cf. 12:8). There was a problem in this area as Paul’s negative statements of 1:17,19,20,21,22,24; 2:1,4,5,6,13; 3:19 show. Prophecy without love, as wisdom and knowledge without love, is not from God.
“and know all mysteries and all knowledge” Paul uses this in 4:1 for gospel truths and in 15:51 for the specific truths about the resurrection body. In this context this phrase seems to refer to knowledge in its every form, which the believers at Corinth were prizing and seeking. Even perfect knowledge without love is not from God. See Special Topic: The Mystery at 2:1.

“all faith” This refers to miracle-working faith (cf. 12:9.28; Matt. 17:20; 21:21), but notice in Matt. 7:21-23 that miracle-working power without love does not know God.

13:3
NASB “I give all my possessions”
NKJV “I bestow all my goods”
NRSV “I give away everything I have”
TEV “I may give away everything I have”
NJB “I should give away...all that I possess”

This implies the giving away of all that one has, personally, piece by piece (cf. John 13:26,27,30). This may be an allusion to Jesus’ discussion with the rich young ruler (cf. Matt. 19:16-29; Mark 10:17-30; Luke 18:18-30).

NASB, NKJV “to feed the poor”
NRSV —omits phrase—
TEV —omits phrase—
NJB “to the poor”

This phrase is not in the Greek text, but is implied in the action of this verb.

NASB, NKJV, TEV, NJB “my body to be burned”
NRSV “my body so that I may boast”

There are two manuscript options: “burned” (i.e. kauthesomai) and “glory” (i.e. kauchtheomai) are both found in early Greek manuscripts and the early church fathers. The phrase, “that I may glory,” has the strongest manuscript support (i.e. MSS P46, Ï, and B). It is also a term used often by Paul (cf. II Cor. 8:24; Phil. 2:16; I Thess. 2:19; II Thess. 1:4). Martyrdom by burning was unknown in the early church, but became more common in later persecutions (i.e. Nero and Domitian). Therefore, one can see how a later scribe might have changed “glory” to “burn.”

For a full discussion of the textual variants see Bruce M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, pp. 563-564. For the opposite opinion see The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, p. 270 footnote.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:4-7

4 Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, 5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, 6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

13:4-7 This may have been a hymn or poem about love, written or quoted by Paul. All of these descriptions of love are active. Love is an action, not simply an emotion. These all describe the ministry of Jesus (the full and complete revelation of YHWH) as He dealt with imperfect people. Love is a person!

13:4 “patient” This term has the connotation of patience with people (cf. Prov. 19:11; Rom. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9) who act unjustly toward us, without retaliation. This is one of the fruits of the Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:22). It is a characteristic of God (cf. Rom. 2:4; 9:22; I Tim. 1:18; I Pet. 3:20).

“kind” This is also a people-focused term. It implies “be gentle to all.” This term was used by Jesus to describe Himself as “gentle” (cf. Matt. 11:29). Peter also uses the same term for Jesus in I Pet. 2:3. It is commanded by Paul as a way for believers to treat one another in Eph. 4:32. It is also one of the gifts of the Spirit in Gal. 5:22. It is used in the sense of the best for the person loved, not sweet sentimentality (cf. 5:5)

“not jealous” This describes a strong desire, literally “to boil.” Love does not desire for itself the possessions of or control over people.
“not brag” This rare term refers to a self-flattering person who is seen by others as a braggart or windbag. It was often related to intellectual or rhetorical pride or boasting in Greek literature.

“not arrogant” This term refers to those who overestimate and flaunt themselves. It is used often in I Corinthians (4:6,18,19; 5:2; 8:1) and here. It truly reflects the character of this church.

13:5 “act unbecomingly” This is not an easy term to define. It is used in 7:36 in a more positive sense. Here its connotation is negative. The term was used in the Egyptian papyri implying a cursing or oath-taking connected with a violent or inappropriate act (cf. 12:3). It connotes rudeness instead of graciousness.

“does not seek its own” This is an oft repeated truth (cf. 8:9; 10:24,33; Rom. 14:16; Phil. 2:3). This may be theologically related to Eph. 5:21, being submissive to one another out of respect for Christ.

“not provoked” This term is literally “to sharpen.” It is used metaphorically to “stir up.” It can be positive as in Acts 17:16 or negative, as here. The Phillips translation has “is not touchy,” used in the sense of “not easily irritated or angered.” This noun is used of Paul and Barnabas’ fight over John Mark (cf. Acts 15:39).

NASB “does not take into account a wrong suffered”
NKJV “thinks no evil”
NRSV “or resentful”
TEV “does not keep a record of wrongs”
NJB “store up grievances”

This is an accounting term for the ledger of unpaid bills. It refers to someone who harbors a revengeful spirit. An example might be Acts 15:36-41 and I Tim. 4:11 over John Mark.

It is possible that this is an allusion to the Septuagint’s translation of Zech. 8:17 “and let none of you devise evil in his heart against his neighbor.” However, since the surrounding phrases are not OT allusions, it weakens the possibility that this one is.

13:6 This is both a negative and positive statement of truth. In this context it may refer to gossip within the Christian community. It is unusual that the term “unrighteousness” is contrasted with “truth.” Probably “unrighteousness” is the opposite of “right living” and “truth” refers to the gospel message.

“with the truth” See Special Topic at II Cor. 13:8.

13:7 “bears all things” The term “all things” (i.e. panta) is FRONTED four times in this verse for emphasis. Love is inclusive. “All things” is used in the sense of “at all times” (i.e. all four verbs are PRESENT tense) and “on all occasions.”

The term “bear” is from the Greek word for “roof.” It is metaphorical for covering (cf. I Pet. 4:8, different term, but same concept) or putting up with (cf. 12:9; I Thess. 3:1,5). The Moffat translation has “slow to expose.”

“believes all things” In this context this implies “sees the best in others” or “gives a fellow Christian the benefit of the doubt.” It always keeps the faith (cf. Gal. 5:22).

“hopes all things” In this context love holds out hope of a fellow believer’s eventual development in the faith. It does not despair.

“endures all things” This is a strong term for enduring temptation and testing (cf. Matt. 10:22; 24:13; Heb. 10:32). Here it speaks of voluntary, steadfast endurance. This phrase emphasizes no personal retaliation or rejection, but steadfast perseverance, especially with people.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:8-13

8Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. 9For we know in part and we prophesy in part; 10but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. 11When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. 12For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. 13But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.
Several translations begin a new paragraph at v. 8. Paul’s discussion about Christian love is slightly changing and developing in a new direction (i.e. qualities and activities of this age versus the consummation of the new age, which has been inaugurated).

“love never fails” This term had two relevant metaphorical usages: (1) it was used of an actor being hissed off the stage or (2) it was used of a flower that dropped its petals because of inclement weather conditions (cf. James 1:11; I Pet. 1:24). God’s love never gives up!

NASB “if there are . . . if there are . . . if there is”
NKJV “whether . . . whether . . . whether”
NRSV “as for . . . as for . . . as for”
TEV “there are . . . there are . . . there is”
NJB “if there are . . . if . . . if”

The grammatical form eite (three FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCES) implies there are spiritual gifts.

“prophecy . . . will be done away . . . tongues . . . will cease . . . knowledge . . . will be done away” Notice the parallel structure. These were the spiritual gifts which the Corinthian Church was glorifying (cf. vv. 1-3). This verse has often been used to depreciate tongues because a different VERB and VOICE are used. However, the context is affirming that all spiritual gifts will stop, but love will never stop. There is no emphasis in this context on the time element of one gift versus another. Spiritual gifts are a part of time, not eternity. Love is eternal!

This term for “done away” is in vv. 8, 10, and 11. See Special Topic: Katargeó at 1:28.

This begins a series of verses that emphasizes the partiality and incompleteness of spiritual gifts. This partiality is due to human weakness, fallenness, and finitude, not a lack connected with God’s giftedness.

“when the perfect comes” This term (i.e. teleios) means “maturity, completeness,” or “fully equipped for an assigned task” (cf. 2:6; 13:10; 14:20). The question has always been, “To what does it refer?” (1) Some have asserted that it refers to the NT. Nothing in this context points toward this. This is only a theory used to claim that the spiritual gifts have ceased in post-apostolic times; (2) some have asserted that it refers to spiritual maturity because of v. 11 (i.e. child then adult) or the proper use of spiritual gifts; and (3) some have asserted that it refers to the Second Coming of Christ and the consummation of the New Age of righteousness because of v. 12 (i.e. “see face to face”). For me it seems to be a combination of both #2 and #3.

“I did away with” This is the Greek term katargeó, which Paul uses so often. See Special Topic at 1:28c. In this context Paul asserts that

1. prophecies will be brought to an end, v. 8 (FUTURE PASSIVE INDICATIVE)
2. knowledge will be brought to an end, v. 8 (FUTURE PASSIVE INDICATIVE)
3. every gift will be brought to an end, v. 10 (FUTURE PASSIVE INDICATIVE)
4. spiritual infancy will be brought to an end, v. 11 (FUTURE ACTIVE INDICATIVE)

“mirror” Corinth was famous for its polished metal mirrors. They were the best available in that day, but they reflected a distorted image. Humans, even redeemed humans, are hindered by (1) sin nature; (2) finitude; (3) limited perspective; (4) culture-affected conscience and world view; (5) time as chronological sequence; and (6) human language to explain and describe a spiritual realm.

Notice the parallelism

1. v. 9, know in part, prophesy in part vs. when the perfect comes
2. v. 11, a child vs. an adult
3. v. 12, a Corinthian mirror vs. face to face and know in part vs. fully known

These seem to reflect a present reality versus a future reality, therefore, the Second Coming, which consummates the New Age, is the focus.

“dimly” This is literally “a riddle” (cf. NJB). The rabbis believed God spoke to Moses in riddles (cf. Num. 12:6,8).

“face to face” This is a metaphor for intimate fellowship (i.e. comparable to Num. 12:8). In the OT seeing YHWH meant death (cf. Gen. 32:30; Exod. 33:20; John 1:18). In the new age this will be normal (cf. Matt. 5:8; II Cor. 5:7; I John 3:2; Rev. 22:4).
“I know in part . . . I will know fully . . . have been fully known” This is obviously a play on the connotation of the Hebrew and Greek terms “know.” In the OT it referred, not to cognitive facts (i.e. Greek concept), but personal relationship (cf. Gen. 4:1 and Jer. 1:5).

In this verse there is also a play on the Greek word for “know” (i.e. γινώσκω). The first usage is the basic term. The second and third are the compound term (i.e. εὐγινώσκω), which implies experiential, full knowledge. Believers will know God in the new age as He has known us (cf. 8:3; Gal. 4:9).

The theological concept of “knowing” is related to the concept of election. The mystery of how election (i.e. God’s choice) relates to covenant response (i.e. human choice) is uncertain. Following the logic of these OT verses: Ps. 1:6; Jer. 1:5; Amos 3:2 and these NT verses: Rom. 8:29; 11:2; I Cor. 8:3; 13:13; Gal. 4:9, believers are known by God before time, in time, and beyond time. Believers, however, know God in stages similar to justification, sanctification, glorification. We know Him in time through the OT, Jesus, and the gospel; through time by our growth to Christlikeness through the Spirit; and beyond time we will know Him in face-to-face, relational intimacy with perfect knowledge of the New Age of righteousness.

13:13 “hope” This Greek term does not have the ambiguity and uncertainty of the English term. It is a confident assurance that God’s promises will be reality in His timing.

SPECIAL TOPIC: HOPE
Paul often uses this term in several related senses. It is often associated with the consummation of the believer’s faith (cf. I Tim. 1:1). This can be expressed as glory, eternal life, ultimate salvation, Second Coming, etc. The consummation is certain, but the time element is future and unknown.

1. the Second Coming (cf. Gal. 5:5; Eph. 1:18; 4:4; Titus 2:13)
2. Jesus is our hope (cf. I Tim. 1:1)
3. the believer to be presented to God (cf. Col. 1:22-23; I Thess. 2:19)
4. hope laid up in heaven (cf. Col. 1:5)
5. ultimate salvation (cf. I Thess. 4:13)
6. the glory of God (cf. Rom. 5:2; II Cor. 3:7-12; Col. 1:27)
7. the salvation of Gentiles by Christ (cf. Col. 1:27)
8. assurance of salvation (cf. I Thess. 5:8-9)
9. eternal life (cf. Titus 1:2; 3:7)
10. redemption of all creation (cf. Rom. 8:20-22)
11. adoption’s consummation (cf. Rom. 8:23-25)
12. a title for God (cf. Rom. 15:13)
13. OT guide for NT believers (cf. Rom. 15:4)

“but now faith, hope, love abide” The verb is SINGULAR (cf. Gal. 5:22). Paul often uses this triad (cf. Rom. 5:2-5; Gal. 5:5-6; Eph. 1:15-18; Col. 1:4-5; I Thess. 1:3, 5:8; Heb) and other NT writers also (cf. Heb. 6:10-12; I Pet. 1:21-22).

“the greatest of these is love” It is greatest because these others will cease at the consummation of the new age. Faith will turn to sight and hope will have its fulfillment, but love remains because it is the basic character of God (cf. John 3:16; I John 4:8,16).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Give the central idea of this chapter in your own words, in one sentence.
2. Why did Paul insert a chapter on love between his discussion of spiritual gifts?
3. Define ἀγάπη love in your own words.
4. Why have vv. 8-13 become a battleground over spiritual gifts in our day?
# I CORINTHIANS 14

## PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

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## READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. vii)

**FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.
CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 14:1-40

A. This continues Paul’s guidelines for public worship begun in chapter 11. The church at Corinth was worshiping in inappropriate, non-standard ways in several areas.

B. The main criteria for evaluation of worship practices is, “Does this edify the whole church?” Public worship has two foci: (1) the needs of the lost who are present and (2) the needs of the believers who are present. This follows Jesus’ Great Commission (cf. Matt. 28:19-20). Hard Sayings of the Bible says,

“Paul’s operative principle for congregational life and worship is constant. Whatever hinders the movement of the gospel, causes confusion rather than growth, offends rather than encourages or strengthens, builds up the self at the expense of others—all this is contrary to God’s intention. And insofar as the women in Corinth and elsewhere in the young churches used their gifts contrary to God’s intention, the injunction to silence is an appropriate, authoritative word. The principle which underlies the injunction is authoritative for both men and women in all churches” (p. 616).

C. Now about the contentious issue of women’s participation in public worship. If you read five commentators you get five different views. The problem seems to be that we all come to this chapter with personal, denominational, experiential, and hermeneutical agendas! None of us is neutral. We take the Bible seriously, but in the Bible, even Paul speaks with two voices (cf. 11:5 vs. 14:34).

Some commentators even try to remove vv. 34-35 as scribal additions (Fee) or relegate them to Paul quoting a slogan of the false teachers. Either way these approaches make the chapter say exactly opposite of what it seems to say.

D. Paul’s words in vv. 34-35 fit Jewish custom and Greco-Roman culture. However, in many significant ways Paul’s ministry is against Jewish customs and Greco-Roman culture.

E. The first century Mediterranean world was a society based on slavery and male domination. For Jesus or Paul to have radically altered either of these social institutions would have negatively affected the church’s growth, even its survival. Both Jesus and Paul affirm the dignity and worth of all humans. The gospel in time will destroy both aspects of abuse. It is safe to say that they spoke to their day with inspired power and that their words pointed to a future day of dignity and equality.

F. Women or slave leaders in the early church would have negatively affected evangelism. The same is true today, but from the opposite end. In our society articulate women gifted for ministry will reach an aspect of our society more effectively than others. This in no way is to desire a feminine clergy, but the realization that all believers are called, gifted, gospel ministers; all believers! I am not advocating women for any particular ministry task, but forcefully asserting the ministry of all believers.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:1-5

1Pursue love, yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. 2 For one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries. 3 But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. 4 One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church. 5 Now I wish that you all spoke in tongues, but even more that you would prophesy; and greater is one who prophesies than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may receive edifying.

14:1 “Pursue love” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. It shows the contextual link with chapter 13. Love is the characteristic of God and His people (cf. Gal. 5:22; I John 4:7-21). Remember, chapters 11-14 are a literary unit on problems related to gathered worship in Corinth.
**SPECIAL TOPIC: NEW TESTAMENT PROPHECY**

I. It is not the same as OT prophecy, which has the rabbinical connotation of inspired revelations from YHWH (cf. Acts 3:18, 21; Rom. 16:26). Only prophets could write Scripture.

| A. Moses was called a prophet (cf. Deut. 18:15-21). |
| B. History books (Joshua - Kings [except Ruth]) were called the “former prophets” (cf. Acts 3:24). |
| C. Prophets usurp the place of High Priest as the source of information from God (cf. Isaiah - Malachi) |

II. In the NT the concept is used in several different ways.

| A. referring to OT prophets and their inspired message (cf. Matt. 2:23; 5:12; 11:13; 13:14; Rom. 1:2) |
| B. referring to a message for an individual rather than a corporate group (i.e. OT prophets spoke primarily to Israel) |
| D. other prophets in the NT |
|   1. early life of Jesus as recorded in Luke’s Gospel (i.e. Mary’s memories) |
|   d. Anna (cf. Luke 2:36) |
|   2. ironic predictions (cf. Caiaphas, John 11:51) |
| E. referring to one who proclaims the gospel (the lists of proclaiming gifts in I Cor. 12:28-29; Eph. 4:11) |
| G. referring to the apocalyptic book of Revelation (cf. Rev. 1:3; 22:7,10,18,19) |

III. NT prophets

| A. They do not give inspired revelation in the same sense as did the OT prophets (i.e. Scripture). This statement is possible because of the use of the phrase “the faith” (i.e. a sense of a completed gospel) used in Acts 6:7; 13:8; 14:22; Gal. 1:23; 3:23; 6:10; Phil. 1:27; Jude 3,20. |

This concept is clear from the full phrase used in Jude 3, “the faith once and for all handed down to the saints.” The “once for all” faith refers to the truths, doctrines, concepts, world-view teachings of Christianity. This once-given emphasis is the biblical basis for theologically limiting inspiration to the writings of the NT and not allowing later or other writings to be considered revelatory. There are many ambiguous, uncertain, and grey areas in the NT, but believers affirm by faith that everything that is “needed” for faith and practice is included with sufficient clarity in the NT. This concept has been delineated in what is called “the revelatory triangle”:
1. God has revealed Himself in time-space history (REVELATION)
2. He has chosen certain human writers to document and explain His acts (INSPIRATION)
3. He has given His Spirit to open the minds and hearts of humans to understand these writings, not definitively, but adequately for salvation and an effective Christian life (ILLUMINATION)

The point of this is that inspiration is limited to the writers of Scripture. There are no further authoritative writings, visions, or revelations. The canon is closed. We have all the truth we need to respond appropriately to God.

This truth is best seen in the agreement of biblical writers versus the disagreement of sincere, godly believers. No modern writer or speaker has the level of divine leadership that the writers of Scripture did.

B. In some ways NT prophets are similar to OT prophets:
3. symbolic acts which vividly portray an event (cf. Agabus, Acts 21:11)

C. They do proclaim the truths of the gospel sometimes in predictive ways (cf. Acts 11:27-28; 20:23; 21:10-11), but this is not the primary focus. Prophesying in I Corinthians is basically communicating the gospel (cf. 14:24,39).

D. They are the Spirit’s contemporary means of revealing the contemporary and practical applications of God’s truth to each new situation, culture, or time period (cf. I Cor. 14:3).

E. They were active in the early Pauline churches (cf. I Cor. 11:4-5; 12:28,29; 13:29; 14:1,3,4,5,6,22,24,29,31, 32,37,39; Eph. 2:20; 3:5; 4:11; I Thess. 5:20) and are mentioned in the Didache (written in the late first century or in the second century, date uncertain) and in Montanism of the second and third centuries in northern Africa.

IV. Have the NT gifts ceased?
A. This question is difficult to answer. It helps to clarify the issue by defining the purpose of the gifts. Are they meant to confirm the initial preaching of the gospel or are they ongoing ways for the church to minister to itself and a lost world?
B. Does one look at the history of the church to answer the question or the NT itself? There is no indication in the NT that the spiritual gifts were temporary. Those who try to use I Cor. 13:8-13 to address this issue abuse the authorial intent of the passage, which asserts that everything but love will pass away.
C. I am tempted to say that since the NT, not church history, is the authority, believers must affirm that the gifts continue. However, I believe that culture affects interpretation. Some very clear texts are no longer applicable (i.e. the holy kiss, women wearing veils, churches meeting in homes, etc). If culture affects texts, then why not church history?
D. This is simply a question that cannot be definitively answered. Some believers will advocate “cessation” and others “non-cessation.” In this area, as in many interpretative issues, the heart of the believer is the key. The NT is ambiguous and cultural. The difficulty is being able to decide which texts are affected by culture/history and which are for all time and all cultures (cf. Fee and Stuart’s How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth, pp. 14-19 and 69-77). Here is where the discussions of freedom and responsibility, which are found in Rom. 14:1-15:13 and I Cor. 8-10, are crucial. How we answer the question is important in two ways.
1. Each believer must walk in faith in the light they have. God looks at our heart and motives.
2. Each believer must allow other believers to walk in their faith understanding. There must be tolerance within biblical bounds. God wants us to love one another as He does.
E. To sum up the issue, Christianity is a life of faith and love, not a perfect theology. A relationship with Him which impacts our relationship with others is more important than definitive information or creedal perfection.

14:2
NASB, NKJV, NRSV, NJB “in a tongue”
KJV “in an unknown tongue”
TEV “in strange tongues”

This is the Greek word glässa, which was used metaphorically to refer to a particular human language or dialect. The experience of “tongues” at Pentecost obviously referred to a known human language (cf. Acts 2:6-10). The miracle seems to be
at the ear (i.e., “they were each one hearing them speak in his own language”). This same phenomena occurred several times in Acts for the purpose of assuring the Jewish believers that God had accepted another group of people (i.e., Samaritans, Roman military people, Gentiles).

However, I Corinthian “tongues” seems more in line with the ecstatic utterances of the Greek oracles, like Delphi, where a woman went into a trance and another person interpreted what she said. Corinth was a cosmopolitan city. People from all over the known world were in Corinth, yet the text assigns “interpretation of tongues” as a spiritual gift (cf. I Cor. 12:10,30; 14:26), not just a person who happens to speak a foreign language.

- “does not speak to men but to God” Corinthian tongues are a private conversation between God and a believer (cf. v. 24). Tongues are in themselves not a means of communication, but intimate fellowship with God. Only if they are interpreted do the speaker and the hearers understand.

- “for no one understands” Tongues at Corinth seem to be unknown, articulated sounds. At Delphi one special person (usually a woman) would utter inarticulate sounds, then another would interpret these for the ones present. This procedure seems to parallel the experience of “tongues” at Corinth.

14:3 “edification” This is the third test used to evaluate spiritual gifts. Do they edify, or build up, the church? This theme is repeated over and over again in this chapter, vv. 3,4,5,12,17,26. This is why “prophesy,” understood as sharing the gospel, is to be desired more than “tongues.” Prophecy proclaims the gospel to all present, while tongues only blesses the speaker unless they are interpreted. If interpreted, tongues and their interpretation serve the same purpose of proclaiming the gospel (i.e. prophesying). See Special Topic: Edify at I Cor. 8:1.

- “and exhortation and consolation” The purpose of gospel proclamation is not for evangelism exclusively, but also for the encouragement of the church (i.e. edification, exhortation, and consolation).

14:4 “One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself” Corinthian tongues without interpretation are individual-oriented gifts.

- “the church” This is the term ekklesia with no article which refers to the entire body of believers. Paul’s desire is that all believers, not just a select few, be blessed in public worship.

14:5 “I wish that you all spoke in tongues” Compare 12:30 and remember this phrase is a DEPENDENT clause on what follows. Paul is not disparaging tongues, but (1) asserting their proper relationship to other spiritual gifts and (2) setting some practical guidelines. The Corinthians were apparently seeking this gift for egotistical, personal glory and prestige.

- “greater is the one who prophesies” This is an evaluation based on Paul’s criteria that tongues are of less value in edifying the entire church. But remember that speaking in tongues is a valid gift of the Spirit.

- “unless he interprets” This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE, introduced by ei instead of ean. Is it possible for one person to have both the gift of tongues and interpretation? It is obvious from other texts that Christian leaders had more than one spiritual gift (cf. Acts 13:1; II Tim. 1:11). However, if it were possible for the same person to speak in tongues and then interpret why would one need an interpreter? How would this combination differ from prophecy? Maybe it is possible that one believer have both gifts, but it is not common (cf. v. 13). More probable is that Paul is using a literary technique to underscore the need for understandable communication in gathered worship.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:6-12**

> 6 But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, what will I profit you unless I speak to you either by way of revelation or of knowledge or of prophecy or of teaching? 7 Yet even lifeless things, either flute or harp, in producing a sound, if they do not produce a distinction in the tones, how will it be known what is played on the flute or on the harp? 8 For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who will prepare himself for battle? 9 So also you, unless you utter by the tongue speech that is clear, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air. 10 There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is without meaning. 11 If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speak will be a barbarian to me. 12 So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church.

14:6 “if” There are four THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL sentences in the paragraph, vv. 6-12, which implies potential action (cf. vv. 6,7,8,11). Both vv. 6 and 7 are questions that expect a “no” answer (as does v. 9).
“by way of revelation or of prophecy or of teaching” These terms seem to reflect different gifts, but the distinctions are uncertain. Possibly since several gifted leaders are mentioned in Eph. 4:11 each proclaiming the gospel, but with different emphases, so too, here. God reveals His truths in differing ways, but the same content. Many gifts, one gospel; many gifted believers, one purpose (i.e. edification of the church and the growth of the church, cf. Matt. 28:19-20).

14:7-8 Paul uses musical instruments to make his point, flutes and harps in v. 7 and a military bugle in v. 8. Musical instruments are used for differing purposes (i.e. to make music or to signal). If the instrument makes the wrong sound it causes confusion. The human voice is meant to communicate information to other humans. If it makes sounds that have no significance to other humans it fails in its purpose (cf. v. 9).

14:10 This is a rare FOURTH CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence. This verse cannot be used to prove that tongues are a known language. Paul uses a different term (i.e. *phōnē* *glōssa*) in both vv. 10 and 11. It is an illustration of the difficulty in understanding an improperly spoken language or foreign language. Human language is meant to be understood.

14:11 NASB, NJB “barbarian”
NKJV, RSV, TEV “foreigner”

This was an onomatopoetic word (i.e. *Barbaros*) for the strange sounds of other languages to the Greeks and Romans, especially the tribal groups to the north of the Roman Empire. The Greeks and Romans said that these tribal languages sounded like “bar, bar” to them. Hence, the term “barbarian.”

14:12 “since you are zealous of spiritual gifts” Paul does not criticize their zeal (cf. v. 1), but tries to channel it for the edification of the entire church (cf. 12:7).

14:13 Therefore let one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret. 14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. 15 What is the outcome then? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also. 16 Otherwise if you bless in the spirit only, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the “Amen” at your giving of thanks, since he does not know what you are saying? 17 For you are giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not edified. 18 I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all; 19 however, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind so that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.

14:13 In context this implies that communicating the gospel to all is preferable to personal ecstasy (cf. v. 15). Does this verse imply that believers receive one gift at salvation (cf. 12:11), but can later ask for another? This question must remain unanswered. It is certain that some had several gifts (cf. Acts 13:1; I Tim. 2:7; II Tim. 1:11).

14:14 “if” This is another THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL, like vv. 6,7,8,11,23,24,28, and 29.

“my spirit prays” This refers to the human spirit. It was a literary metaphor for personhood.
“my mind is unfruitful” Paul was playing on the Corinthian’s love for wisdom. He was also reaffirming that tongues alone do not communicate, even to the speaker.

14:15
NASB “What is the outcome then”
NKJV “What is the result then”
NRSV, TEV “What should I do then”
NJB “What then”

This is an idiom (cf. 14:26; Acts 21:22). Paul wants to draw a conclusion to his discussion.

“I will sing with the spirit” Does this imply another spiritual gift (cf. v. 26; Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19)?

14:16 “if” This is another THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence, like vv. 6,7,8,11 and 14.

NASB “the one who fills the place of the ungifted”
NKJV “he who occupies the place of the uninformed”
NRSV “how can anyone in the position of an outsider”
TEV “how can ordinary people taking part in the meeting”
NJB “the uninitiated person”

This term was used of someone who was uninformed or untrained in a certain area, therefore, an unprofessional or lay person (cf. Acts 4:13; II Cor. 11:6). The usage here and in vv. 23-24 can have one of two possible meanings: (1) a regular visitor to a Christian meeting while in v. 23 possibly a first time visitor or (2) possibly a new Christian, but one without the gifts of tongues or interpretation.

The phrase “the place of” is referring either to (1) visitors or possibly new Christians who had designated seats where they could hear clearly or (2) an idiom for one who is uninformed.

“say the ‘Amen’”

SPECIAL TOPIC: AMEN

I. OLD TESTAMENT
   A. The term “Amen” is from a Hebrew word for truth (emeth) or truthfulness (emun, emunah) and faith or faithfulness.
   B. Its etymology is from a person’s physical stable stance. The opposite would be one who is unstable, slipping (cf. Deut. 28:64-67; 38:16; Ps. 40:2; 73:18; Jer. 23:12) or stumbling (cf. Ps. 73:2). From this literal usage developed the metaphorical extension of faithful, trustworthy, loyal, and dependable (cf. Gen. 15:16; Hab. 2:4).
   C. Special usages
      1. a pillar, II Kgs. 18:16 (I Tim. 3:15)
      2. assurance, Exod. 17:12
      3. steadiness, Exod. 17:12
      4. stability, Isa. 33:6; 34:5-7
      5. true, I Kgs. 10:6; 17:24; 22:16; Prov. 12:22
      6. firm, II Chr. 20:20; Isa. 7:9
      7. reliable (Torah), Ps. 119:43,142,151,168
   D. In the OT two other Hebrew terms are used for active faith.
      1. bathach, trust
      2. yra, fear, respect, worship (cf. Gen. 22:12)
   E. From the sense of trust or trustworthiness developed a liturgical usage which was used to affirm a true or trustworthy statement of another (cf. Deut. 27:15-26; Neh. 8:6; Ps. 41:13; 70:19; 89:52; 106:48).
   F. The theological key to this term is not mankind’s faithfulness, but YHWH’s (cf. Exod. 34:6; Duet. 32:4; Ps. 108:4; 115:1; 117:2; 138:2). Fallen humanity's only hope is the merciful faithful covenant loyalty of YHWH and His promises.

Those who know YHWH are to be like Him (cf. Hab. 2:4). The Bible is history and a record of God restoring His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) in mankind. Salvation restores mankind’s ability to have intimate fellowship with God. This is why we were created.
II. NEW TESTAMENT

A. The use of the word “amen” as a concluding liturgical affirmation of the trustworthiness of a statement is common in the NT (cf. I Cor. 14:16; II Cor. 1:20; Rev. 1:7; 5:14; 7:12).

B. The use of the term as a close to a prayer is common in the NT (cf. Rom. 1:25; 9:5; 11:36; 16:27; Gal. 1:5; 6:18; Eph. 3:21; Phil. 4:20; II Thess. 3:18; I Tim. 1:17; 6:16; II Tim. 4:18).

C. Jesus is the only one who used the term (often doubled in John) to introduce significant statements (cf. Luke 4:24; 12:37; 18:17,29; 21:32; 23:43).

D. It is used as a title for Jesus in Rev. 3:14 (possibly a title of YHWH from Isa. 65:16).

E. The concept of faithfulness or faith, trustworthiness or trust, is expressed in the Greek term *pistos* or *pistis*, which is translated into English as trust, faith, believe.

14:16,17 “at your giving thanks” This phrase may refer to the Lord’s Supper, which was called the *Eucharist* from the Greek term “give thanks.” Verse 17, however, implies that it refers to prayer.

14:18 “I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all” Paul knew what he was talking about. This verse, combined with v. 39, should make modern Christians think twice before criticizing the concept of tongues in our day. It should also make those who emphasize it to think twice. Paul admits to it so as to depreciate it.

It is interesting how this chapter switches between the SINGULAR, vv. 2,4,9,13,14,19,26,17, and the PLURAL, vv. 5,6,18,22,23,39.

The tension in this church was (1) between social classes and (2) between individual giftedness and corporate edification. In the church the individual always serves the corporate (cf. 12:7)! This is another example of Paul trying to identify, at least in some measure, with the over-zealous believers at Corinth. As he affirmed knowledge, but emphasized love, he now affirms tongues, but emphasizes edification.

14:19 “however, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind. . .rather than ten thousand words in a tongue” The literary unit of chapters 11-14 is dealing with public, gathered worship (cf. vv. 23,28,34). In this setting personal worship in tongues is less desirable because no one else is taught and thereby converted (cf. vv. 24-25) or edified (“so that I may instruct others also,” cf. vv. 3,4,5,12,1,19,26).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:20-25**

> 20Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature. 21In the Law it is written, “BY MEN OF STRANGE TONGUES AND BY THE LIPS OF STRANGERS I WILL SPEAK TO THIS PEOPLE, AND EVEN SO THEY WILL NOT LISTEN TO ME,” says the Lord. 22So then tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophecy is for a sign, not to unbelievers but to those who believe. 23Therefore if the whole church assembles together and all speak in tongues, and ungifted men or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad? 24But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; 25the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you.

14:20 “do not be children” This is a PRESENT IMPERATIVE with a NEGATIVE ARTICLE, which usually means to stop an act in process. They were being children in this area (cf. Eph. 4:14), though they thought they were so spiritual and wise!

“in your thinking” This is from the Greek word for diaphragm or midriff. This, not the brain, was thought to be the physiological site of the intellect for the ancients.

“yet in evil be infants” In some areas believers should be uninformed (cf. Matt. 10:16; Rom. 16:19). One of the greatest protections against evil is ignorance or naivete.

“be mature” Paul uses this term (i.e. *teleios*) to describe the believer who fully understands the gospel and lives it (cf. 2:6; 13:10; 14:20; Eph. 4:13; Phil. 3:15; Col. 1:28). All believers start as baby Christians and must grow. There are levels of understanding and godly living. However, this term does not imply a sinlessness, but a spiritual fullness and equipment for service.
14:21-22 This is a partial quote from Isa. 28:11-12. It relates to the Assyrian invasion of Israel. Verse 22 is related to this quote and not to the entire context. This sentence is exactly opposite to all else Paul says in this context. It must only relate to the OT quote. Paul is using “sign” in two ways: judgment and grace.

14:21 “In the Law” Usually in a Jewish context this would refer to the writings of Moses (i.e. Genesis - Deuteronomy), but not always. In John 10:34; 12:34; and 15:25, this phrase refers to a quote from the Psalms, as it does in Rom. 3:9. This same phrase is used in v. 34, but it is uncertain to which texts it refers unless possibly Gen. 3.

Walter Kaiser, in Toward An Exegetical Theology, p. 110, makes the interesting comment that verses 34 and 35 are a quote from the letter which Paul received from the Corinthian church. Usually Paul’s answers to their written questions are introduced by the phrase, “now concerning” (cf. 7:1,25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1), but not always (i.e. the apparent quote from the letter found in 6:12 and 10:23). If this is true then “the Law also says” may refer to Psalm 68:11, which is alluded to without quoting in v. 36! Psalm 68:11 affirms the proclamation of the good news in gathered worship by women. Gordon Fee, in his commentary on I Corinthians (New International Commentary) also asserts that Paul did not write vv. 34-35 (pp. 699-708).

14:23 “if” This is another THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence (cf. vv. 6,7,8,11, and 14).

“the whole church assembles together” The literary context of chapters 11-14 deals with guidelines for public worship. Usually these early churches met in private homes (i.e. house churches). Often in a city the size of Corinth there would be several homes involved. This may be one of the reasons for the development of factions within the church. Paul’s words imply a larger group meeting possible to celebrate the love feast (cf. 11:17-34) and Lord’s Supper. How often or where they met is uncertain. From this verse obviously guests were allowed, which shows it was not a secret or closed meeting.

“you are mad”
TEV “you are all crazy”
NJB “you are all raving”

This term (i.e. mainomai) is used in Acts 12:15 and 26:24-25. In John 10:29 it is used to describe demon possession. This term does not imply insanity, but possession by a spirit. In Greek culture this would have been seen as a privileged spiritual state, but no so in Christianity.

14:24 “if” This is another THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence (cf. vv. 6,7,8,11,14,23,24,28,29).

“convicted. . .called to account”
TEV “convicted of their sin. . .judged”
NJB “find himself put to the test. . .judged”

Prophecy brings understanding and conviction; tongues bring confusion to visiting unbelievers or new believers.

“all. . .all. . .all” This does not imply that every believer spoke at every worship service, but that all that was done at the worship service added to the spiritual conviction which the visitors and possible new believers experienced. The “all” surely includes women believers present.

14:25 “the secrets of his heart are disclosed” This may refer to the truth that (1) God knows the thoughts of mankind and brings conviction by His Spirit (cf. 24) or (2) public confession of sin was a part of first century worship (cf. Matt. 3:6; Mark 1:5; Acts 19:18; and James 5:16).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HEART

The Greek term kardia is used in the Septuagint and NT to reflect the Hebrew term l̄b̄. It is used in several ways (cf. Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Danker, A Greek-English Lexicon, pp. 403-404).

1. the center of physical life, a metaphor for the person (cf. Acts 14:17; II Corinthians 3:2-3; James 5:5)
2. the center of spiritual life (i.e. moral)
   a. God knows the heart (cf. Luke 16:15; Rom. 8:27; I Cor. 14:25; I Thess. 2:4; Rev. 2:23)
b. used of mankind’s spiritual life (cf. Matt. 15:18-19; 18:35; Rom. 6:17; I Tim. 1:5; II Tim. 2:22; I Pet. 1:22)

3. the center of the thought life (i.e. intellect, cf. Matt. 13:15; 24:48; Acts 7:23; 16:14; 28:27; Rom. 1:21; 10:6; 16:18; II Cor. 4:6; Eph. 1:18; 4:18; James 1:26; II Pet. 1:19; Rev. 18:7; heart is synonymous with mind in II Cor. 3:14-15 and Phil. 4:7)

4. the center of the volition (i.e. will, cf. Acts 5:4; 11:23; I Cor. 4:5; 7:37; II Cor. 9:7)

5. the center of the emotions (cf. Matt. 5:28; Acts 2:26,37; 7:54; 21:13; Rom. 1:24; II Cor. 2:4; 7:3; Eph. 6:22; Phil. 1:7)

6. unique place of the Spirit’s activity (cf. Rom. 5:5; II Cor. 1:22; Gal. 4:6 [i.e. Christ in our hearts, Eph. 3:17])

7. The heart is a metaphorical way of referring to the entire person (cf. Matt. 22:37, quoting Deut. 6:5). The thoughts, motives, and actions attributed to the heart fully reveal the type of individual. The OT has some striking usages of the terms

   a. Gen. 6:6; 8:21, “God was grieved to His heart,” also notice Hosea 11:8-9
   b. Deut. 4:29; 6:5, “with all your heart and all your soul”
   c. Deut. 10:16, “uncircumcised heart” and Rom. 2:29
   d. Ezek. 18:31-32, “a new heart”
   e. Ezek. 36:26, “a new heart” vs. “a heart of stone”

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:26-33

26What is the outcome then, brethren? When you assemble, each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. 27If anyone speaks in a tongue, it should be by two or at the most three, and each in turn, and one must interpret; 28but if there is no interpreter, he must keep silent in the church; and let him speak to himself and to God. 29Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. 30But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, the first one must keep silent. 31For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted; 32and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets; 33for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

14:26-33 This gives us a real insight into the dynamic, unstructured worship service of the early church. Apparently there was, as of yet, no professional clergy. Anyone could and did speak freely. Problems arose in two areas. First, there was confusion because too many wanted to speak and second, they were interrupting each other.

Paul is attempting to structure the gathered worship service in such a way as not to limit the freedom of the Spirit, but to accentuate the purpose of the meeting, which is the salvation of the unsaved and the maturity of the saved (cf. Matt. 28:19-20). This is not structure for structure’s sake (cf. v. 32)! Paul is not seeking a controlled worship setting!

14:26 “What is the outcome” See note at verse 15.

- “Let all things be done for edification” This is the recurrent mandate (i.e. PRESENT PASSIVE [deponent] IMPERATIVE). The purpose of spiritual gifts is not the elevation of an individual, but the growth (both in numbers and maturity) of the church. To put it another way “Does this act or structure accomplish the purpose of the Great Commission of Jesus” (cf. Matt. 28:19-20)?

14:27 “if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence. Paul is not affirming their actions, but noting their actions.

14:28 “if” This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence. Paul desires that gathered worship provides spiritual information to all present. Tongues is acceptable if it is interpreted. Gathered worship is not the time and place for private experience and devotion to dominate the purpose of the corporate.

- “if there is no interpreter, he must keep silent in the church” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. Tongues and prophecy are controllable by the person who is gifted (cf. v. 30). Edification of the body of Christ and evangelism, not personal freedom, are the keys to public worship.

14:29 Prophets do not have uncontested freedom (i.e. subject, time, or content) to speak. They are to be evaluated by other gifted believers (cf. 14:30 and 12:10; I John 4:1-3). Remember that the demonic were present when Jesus spoke in both the Synagogue and in outdoor preaching.
SPECIAL TOPIC: SHOULD CHRISTIANS JUDGE ONE ANOTHER?

This issue must be dealt with in two ways. First, believers are admonished not to judge one another (cf. Matt. 7:1-5; Luke 6:37,42; Rom. 2:1-11; James 4:11-12). However, believers are admonished to evaluate leaders (cf. Matt. 7:6,15-16; I Cor. 14:29; 1 Thess. 5:21; I Tim. 3:1-13; and I John 4:1-6).

Some criteria for proper evaluation may be helpful
1. evaluation should be for the purpose of affirmation (cf. I John 4:1 - “test” with a view toward approval)
2. evaluation should be done in humility and gentleness (cf. Gal. 6:1)
3. evaluation must not focus on personal preference issues (cf. Rom. 14:1-23; I Cor. 8:1-13; 10:23-33)
4. evaluation should identify those leaders who have “no handle for criticism” from within the church or the community (cf. I Tim. 3).

14:30 “if” This is another THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence (cf. cf. 6,7,8,11,23,24,28,29).

“the first must keep silent” This is parallel to v. 28 (i.e. PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE). This implies that a speaker may be interrupted by another believer and that the current speaker must hear the new speaker before responding or adding to the revelation. These early services were very dynamic and extemporaneous. This appeals to some personalities as strongly as a strict order appeals to other personalities!

Now the question is “was this a standard structure in all of Paul’s churches or a unique aspect of the Corinthian church? Do we take this discussion as NT evidence of how all services should be structured or just an example of how to handle problems in this area?

14:31 “For you can all prophesy one by one” How literally should this phrase be taken? Is Paul asserting a structure or an unlimited opportunity for any and all believers to speak in the same worship service? Were there no time restraints on the early gathered services? This is an example of a literary statement, not a literal statement. In context Paul is limiting their freedom, not extending their freedom!

However, the term “all” surely implies that both women and men can prophesy (cf. 11:5). All believers, male and female, are gifted for the common good (cf. 12:7; 14:26). This adds a further need to clarify v. 34!

“so that all may learn and all may be exhorted” This purpose clause (i.e. hina) states Paul’s main concern, not that all are able to speak, but that all are built up, edified, and matured! This is the recurrent theme of this chapter.

For “exhorted” see full note at II Cor. 1:4-11.

14:32
NASB, NKJV, NRSV “the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets”
TEV “the gift of proclaiming God’s message should be under the speaker’s control”
NJB “the prophetic spirit is to be under the prophet’s control”

These translation options show the two different ways this phrase can be understood.
1. Those who proclaim God’s message are subject (i.e. PRESENT PASSIVE INDICATIVE) to others who proclaim God’s message (i.e. prophets check prophets, v. 29).
2. The one who proclaims God’s message has personal control (i.e. PRESENT MIDDLE INDICATIVE) over when and what to say (cf. v. 30).

The term “spirit” is used in the same way as vv. 2,14,15 (twice), 16. It is an idiomatic way of referring to the personhood of an individual (cf. 2:11; 5:34; 7:34; 16:18).

14:33
NASB “for God is not a God of confusion but of peace”
NKJV “for God is not the author of confusion but of peace”
NRSV, NJB “for God is a God not of disorder but of peace”
TEV “because God does not want us to be in disorder but in harmony and peace”

This does not refer to creation. This is not order versus chaos, but factional infighting or egotism versus peace. This is not belittling the dynamic character of first century worship (cf. vv. 39-40), but the jealous, egotistical attitude of some of the gifted
speakers (cf. II Cor. 6:5; 12:20; James 3:16). Both our worship style and attitude reflect on the God we claim to be worshiping (cf. 11:17-34).

“as in all the churches of the saints” It is uncertain if this phrase goes with v. 33a (NASB, NKJV) or with v. 34 (NRSV, TEV, NJB). Because the phrase “in the churches” repeats the v. 33b it is probable that 33b forms a concluding remark as it does in 4:17 and 7:17. This phrase states clearly to all the Corinthian house churches that they are not special, superior, or uniquely gifted (cf. 4:17; 7:17; 11:16; 14:33,36; 16:1). See Special Topic: Saints at I Cor. 1:2.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:34-36

34The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says. 35If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church. 36Was it from you that the word of God first went forth? Or has it come to you only?

14:34 “The women are to keep silent in the churches” This verse has become a major theological issue in certain segments of the modern church. The modern western social, cultural trend toward individual rights and equality has made the NT, and especially Paul, seem judgmental and negative on this issue. In Paul’s day his theology relating to women was radically positive (cf. Eph. 5:22-23). Paul obviously worked with many women, as his list of co-workers in Rom. 16 shows.

Even in this context, Paul states the balance, 11:5 versus 14:34. Somehow vv. 34-35 relate uniquely to Corinth and the first century. The theories are legion (see Special Topic below)! How it relates to our day is problematic. Dogmatism and proof-texting are inappropriate. The biblical witness is not uniform or monolithic on this issue.

Paul limits several groups in the Corinthian worship setting, “keep silent,” vs. 28,30,34. There was a problem in public worship at Corinth. Christian women were a part of that problem. Their new freedom in Christ (or their being part of a Roman societal woman’s freedom movement) was causing cultural, theological, and evangelistic problems. In our day the opposite may be true. Gifted women leaders will help the twenty-first century church reach the world with the gospel. This does not affect the God-given order of creation, but it does show the priority of evangelism (cf. 9:22). This issue is not a gospel or doctrinal issue.

SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL’S USE OF WOMEN IN MINISTRY

Notice all of the women in Rom. 16 who were fellow-workers with Paul in the gospel (cf. Phil. 4:3): Phoebe in v. 1; Prisca in v. 3; Mary in v. 6; Junia (or Junias—if so it was a man) in v. 7; Tryphaena and Tryphosa in v. 12; Persis in v. 12; “his mother” in v. 13; Julia in v. 15; and “his sister” in v. 15. Be careful of dogmatism in the area of women in ministry. All believers are gifted (cf. I Cor. 12:7,11); all believers are full-time ministers (cf. Eph. 4:12). In this list we have a woman deacon, Phoebe, and a possible woman apostle, Junia (cf. Joel 2:28; Acts 2:16-21). It is difficult to know how to handle this issue biblically because of the seemingly paradoxical statements of Paul such as I Cor. 11:4-5 compared with 14:34.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THEORIES RELATED TO “WOMEN KEEP SILENT”

I. This is not a statement from Paul, but a later addition (cf. Gordon Fee, New International Commentary, “I Corinthians,” pp. 699-708), usually based on some Greek manuscripts (i.e. MSS D, F, G; one MS of the Vulgate; Latin church Father Ambrosiaster, after A.D. 384) which put vv. 33-34 after v. 40.

II. Paul is quoting the letter from the Church, which states the false views of the factious group. Paul quotes it to deny it. However, this protracted discussion (i.e. vv. 33-35 or 36) does not fit Paul’s earlier “slogans.” It is not a simple statement modified by Paul, but a sustained argument.

III. Paul is referring to a problem group of women who are disrupting the worship service either by tongues, prophecy, or questions. Their exuberance in their new freedom in Christ was causing cultural difficulties in evangelism and worship.

IV. Paul is limiting women, not in public prophesying, but in evaluating other prophets’ (i.e. male prophets) messages, thereby implying an authority over them (James Hurley, Men and Women in Biblical Perspective, pp. 185-194 and Wayne Grudem, The Gift of Prophecy in I Corinthians, pp. 239-255).

V. Paul is dealing with different situations in 11:5 and 14:34.

A. One is a house church (i.e. 11:5) and one is the gathered church (i.e. 14:34)

B. 11:5 is addressed to single women and 14:34 to married women
C. Some women were unruly or too outspoken

The variety and number of interpretations shows the uncertainty of modern interpreters related to the worship practices of Corinth and for that matter, first century Christian congregations. Was the problem:
1. local (i.e. uniquely Corinth)
2. first century Roman culture
3. abuse of giftedness
4. attempt to dominate by women
5. attempt to impose a Jewish structure
6. false view of a factious group at Corinth

NASB “are to subject themselves”
NKJV “they are to be submissive”
NRSV “should be subordinate”
TEV “they must not be in charge”
NJB “theirs is a subordinate part”

This is a PRESENT PASSIVE IMPERATIVE. “Subject” was a military term describing the chain of command. It is used of Jesus (cf. Luke 2:51 to His earthly parents and I Cor. 15:28 to His Heavenly Father) and is a universal truth for the church (cf. Eph. 5:21).

“just as the Law also says” Is Paul referring to a specific text or a general principle? There is no OT text that says this. It is possible that in light of 11:8-9 that Gen. 2:20-24 is the referent (cf. I Tim. 2:13). Some think that the result of the fall in Gen. 3:16 is the referent. It is also contextually possible that the “subjection” is related to the use of the word in v. 32, where it would refer to submission to other prophets (cf. Hard Sayings of the Bible, p. 616).

There is a fluidity in Paul’s writings in using this term “law.” Most often it refers to Mosaic Law, the old covenant, but sometimes it refers to the concept of the law in general. If that is true here then it refers to the general tenets of this patriarchal, “men first,” culture.

If women were allowed to be in charge, even in appearance, it would have hurt the cause of Christ in the first century Greco-Roman world. In this way it is similar to how the NT treats the issue of slavery. See note at v. 21 for a different understanding of this phrase.

14:35 This verse shows that the term “woman” in v. 34 refers to “wives.” Does this imply a single woman can speak? This same ambiguity is in chapter 11:5.

This verse is related to I Tim. 2:11-12 and Titus 2:5. Is it theological or cultural in I Tim. 2:13-14? Is it locked into a unique historical setting or is it a universal truth for all cultures, all ages? The biblical witness is speaking with two voices (cf. How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, pp. 15,63,72,74).

“if’ This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence. Christian wives were asking questions in public worship at Corinth. The church meetings were already being interrupted by singers, tongue speakers, tongue interpreters, and prophets. Now curious wives or wives flaunting their freedom were also becoming actively involved in the chaos!

“let them ask” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. These women are told who to ask and when to ask and why! Their actions were affecting the effectiveness of gathered worship.

Please read the note on Walter C. Kaiser’s understanding of vv. 34-36 at v. 21, paragraph two.

14:36 This was a sarcastic question to shock the prideful Corinthian church into spiritual reality and their place among the other congregations. The grammatical form of the two questions in v. 36 expects a “no” answer.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:37-38**

37If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord’s commandment. 38But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized.
Paul is asserting that those with true spiritual gifts should recognize others who speak and are gifted from God (cf. v. 32; Matt. 11:15; 13:9, 15, 16, 43). Paul’s description of his sense of leadership is expressed in 7:40 and 14:38. Paul recognized his Apostolic gift and its authority to speak for Christ. His apostleship was being questioned and challenged by some at Corinth. Verse 38 implies a divine curse (PRESENT PASSIVE INDICATIVE) on those who reject Apostolic authority (cf. Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in I Corinthians*, p. 52 footnote #104).

**14:38**

**NASB** “he is not recognized”

**NKJV** “let him be ignorant”

**NRSV** “is not to be recognized”

**TEV** “pay no attention to him”

**NJB** “that person is not recognized himself”

There is a variation in the verb tense in the Greek manuscripts, between PRESENT PASSIVE INDICATIVE and PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE THIRD PERSON PLURAL. The PASSIVE INDICATIVE implies “ignored or unrecognized by God.” The IMPERATIVE commands the believers at Corinth to reject the person who rejects Paul’s authority or possibly Paul’s authority represented in his advocate and representative, Timothy.

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**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:39-15:2**

39 Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues. 40 But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner. 15:1 Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 15:2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

**14:39 “desire earnestly”** This is Paul’s term for strong desire (cf. 12:31; 14:1). The TEV has “set your heart on.” For Paul in this cultural setting the desire is directed toward proclaiming/sharing the gospel for the good of the believer and unbeliever. Compare this with Num. 29:11.

It seems that Paul’s opening statement in 14:1 is also his concluding statement in v. 39. The Greek term ἀστε, followed by an IMPERATIVE, may be a way of introducing Apostolic summaries (cf. 10:12; 11:33; 14:39; 15:58; Phil. 2:12; I Thess. 4:18).

**“do not forbid to speak in tongues”** This is a needed balance to the problems at Corinth and today. We tend to overreact in our attitudes about spiritual matters. The road of truth has a ditch of error on each side (i.e. everyone speaks in tongues versus no one speaks in tongues)!

**NASB** “properly and in an orderly manner”

**NKJV, NRSV** “decently and in order”

**TEV** “proper and orderly way”

**NJB** “proper and orderly fashion”

The first term is from a combination of the adverb “good” (εὖ) and the noun “fashion” or “form” (cf. Rom. 13:13; I Thess. 4:12).

The second term means “to arrange in a proper way, to give orderliness” (cf. Col. 2:5). This phrase parallels v. 33. It has to do, not with a preset order (i.e. controlling agenda), but with the purpose of the public worship service, which is evangelism and discipleship (cf. Matt. 28:19-20).

This is Paul’s concluding statement on the subject of public, gathered worship, which began in chapter 11.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. What are the three criteria for judging spiritual gifts?
   a.
   b.
   c.
2. Why are tongues depreciated in this chapter to prophesy? Are tongues an inferior spiritual gift?
3. How is the mind related to tongues?
4. What is the problem with verse 22?
5. Is the church at Corinth to be used as a guideline for all churches?
6. Are women to be quiet in church? Explain your answer comparing 11:5 and 14:34.
READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.
1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

A. It is obvious from the context that Paul is reacting to a local potential heresy that denies the resurrection of the dead. Several theories have been postulated as to the possible origin:
   1. incipient gnostic ideas which emphasized the dualism between spirit (i.e. God, which is good) and matter (i.e. material things, which are evil)
   2. those asserting that the resurrection has already occurred (cf. II Tim. 2:18).

B. This is the definitive passage in the NT on the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of believers. It must be remembered that this passage was written before any of the Gospels were written down.

C. Notice Paul’s pastoral emphasis in the way this doctrinal chapter ends, v. 58. This is similar to I Thess. 4:18. Paul always brings doctrine down to daily living and serving. Truth informs lifestyle!

D. It helps to see the overall structure of this long chapter. Dr. David King, a colleague at East Texas Baptist University, has a good outline from his class notes:

1. Introduction: (15:1-11)
      (1) The basic facts of the Gospel concern the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (15:3-4).
      (2) The post-resurrection appearances of Jesus prove beyond any doubt that Jesus rose from the dead (15:5-7).
      (3) Paul magnifies the grace of God which allowed him to be among the witnesses of Jesus’ resurrection (15:8-11).
   
2. The basis of the doctrine of our resurrection is the resurrection of Jesus (15:12-34).
   a. Some say that He did not rise from the dead. What are the implications of that (15:12-19)?
      (1) Our preaching is without value (15:12-14).
      (2) Your faith is futile (15:14 & 17).
      (3) We are false witnesses of the truth of God (15:15).
      (4) You are still in your sins (15:17).
      (5) Those believers who have died are lost forever (15:18).
      (6) All believers are to be pitied (15:19).
   
   b. But Christ has been (and still is!) Risen! What are the implications of that (15:20-34)?
      (1) He is the first-fruit of a coming harvest (15:20).
      (2) Christ, the man, overcame death which was introduced into the world by the first man, Adam (15:21-22).
      (3) The resurrection is divided into two parts: the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of others (15:23).
      (4) Death will be overcome by resurrection and all will be subject to God, the creator of all (15:24-28).
      (5) Believers are baptized in faith believing in both a spiritual and a physical resurrection (15:29).
      (6) We can face all kinds of danger without fear, for if we die, we shall live again and be judged, according to our deeds (implied) so we must be careful how we live (15:30-34).

3. The doctrine of the resurrection of believers is reasonable. Paul answers some of their questions (15:35-57).
   a. How are the dead raised? Answer: By the power of God, just as God raises plants from seeds (15:35-38).
   b. What kind of body do they have? Answer: A different kind of body suitable to the different kind of life we will live in eternity (15:39-41).
      (1) God has created different kinds of bodies for life in this world (15:39-41).
(2) The resurrection body is a new kind of body (15:42-44).
   Imperishable instead of perishable,
   Glorious instead of humiliated
   Powerful instead of weak
   Spiritual instead of animal (or physical)
(3) The nature of the resurrection body is clarified by contrast with the natural body which leads Paul to
   a contrast between Adam and Christ (15:45-49).
c. When will all this take place? Answer: When Jesus comes again (15:50-57).
   (1) A change is necessary for all (15:50).
   (2) We shall all be changed instantly (15:51-52).
   (3) It will happen when God’s trumpet sounds (15:52–cf. I Thess. 4:16).
   (4) When the change has taken place complete victory over death will be ours in Jesus Christ (15:53-57).
4. Conclusion: The result of belief in this doctrine is steadfastness in service because we know that our service is
   not in vain (15:58)” (pp. 9 and 10).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:1-2
1Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you
stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.

15:1
NASB “Now I make known to you”
NKJV “Moreover… I declare to you”
NRSV “Now I would remind you”
TEV “And now I want to remind you”
NJB “I want to make clear to you”

Paul has structured his letter around several questions (cf. 7:1,25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1) with the phrase “now concerning” (i.e.
peri de). Chapter 15 begins with de. Is it possible that this discussion concerning the resurrection was not a question which the
church asked, but a situation that Paul was made aware of and also wanted to address?

This is a PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE form of gnòrizhō, which means to make known, reveal, or declare. However,
Paul was not giving new information (cf. 12:3), but a doctrinal summary organizing the gospel he had earlier preached to them.

“brethren” Paul often uses this word to denote a new aspect of his topic or a change of subject, as he does here (cf. 1:10; 2:1;

“the gospel” Paul parallels the concept of “gospel” in v. 2 with “the word I preached to you.” In Hebrew thought there was
a power to the divine word (cf. Isa. 55:11; John 1:1). This then is a metaphor for the content of Paul’s preaching, not simply a
way of referring to vocalization.

This verse has a COGNATE ACCUSATIVE, literally “the gospel which I gospeled to you.”
These are my comments on “gospel” from my Gospel According to Peter, vol. 2, p. 8.

“With Mark probably being the first written Gospel, this is the first use of the term euangelion (cf. 1:14,15; 8:35;
10:29; 13:10; 14:9) by a Gospel writer (Paul’s use in Gal. 2:2 and I Thess. 2:9 would be chronologically earlier). It is
literally “the good news” or “the good message.” This obviously reflects Isa. 61:1 and possibly 40:9 and 52:7. Its
grammatical form can be understood as (1) the message given by Jesus or (2) the message about Jesus. Number 2 is
probably the intended meaning. However, the Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels, published by IVP, says “The
genitive (‘of’) is probably both subjective and objective: Jesus proclaims the gospel and it proclaims his story” (p. 285).
The Jerome Biblical Commentary says “Mark’s use of the word ‘gospel’ is akin to that in Paul where it can mean either
the act of proclaiming or the content of what is proclaimed.”

“which also you received” This term is used of “passed on traditions” (cf. 11:23; 15:3; Mark 7:4; Phil. 4:9; I Thess. 4:10;
II Thess. 3:6). Paul was passing on what he received (i.e. the gospel) from Christ (cf. Gal. 1:12). Before Paul was the Apostle
to the Gentiles, he was a receiver of the gospel himself. This is an AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE. Although Jesus died for
all human sin, it is obvious from this passage and others (cf. John 1:12) that each person must personally receive God’s free offer
(cf. v. 11) of salvation. The gospel involves (1) the welcoming of a person; (2) believing truths about that person; and (3) living
a life in emulation of that person.
“in which also you stand” This is a PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE, which denotes completed action in past time that has become a permanent state.

SPECIAL TOPIC: STAND (HISTAMI)

This common term is used in several theological senses in the New Testament

1. to establish
   a. the OT Law, Rom. 3:31
   b. one’s own righteousness, Rom. 10:3
   c. the new covenant, Heb. 10:9
   d. a charge, II Cor. 13:1
   e. God’s truth, II Tim. 2:19
2. to resist spiritually
   a. the devil, Eph. 6:11
   b. the day of judgment, Rev. 6:17
3. to resist by standing one’s ground
   a. military metaphor, Eph. 6:14
   b. civil metaphor, Rom. 14:4
4. a position in truth, John 8:44
5. a position in grace
   a. Rom. 5:2
   b. I Cor. 15:1
   c. I Pet. 5:12
6. a position in faith
   a. Rom. 11:20
   b. I Cor. 7:37
   c. I Cor. 15:1
   d. II Cor. 1:24
7. a position of arrogance, I Cor. 10:12

This term expresses both the covenantal grace and mercy of a sovereign God and the fact that believers need to respond to it and cling to it by faith! Both are biblical truths. They must be held together!

15:2 “you are saved” This is the PRESENT PASSIVE INDICATIVE, “being saved” (cf. 1:18; II Cor. 2:15). Salvation is a process toward Christlikeness.

See Special Topic: Greek Verb Tenses Used for Salvation at 3:15.

“if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence, which implies that they would “hold fast” to the truth of the gospel, which he preached to them, but it adds a note of contingency by a second “ei” (i.e. unless). This seems to parallel Jesus’ Parable of the Soils (cf. Matt. 13) and John’s discussion in I John 2:19 of those who were in the fellowship, but left.

There were those factions in Corinth who by their actions, attitudes, and theology showed they were never believers! They rejected Paul’s gospel, Paul’s Apostolic authority and merged the gospel into Roman culture, whereby the culture became dominant! Cultural Christianity is always weak and sometimes not Christian!

However, please note that contextually Paul is asserting his confidence that he has that the Corinthian believers are true believers.

1. AORIST tense, v. 1, “received”
2. PERFECT tense, v. 1, “in which also you stand”
3. FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence, v. 2, “since you hold fast”

“unless you believed in vain” “If you hold fast...in vain.” The word “vain” (eikê) means “to no purpose” (cf. Gal. 3:4; 4:11). It is obvious from Matt. 13:1-9,18-23 that false professions are a reality of religious life. This phrase forms the fourth in a series which describes necessary elements of the Christian life: acceptance, position, progress, and continuance. Salvation is a process
NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:3-11

3For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; 7then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; 8and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also. 9For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. 11Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

15:3 “I delivered to you” This refers to (1) Christian witness that Paul received (i.e. from Stephen, Acts 7; from Ananias, Acts 5; and from persecuted Christians, Acts 9:1-2; I Cor. 15:9; (2) direct revelation from the Lord (cf. 11:23; Gal. 1:12). Paul passed on the gospel truths he had received. Paul was not an innovator, but a faithful witness and applied the gospel truths to new situations.

“first importance” This is the only Apostolic Gospel summary. Our modern gospel summaries, like the Roman Road (i.e. 3:23; 5:8; 6:23; 10:9-13), are modern selections taken from larger inspired writings. Paul wants to remind them of the essentials of the gospel.

Paul’s gospel summary:
1. Christ died for our sins
2. Christ was truly dead and buried
3. Christ was raised from the dead
4. We know these are true because He appeared to many people over many days

“Christ died for our sins” The term “Christ” is the Greek translation of the Hebrew term Messiah, which meant an anointed one. This term, without the usual “Jesus Christ” or “Lord Jesus Christ” or “Christ Jesus” shows the primitive origin of Paul’s tradition, where Jesus is affirmed as the Jewish Messiah, the Promised One. In all probability, Paul received this from Ananias and the other believers in Damascus after his conversion.

This is an AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE. “Jesus paid a debt He did not owe and we owed a debt we could not pay” (cf. Gal. 3:13; I John 4:10).

The preposition “for” (huper) meant “on behalf of”; it was often used synonymously with another Greek preposition, anti, which meant “in the place of.” This was a reference to the vicarious, substitutionary atonement (cf. Isa. 53; Mark 10:45).

The death of Christ was a recurrent theme in Paul’s writings. He used several different terms and phrases to refer to Jesus’ substitutionary death: (1) blood (cf. I Cor. 11:25,27; Rom. 3:25; 5:9; Eph. 1:7; 2:13; Col. 1:20); (2) gave Himself up (cf. Eph. 5:2,25); (3) delivered up (cf. Rom. 4:25; 8:32); (4) sacrifice: (cf. I Cor. 5:7); (5) died (cf. Rom. 5:6; 8:34; 14:9,15; I Cor. 8:11; 15:3; II Cor. 5:15; Gal. 5:21; I Thess. 4:14; 5:10); (6) cross (cf. I Cor. 1:17-18; Gal. 5:11; 6:12-14; Eph. 2:16; Phil. 2:8; Col. 1:20; 2:14); (7) crucifixion (cf. I Cor. 1:23; 2:2; II Cor. 13:4; Gal. 3:1).

“according to the Scriptures” This refers to the OT because none of the NT was written by this time except possibly Galatians and Thessalonians. The use of this phrase in vv. 3-4 asserts the prophetic (cf. Luke 24:27) and the predetermined redemptive plan of God (cf. Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29).

However, it is possible that Scripture here refers to one of the Gospels. It is uncertain when they were written, and when they were circulated among the early churches. If the phrase does refer to a Gospel account, then “on the third day” could refer to Jesus being raised on Sunday, the first day of the week and by, Jewish reckoning, three days.

15:4 “He was buried” He was truly dead!

“on the third day” There is not much OT attestation to the third day. However, it was part of the kerygyma (cf. Mark 10:34; Luke 24:46; Acts 10:40). Some see it referring to Jonah 1:17 or Ps. 16:10, however, Jesus’ comments (cf. Matt. 12:40) seem to relate it to Jonah’s experience in the great fist.

“He was raised” This is a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE, used so often in this chapter (cf. vv. 4,12,13,14,16,17,20). This Greek verb tense speaks of Christ’s continuing status as “the risen One” and the passive verb speaks of God’s actions in raising Him from the dead. This asserts the Father’s approval of the life, teachings, and sacrificial death of Jesus. The NT often
attributes the works of redemption to all three persons of the Godhead: (1) God the Father raised Jesus (cf. Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30,33,34,37; 17:31; Rom. 6:4,9; 10:9; I Cor. 6:14; II Cor. 4:14; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12; I Thess. 1:10); (2) God the Son raised Himself (cf. John 2:19-22; 10:17-18); (3) God the Spirit raised Jesus (cf. Rom. 8:11).

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE RESURRECTION

A. Evidence for the resurrection
   1. Fifty (50) days later, at Pentecost, the resurrection had become the key note of Peter’s sermon (cf. Acts 2). Thousands who lived in the area where it happened believed!
   2. The lives of the disciples were changed radically from discouragement (they were not expecting resurrection) to boldness, even martyrdom.
B. Significance of the resurrection
   1. Shows Jesus was Who He claimed to be (cf. Matt. 12:38-40, prediction of death and resurrection).
   2. God put His approval on Jesus’ life, teaching, and substitutionary death! (cf. Rom. 4:25).
   3. Shows us the promise to all Christians (i.e., resurrection bodies, cf. I Cor. 15).
C. Claims from Jesus that He would rise from the dead:
   4. John 2:19-22; 12:34; chapters 14-16
D. Further Study
   1. Evidence That Demands a Verdict by Josh McDowell
   2. Who Moved the Stone? by Frank Morrison
   3. The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, “Resurrection,” “Resurrection of Jesus Christ”

15:5 “Cephas” Paul usually calls him by this name in his Corinthian letters (cf. 1:12; 3:22; 9:5; 15:50, but in Galatians he calls him both Cephas (cf. 2:9) and Peter (cf. 1:18; 2:7,8,11,14). Paul never calls him Simon.

It is amazing that the first person (after the women at the tomb) the resurrected Christ appears to is the very one who had denied Him three times, the very one who preached the first sermon of the Church at Pentecost. Jesus marks him out for special emphasis in Mark 16:7, where the Apostles are told to meet Jesus in Galilee. This surely shows the love, understanding, forgiveness, and restoring powers of Christ. Much of John 21 is describing Peter’s restoration to leadership.

“the twelve” The western family of Greek manuscripts (i.e. D), as well as the Vulgate, have “eleven.” This term became a technical term for the Apostolic group. Paul never used this word in any of his other writings. Some think this implies that vv. 3-7 may have been a catechismal summary of the early church.

15:6 “He appeared to more than five hundred brethren” This may refer to Matt. 28:16-20, which shows that the Great Commission was given to the whole church, not just a few leaders. Paul’s emphasis in v. 6 is the historical reality of the resurrection. If one did not believe, there were numerous eye witnesses to testify.

“fallen asleep” Paul follows Jesus’ usage (cf. Matt. 27:52; John 11:11,13) and OT usage (cf. Dan. 12:2) of sleep as a euphemism for death.

15:7 “James” This refers to the Lord’s brother who did not believe in Him until after the resurrection (cf. Mark 3:21; John 7:5). All of his family were present in the Upper Room (cf. Acts 1:14). This James was identified as the Lord's half-brother (cf. Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3), in order to differentiate him from James the Apostle, part of the inner circle, who was killed very early (cf. Acts 12). For several generations the Church in Jerusalem had a physical relative of Jesus as its leader. Several biblical passages (cf. Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; I Cor. 15:7; and James 1:1) indicate that James was a very important leader in the Church in Jerusalem. Paul is the only one to mention the appearance. This shows how much detail is omitted in the NT about Jesus’ teaching and actions. We have all we need to trust Him and follow Him, but not enough for a complete history of His life.
SPECIAL TOPIC: JAMES, THE HALF BROTHER OF JESUS

A. He was called “James the Just” and later nicknamed “camel knees” because he constantly prayed on his knees (from Hegesippus, quoted by Eusebius).

B. James was not a believer until after the resurrection (cf. Mark 3:21; John 7:5). Jesus appeared to him personally after the resurrection (cf. I Cor. 15:7).

C. He was present in the upper room with the disciples (cf. Acts 1:14) and possibly also there when the Spirit came on Pentecost.

D. He was married (cf. I Cor. 9:5).

E. He is referred to by Paul as a pillar (possibly an apostle, cf. Gal. 1:19) but was not one of the Twelve (cf. Gal. 2:9; Acts 12:17; 15:13ff).

F. In Antiquities of the Jews, 20:9:1, Josephus says that he was stoned in A.D. 62 by orders from the Sadducees of the Sanhedrin, while another tradition (the second century writers, Clement of Alexandria or Hegesippus) says he was pushed off the wall of the Temple.

G. For many generations after Jesus’ death a relative of Jesus was appointed leader of the church in Jerusalem.

[to all the apostles] Since the Twelve are mentioned in v. 5, this seems to refer to a wider use of the term. James seems to be an “apostle” in the same sense as Barnabas (cf. Acts 14:4, 14); Andronicus and Junias (or Junia, cf. Rom. 16:7); Apollos (cf. II Cor. 4:9); Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25); or Silvanas and Timothy (cf. I Thess. 2:6; Acts; 18:5). It is possible to argue that Cephas is mentioned separately from the Twelve so “all the Apostles” could refer to the Twelve also. The following is a chart of the post-resurrection appearances from Paul Barnett, Jesus and the Rise of Early Christianity, p. 185.

<table>
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<th>I Corinthians</th>
<th>Matthew</th>
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<th>John</th>
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<td><strong>Jerusalem Appearances</strong></td>
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<td>Women (Mt. 28:9)</td>
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<td>Cephas (I Cor. 15:5)</td>
<td>Simon (Lk. 24:34)</td>
<td>two men (Lk. 24:15)</td>
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<td>the Twelve (I Cor. 15:5)</td>
<td>disciples (Lk. 24:36)</td>
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<td><strong>Galilee Appearances</strong></td>
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<td>500+ believers (I Cor. 15:6)</td>
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<td>James (I Cor. 15:7)</td>
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<td>seven disciples (Jn. 21:1)</td>
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<td>eleven disciples (Mt. 28:16)</td>
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<td><strong>Jerusalem Appearances</strong></td>
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<td>all the apostles (I Cor. 15:7)</td>
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15:8
NASB, NRSV “as it were to one untimely born”
NKJV “as one born out of due time”
TEV “even though I am like someone whose birth was abnormal”
NJB “as though I was a child born abnormally”

These English translations show the general sense of this rare term. It is only used three times in the Septuagint (cf. Num. 12:12; Job 3:16; and Eccl. 6:3) for a miscarriage. The term implies an untimely, early birth. However, in this context, Paul seems to be describing his late addition to the Apostolic group (i.e. road to Damascus conversion, cf. Acts 9).

It is surely possible that this was one of the disparaging remarks of one or more of the factions at Corinth who rejected Paul’s authority (i.e. he was not a regular Apostle). Paul acknowledges the grace of Christ in appearing to him amidst his persecution of the Church (cf. v. 10; Gal. 1:23). However, he is still in the select list of those to whom Christ appeared after His resurrection. Paul even may be asserting that he is the only one to whom the glorified (i.e. ascended) Christ appeared (cf. Gal. 1:15-16).

It is also possible that the term had a secondary meaning of “monster,” which would have referred to Paul’s vicious and repeated attacks on innocent believers (i.e. Acts 9:1-2). Paul may have coined this word himself since it describes his pre-conversion Jewish exuberance.

15:9 “the least of the apostles” Paul was so humbled by God’s grace even amidst his persecution of Jesus’ church. He often uses phrases like this to describe himself (cf. II Cor. 12:11; Eph. 3:8; I Tim. 1:15).


15:10 “by the grace of God I am what I am” “Grace” is fronted for emphasis. All of us are what we are by the grace of God, but notice the needed balance on purposeful human action (cf. Phil. 2:12-13).

“did not prove vain” This is a different word from v. 2. As a matter of fact, Paul uses three different terms translated “vain” or “empty” in this chapter.

1. *eiké*, v. 2
2. *kenos*, vv. 10,14,48; II Cor. 6:1
3. *mataios*, v. 17; I Cor. 3:20

His point is that God’s grace proved effective in Paul’s ministry, of which the Corinthian church itself was an evidence and result.

“I labored even more than all of them” The context dictates that this refers to the other Apostles. Paul compares himself to other Apostles in Galatians because his apostolic authority is being challenged. It is probable that one or more of the factions is doing the same thing in Corinth. Paul has no quarrel with the Twelve. He just clearly asserts his own calling and authority!

“yet not I, but the grace of God with me” There is a balance in Paul’s theology between call, giftedness, and service relating to God’s sovereignty. There is always a covenantal balance between these two ways of viewing one’s effectiveness. Paul asserts that he worked harder than the other Apostles, but he also knew that God was the source, not himself. This same balance is seen between John 15:5 and Phil. 4:13, or Phil. 2:12-13.

15:11 Paul strongly asserts that the gospel he received and preached was the very same as the original Apostles preached. The very fact that he makes the claim shows what opposition he was facing at Corinth. Some were denying his apostolic authority and, even possibly, his gospel content.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:12-19

12Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; 14and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. 15Moreover we are even 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, not even Christ has been raised; 17and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. 18Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.

15:12 “if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence, which implies Christ was being preached (cf. v. 11).
“how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?” The source of this denial of the resurrection probably had its origin in Greek philosophy, which thought the physical body was the source of evil. It is textually uncertain whether they were denying the resurrection of Christ or the resurrection of all believers. This was not a unique problem in the early church (cf. II Tim. 2:18).

15:13 “if” This is another FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL. It is often called by grammarians a “simple” or “logical” condition (cf. vv. 13,14,15,16,17,19). Obviously in this verse Paul is using it to heighten his literary argument and not asserting that Christ has not been raised! But the logic in these next few verses is powerful. If Christ has not been raised then:

1. there is no resurrection at all, vv. 13,16
2. our preaching is vain, v. 14
3. your faith is vain, v. 14
4. they are false witnesses, v. 15
5. your faith is worthless, v 17
6. you are still in your sins, v. 17
7. those who have died have gone, v. 18
8. we are of all men most to be pitied, v. 19

This theological issue of the resurrection of Christ is no minor issue! He is alive or Christianity is a lie! This is a watershed doctrine!

15:14,17 “vain...worthless” These two different terms imply empty and fruitless. Without the resurrection the claims of the gospel message have no effect!

15:19 “if we have hoped in Christ in this life only” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence. Paul is making the point that if Christ was not raised we only have hope (PERIPHRASTIC PERFECT ACTIVE) in this life because there is no afterlife—if Christ has not been raised!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:20-28

But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death. For He has put all things in subjection under His feet. But when He says, “All things are put in subjection,” it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.

15:20 “But” What an important contrast!

“Christ has been raised” This chapter has often been called “the Resurrection Chapter.” Both the resurrection of Christ and of His followers is the recurrent theme. The certainty and lasting results of this can be seen in the verb egeirō, which means to awaken, to raise up.

v. 12, PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE
v. 13, PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE
v. 14, PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE
v. 15, AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE (twice)
v. 16, PRESENT PASSIVE INDICATIVE
v. 16, PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE
v. 17, PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE
v. 20, PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE
v. 22, PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE
v. 25, PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE
v. 42, PRESENT PASSIVE INDICATIVE
v. 43, PRESENT PASSIVE INDICATIVE
v. 44, PRESENT PASSIVE INDICATIVE
v. 52, FUTURE PASSIVE INDICATIVE

Notice the consistent PASSIVE voice. The Triune God raises the dead. The PERFECT tense speaks of Jesus’ past resurrection, which becomes a state of being. Believers share the reality of His resurrection and the hope of theirs!
“those who are asleep” This is a PERFECT MIDDLE PARTICIPLE (cf. Matt. 27:52), which was a Hebrew idiom for death.

“first fruits” This OT annual sacrificial ritual is discussed in Lev. 23:10ff. The first fruits in the OT were ripened sheaves of the barley harvest waved before the Lord in the Temple the day after the High Holy Sabbath of Passover Week, which would be Resurrection Sunday. They were given to show God’s ownership of the entire crop. This is an OT type for the promise of the resurrection of all of Christ’s followers! Paul uses this term again in 16:15 to describe the first believers in Achaia. He also uses it in Rom. 8:23 describing believers as receiving the Spirit, but anxiously waiting for the resurrection. Jesus is the first to be resurrected (cf. Col. 1:18), but in due time all of His followers will experience the same. In a spiritual sense we already have resurrection life (cf. Eph. 2:5-6).

15:21-22 This is the Adam-Christ typology that will be followed up in vv. 45-48 (cf. Rom. 5:12-21; Phil. 2:6-11). In Adam all humanity has been affected by sin (i.e. death). In Christ, potentially all humanity can be affected by grace.

These ambiguous verses, along with Rom. 5:18-19, have caused some theologians to assert an eventual salvation for all humans. Others have seen it as referring to the resurrection of both the saved and the lost (cf. Dan. 12:2). In Adam all die; in Jesus all will be raised (i.e. some to reward, some to judgment). It seems obvious to me that Paul’s writings, taken in context, demand a repentant faith response by believers.

15:23-25 Some theologians assert that these verses confirm a pre-millennial concept of eschatology. However, this text is not a discussion of the millennium, but the resurrection. Death was defeated at the empty tomb, not a future temporal reign. We must be careful of our theological agendas driving the interpretation of a context. Paul never discusses a millennium, even in his discussion of the rapture (cf. I Thess. 4:13-18) nor of the Antichrist (cf. II Thess. 2). Neither did Jesus ever discuss a millennium, even in His eschatological discourses (cf. Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21).

15:23 “His coming” See Special Topic following.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: NT TERMS FOR CHRIST’S RETURN

The eschatological emphasis of a special coming day when humans will meet Jesus (as Savior and Judge) goes by several designations in Paul’s writings: (1) “the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (cf. I Cor. 1:8); (2) “the day of the Lord” (cf. I Cor. 5:5; I Thess. 5:2; II Thess. 2:2); (3) “the day of the Lord Jesus” (cf. I Cor. 5:5; II Cor. 1:14); (4) “the day of Jesus Christ” (cf. Phil. 1:6); (5) “the day of Christ” (cf. Phil. 1:10; 2:16); (6) “His day (Son of Man)” (cf. Luke 17:24); (7) “the day that the Son of Man is revealed” (cf. Luke 17:30); (8) “the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ” (cf. I Cor. 1:7); (9) “when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven” (cf. II Thess. 1:7); (10) “in the presence of the Lord Jesus at His coming” (cf. I Thess. 2:19).

There are at least four ways in which the NT authors refer to the return of Jesus:

1. **epiphaneia**, which refers to a dazzling brightness which is theologically (though not etymologically) related to “glory.” In II Tim. 1:10; Titus 2:11 and 3:4 it refers to Jesus’ first coming (i.e. incarnation, cf. v. 11) and His Second coming (cf. v. 13). It is used in II Thess. 4:8 which includes all three major terms for the Second Coming: I Tim. 6:14; II Tim. 4:1; Titus 2:13.


3. **apokalupsis** (or **apocalypsis**), which means an unveiling for the purpose of revealing. It is the name of the last book in the NT (cf. Luke 17:30; I Cor. 1:7; II Thess. 1:7; I Pet. 1:7; 4:13).

4. **phaneroo**, which means to bring to light or clearly reveal or manifest. The term is used often in the NT for many aspects of God’s revelation. It, like epiphaneia, can refer to Christ’s first coming (cf. I Pet. 1:20; I Jn. 1:2; 3:5,8; 4:9) and His second coming (cf. Matt. 24:30; Col. 3:4; I Pet. 5:4; I Jn. 2:28; 3:2).

5. The very common term for “coming,” **erchomai**, is also used occasionally for Christ’s return (cf. Matt. 16:27-28; 23:39; 24:30; 25:11; Acts 1:10-11; I Cor. 11:26; Rev. 1:7,8).

6. It is also used with the phrase “day of the Lord” (cf. I Thess. 5:2), which is an OT title for God’s day of blessing (resurrection) and judgment.

The NT as a whole is written within the world-view of the OT, which asserted:

a. a current evil, rebellious age
b. a coming new age of righteousness
c. an age brought about by the Spirit’s agency through the work of the Messiah (Anointed One)
The theological assumption of progressive revelation is required because the NT authors slightly modify Israel’s expectation. Instead of a military, nationalistic (Israel) coming of the Messiah, there are two comings. The first coming is the incarnation of deity in the conception and birth of Jesus of Nazareth. He came as the non-military, non-judicial “suffering servant” of Isa. 53; also the mild rider on the colt of a donkey (not a war horse or kingly mule), of Zech. 9:9. The first coming inaugurated the New Messianic Age, the Kingdom of God on earth. In one sense the Kingdom is here, but of course, in another it is still far off. It is this tension between the two comings of the Messiah which, in a sense, is the over-lapping of the two Jewish ages that was unseen, or at least unclear, from the OT. In reality, this dual coming emphasizes YHWH’s commitment to redeem all humanity (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5 and the preaching of the prophets, especially Isaiah and Jonah).

The church is not waiting for the fulfillment of OT prophecy because most prophecies refer to the first coming (cf. How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth, pp. 165-166). What believers do anticipate is the glorious coming of the resurrected King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the expected historical fulfillment of the new age of righteousness on earth as it is in heaven (cf. Matt. 6:10). The OT presentations were not inaccurate, but incomplete. He will come again just as the prophets predicted in the power and authority of YHWH.

The Second Coming is not a biblical term, but the concept is the world-view and framework of the entire NT. God will set it all straight. Fellowship between God and mankind made in His image will be restored. Evil will be judged and removed. God’s purposes will not, cannot, fail!

15:24 “the kingdom” It is surprising how often this concept is used by Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels. It is the subject of His first sermon and last sermon as well as the thrust of most parables. It is surprisingly only used twice in John’s Gospel. It is the reign of God in believing human’s hearts now that will one day be consummated over all the earth.

It is used by Jesus as the current presence of the kingdom of God in and through His own personal presence and teaching (cf. Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; 11:12; 12:28; Mark 1:15; Luke 9:9,11; 11:20; 21:31-32). However, it is also linked to a future glorious consummation at His return (cf. Matt. 6:10; 16:28; 26:64). It is “the already/not yet” eschatological tension of the Gospels!

The specific reference to “the kingdom” is relatively rare in Paul’s writings.

Romans - 14:17
I Corinthians - 4:20; 6:9; 15:24,50
Galatians - 5:21
Ephesians - 5:5
Colossians - 1:13; 4:11
I Thessalonians - 2:12
II Thess. - 4:1,18

“when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power” This refers to the angelic powers of this current evil age (cf. Rom. 8:38; Eph. 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:10,15). This abolishment apparently occurs (1) theologically at the cross and resurrection and (2) temporally at Christ’s return. If this is true, then I Thess. 4:13-18 is the closest parallel in Paul’s writings. Notice that after the rapture, believers are with the Lord forever (cf. I Thess. 4:17), which is the eternal kingdom of the Father (cf. Dan. 7:13-14).

SPECIAL TOPIC: ANGELS IN PAUL’S WRITINGS

The rabbis thought that the angels were jealous of God’s love and attention to fallen mankind and, therefore, were hostile to them. The Gnostic false teachers asserted that salvation was only available by secret passwords through hostile angelic spheres (cf. Col. and Eph.), which led up to the high-god.

George Eldon Ladd has a good summary of the terms used by Paul for angels in his book A Theology of the New Testament: “Paul refers not only to good and bad angels, to Satan and to demons; he uses another group of words to designate ranks of angelic spirits. The terminology is as follows:

‘Rule’ [arche], I Cor. 15:24; Eph. 1:21; Col. 2:10
‘Rules’ [archai; RSV, “principalities”], Eph. 3:10; 6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:15; Rom. 8:38
‘Authority’ [exousia], I Cor. 15:24; Eph. 1:21; Col. 2:10
‘Authorities’ [exousiai; RSV, “authorities”], Eph. 1:21
‘Power’ [dynamis], I Cor. 15:24; Eph. 1:21
‘Powers’ [dynamites], Rom. 8:38
‘Thrones’ [thronoi], Col. 1:16
15:25 “He has put all His enemies under His feet” This is an OT idiom of complete victory (cf. Ps. 8:6; 110:1). In the OT the enemies were the surrounding pagan nations, but in the NT they are the angelic, spiritual powers hostile to God and His Christ. These evil powers influence humans to disbelief and rebellion. Jesus has fully defeated these powers by His resurrection. The final resurrection of all believers will mark the consummation of this victory!

15:26 “The last enemy that will be abolished is death” This means “made null and void.” Death is defeated (cf. II Tim. 1:10; Rev. 21:4). Death was not the will of God for mankind, but a result of the Fall. The curse will be removed as it is now defeated.

For the term “abolished” in vv. 24 and 26 see Special Topic: Katargeō at I Cor. 1:28.

15:27-28 The pronoun antecedents are ambiguous. Obviously this refers to an inner relationship within the Godhead (cf. 3:23; 11:3). Christ, the Son, is subordinate (but not unequal, cf. Col. 3:11) to the Father in His function within time (cf. Rom. 11:33-36).

15:27 This is a quote from Ps. 8:6 with an added allusion to Ps. 110:1

15:28 “when all things are subject to Him” When does this occur? This is the question! There are obvious time indicators throughout this paragraph.

1. after that (epeita), v. 23
2. then (eita), v. 24
3. when (hotav, twice), v. 24
4. until (achri), v. 25
5. when (hostan), v. 27
6. when (hostan), v. 28

Does this refer to (1) Jesus’ death and resurrection; (2) Jesus’ ascension; (3) Jesus’ return/rapture; or (4) some aspect of the millennium? There is an obvious time sequence, but Paul is too ambiguous for any interpreter to declare with certainty. Often our presupposition and systematic theologies shape this passage into any desired shape!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:29-34

39Otherwise, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them? 39Why are we also in danger every hour? 39I affirm, brethren, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. 39If from human motives I fought with wild beasts at Ephesus, what does it profit me? If the dead are not raised, LET US EAT AND DRINK, FOR TOMORROW WE DIE. 39Do not be deceived: “Bad company corrupts good morals.” 39Become sober-minded as you ought, and stop sinning; for some have no knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.

15:29 This verse has caused major problems in interpretation. We have no parallel passages in Scripture. We have no other reference for this practice in the early church, although there is some historical evidence about something similar being practiced among the heretics of the second and third century. We must admit we just do not know biblically exactly to what this refers. Some theories are: (1) new Christians baptized to take the place of dead Christians; (2) new converts baptized because of their respect for a dead loved one; (3) persons in catechism having died before being baptized were proxy baptized by living Christians; and (4) new converts were baptized over the graves of great Christians.

Hermeneutically several assumptions need to be applied to the interpretation of this verse.

1. It basically is in a series of examples/illustrations of the reality of the resurrection.
2. One does not build theology/doctrine on illustrations.
3. Since there is no clue to the exact historical reference, this text should not be emphasized or applied.
4. It is even contextually uncertain if Paul is affirming this practice or simply making an allusion to it (cf. TEV, NJB).
“if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence used to make a strong counterpoint.

15:31
NASB, NKJV "I affirm"
NRSV "that is as certain"
TEV "I declare this"
NJB "I swear"

This is not in the Greek, but in context the following phrase might be an oath formula. Paul uses oath formulas quite often to assert the truthfulness of his statements (cf. Rom. 9:1; II Cor. 1:18,23; 11:10-11,31).

“by the boasting in you which I have in Christ” Paul is asserting that his work in Corinth is an evidence of his labor for Christ. His labor has been worth it (cf. II Cor. 3:1-2; 7:4; 9:2-3). Paul’s churches were an evidence of his apostleship and effectiveness.

“I die daily” This phrase is placed first in the sentence for emphasis. Verses 30-32 refer to the difficulties Paul faced in service to Christ (cf. II Cor. 1:8-10, 4:8-12; 11:23-27). He knew it was worth it because he had personally seen the glorified Christ on the road to Damascus (cf. Acts 9:1-22; 22:3-16; 26:9-18). Paul’s theology was informed by personal experience and personal revelation (cf. Gal. 1:11-12) and the Old Testament.

15:32 “if” Paul uses two FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentences to make the point. If there is no resurrection and no Christian reward, why was Paul willing to suffer daily for the gospel?

“I fought wild beasts at Ephesus” Paul does not mention this experience in his litany of sufferings in II Cor. 11:23-27, and because Paul was a Roman citizen, he should not have been forced to fight wild beasts. This must be a metaphor of the difficult spiritual situation that Paul encountered at Ephesus (cf. I Cor. 1:8-10). Some take this text literally and assert an imprisonment at Ephesus.

“What does it profit me” Paul’s labors for Christ are of no spiritual effect if there is no resurrection, either of Christ and thereby no resurrection for Paul. He labors for the gospel, but if the gospel is not true, there is no reward (i.e. no salvation, no resurrection, no eternal life, no fellowship with God, no reuniting with loved ones in heaven, cf. 15:12-19).

“LET US EAT, AND DRINK, FOR TOMORROW WE DIE” This was the motto of the Epicureans. It is also a quote from Isa. 22:13 (cf. Isa. 56:12; Luke 12:19). This is similar to the current saying, “You only go around once in life, so get all the gusto you can!” But, what if there is a resurrection? What if we do stand before a Holy God to give an account of the gift of life (cf. Dan. 12:2)!

15:33 “deceived” This is a PRESENT PASSIVE IMPERATIVE. The church at Corinth was being led astray by false theology (cf. 6:9).

“Bad company corrupts good morals” This seems to be a quote from the Greek prophet, Menander’s Thais, relating to a prostitute. Some factions at Corinth were proud of their (1) Greco-Roman heritage or (2) sexual freedom. Paul intensifies their attitudes by quoting from their own philosophers (cf. vv. 32 and 33). Paul was raised in Tarsus, which was well known for its schools of Greek philosophy. He was uniquely learned in rabbinical Judaism and secular Greek thought.

15:34
NASB “become sober-minded”
NKJV “awake to righteousness”
NRSV “come to a sober and right mind”
TEV “come back to your right senses”
NJB “wake up from your stupor as you should”

This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. This seems to mean, “come to your moral senses once and for all.”

“stop sinning” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE with a NEGATIVE PARTICLE which means to stop an act in process. It is obvious that those who denied the resurrection were also living godless lives. Paul uses their immorality as a way to show the faulty validity of their theological assertion (i.e. no resurrection).

“no knowledge of God” In English this is the term “agnostic.” This was a subtle sarcastic remark to those who revered knowledge so highly. Their theology and actions clearly showed they had no true knowledge!
15:35 “someone will say” This is Paul’s use of a literary technique called diatribe. This question/answer format is also seen in the OT in Malachi and in the NT in Romans and I John. The subject of the literary work is carried forward by a dialog between the writer and a supposed objector. Here the argument is moved on to a slightly different theme. First, some of the factious groups denied the resurrection of Christ and thereby the resurrection of all believers. Now Paul addresses those who question the form of the resurrection body.

**“with what kind of body do they come”** One source of the conflict concerning a resurrected body comes from the negative view of the physical body in some schools of Greek philosophy. The Greeks often viewed the material as evil (i.e. gnosticism) and even worse, the physical body as the prison-house of the eternal divine spark or soul within all humans. This cultural/philosophical background came into direct conflict with Paul’s Hebraic (i.e. Pharisaic) background of the affirmation of a physical, bodily after-life.

15:35-41 Paul uses a series of illustrations that show the continuity, and yet difference, between the physical body and the spiritual body.
1. seed vs. mature plant, v. 37
2. human vs. animal flesh, v. 39
3. heavenly body vs. earthly bodies, v 40
4. night lights vs. Sun light, v. 41

15:36 “You fool” There is a precedent of using this response to falsehood in the OT Hebrew:
1. kesil - which implies a self-confidence in wisdom literature (ex. Prov. 17 and 26; Eccl. 7)
2. evil - which implies a mental competence also used mostly in wisdom literature (ex. Isa. 29:11; 35:8; Hos. 9:7)
3. nabal - which implies an empty headed person (ex. Deut. 32:6,21; II Sam. 3:33; 13:13; Ps. 14:1; 53:1; Jer. 12:11)
4. sakal - which implies a thickheaded person (ex. I Sam. 26:21; Eccl. 2:19; 10:3,14)

Jesus used three words to describe foolish people.
2. anōthestos, Luke 24:25
3. mōros, Matt. 5:22; 23:17,19

The strongest statement by Jesus in regard to the use of a characterization of one person by another is in Matt. 5:22, where mōros reflects the Aramaic word raca, which means incapable of life.

Paul follows the OT and Jesus in using several terms to describe foolish people.
1. aphrôn, I Cor. 15:36; II Cor. 11:16,19; 12:6,11
2. mōros, I Cor. 3:18; 4:10 and a related form in Rom. 1:22

People who claim to know God, but think and act in inappropriate ways are often characterized as poor thinkers! Paul’s sarcastic comments, so frequent in I and II Corinthians, reveal this type of person. They were so confident that they possessed knowledge that they could not see nor recognize true knowledge!

15:37 “that which you sow does not come to life unless it dies” Paul again is following Jesus’ words (cf. John 12:24). This is the use of phenomenological language (i.e. the way things appear to the five senses). This is not meant to be a scientific statement, but an agricultural metaphor of new life from hard, seemingly dead, seeds.

The term “unless” denotes a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence, which means potential action.

**“perhaps”** This is an incomplete FOURTH CLASS CONDITIONAL (cf. 14:10). Paul is asserting the possibility of different kinds of grain seeds.

15:39-40 “another...another” The first, used four times in v. 39 and three in v. 41, is allos and the next “another” is used three times in v. 40 and is heteros. The distinction between these two was explicit in classical Greek, but almost gone in Koine Greek. In this context the distinction seems to remain:
1. *allos*, another of the same kind (cf. vv. 39,41)
2. *heteros*, another of a different kind (cf. v. 40)

15:40,41,43 “glory” See Special Topic: Glory at I Cor. 2:7.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:42-49

42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable *body*, it is raised an imperishable *body*; 43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; 44 it is sown a natural *body*, it is raised a spiritual *body*. If there is a natural *body*, there is also a spiritual *body*. 45 So also it is written, “The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL.” The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. 46 However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. 47 The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. 48 As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. 49 Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.

15:42-49 The Bible does not specifically or fully reveal the things related to the afterlife. Probably because we are not able in our fallen, temporal, earthly state to comprehend them. This paragraph discusses the resurrection body by comparing it to the earthly body. Yet, still it is not precise. All that can be said is that our new bodies will be perfectly prepared for life, fellowship, worship, and service of our God in the new age. In light of this, the exact form is irrelevant (cf. Phil. 3:21; I John 3:2).

15:42

NASB, NRSV,

NJB “perishable. . .imperishable”
NKJV “corruptible. . .incorruptible
TEV “mortal. . .immortal”

The basic meaning of this term *phtherei* is destroy, ruin, corrupt, or spoil. It can be used for
1. financial ruin (possibly II Cor. 7:2)
2. physical destruction (cf. I Cor. 3:17a)
3. moral corruption (cf. Rom. 1:23; 8:21; I Cor. 15:33,42,50; Gal. 6:8; Rev. 19:2)
4. sexual seduction (cf. II Cor. 11:3)
5. eternal destruction (cf. II Pet. 2:12,19)
6. perishing traditions of men (cf. Col. 2:22; I Cor. 3:17b)

Often this term is used in the same context as its negated opposite (cf. Rom. 1:23; I Cor. 9:25; 15:50,53). Notice the parallel contrasts between our earthly physical bodies and our heavenly eternal bodies.

1. corruptible vs. incorruptible, vv. 42,50
2. dishonor vs. glory, v. 43
3. weakness vs. power, v. 43
4. natural body vs. spiritual body, v. 44
5. first Adam vs. last Adam, v. 45
6. image of the earthly vs. image of the heavenly, v. 49


15:44 “if” The United Bible Societies’ *Handbook on Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians* says this is not a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence, but a statement of fact (cf. p. 361). However, A. T. Robertson in *Word Pictures in the New Testament* asserts that it is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL (cf. p. 197). Grammar is not a science.

15:45 “The first MAN, Adam” Jesus’ mentioning of Adam (cf. Matt. 19:4; Mark 10:6; Luke 3:38) denotes his historicity. Jesus assumed a special human creation named Adam and Eve. Paul’s use of Adam-Christ typology, both here and in Rom. 5:17-21, demands a special creation of Adam and Eve. This may be a later creation (see my commentary on Genesis 1-11, where I assert an old earth, but a relatively recent creation of Eden), but it seems to me it must be a special creation.

*“the last Adam became a life-giving spirit”* This must refer to the resurrection of Jesus. It is not meant to deny a physical aspect to Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances, but to contrast the first Adam, whose actions caused death, with the last Adam, whose actions caused life, eternal life, resurrection life!
“a life-giving spirit” This is a good example of the difficulty in some contexts of knowing if “spirit” should be a small “s” (cf. Rom. 8:9; II Cor. 3:3; Gal. 4:6; I Pet. 1:11). The Bible uses the term pneuma in several different verses. See Special Topic: Pneuma at 12:1.

15:46 This is not an ontological statement, but a temporal statement relating to the first Adam and the second Adam (cf. v. 47). Physical human life precedes spiritual life!

15:47 “the second man is from heaven” There are several additions to this phrase in the Greek manuscripts. Most of them are an attempt to accentuate that Jesus is human like Adam, but more than human. Bart D. Ehrman, The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture, pp. 94-95, thinks these changes were a result of the doctrinal controversies within the church during the period when these manuscripts were being copied. He suggests the additions were purposeful, theological clarifications on the part of orthodox scribes.

15:49 “Just as we have borne the image of the earthly” This text occurs in early Greek manuscripts P, N, A, C, D (i.e. AORIST ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE). The context seems to demand the text of the early Alexandrian manuscript B, which was, “We shall bear . . .” (i.e. FUTURE ACTIVE INDICATIVE). Both of these Greek words were pronounced similarly. The early manuscripts were often copied at one time by one man reading the text aloud and several men making written copies. Theologically the FUTURE INDICATIVE is preferable. The other verbs in context are FUTURE. It is a descriptive context, not horatory (i.e. exhortation to action).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:50-57

50Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, 52in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, “DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY 55”O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?” 56The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; 57but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

15:50 “flesh and blood” This is a metaphor for humanity (cf. Matt. 16:17; Gal. 1:16; Eph. 6:12; Heb. 2:14).

“inherit” This is a family metaphor describing our permanent fellowship with God. In the OT the Levites received no large land inheritance (only 48 Levitical cities), thus they were said to have YHWH as their inheritance. The NT transfers this (as it does many priestly activities) to all believers.

“the kingdom of God” See note at 15:24.

15:51 “mystery” See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: GOD’S PLAN FOR REDEMPTION, “MYSTERY”

God has a unified purpose for mankind’s redemption that even preceded the fall (cf. Gen. 3). Hints of this plan are revealed in the OT (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6; and the universal passages in the prophets). However, this full agenda was not clear (cf. I Cor. 2:6-8; Col. 1:26). With the coming of Jesus and the Spirit it begins to become more obvious. Paul used the term “mystery” to describe this total redemptive plan (cf. I Cor. 4:1; Eph. 6:19; Col. 4:3; I Tim. 1:9). However, he used it in several different senses:

1. A partial hardening of Israel to allow Gentiles to be included. This influx of Gentiles will work as a mechanism (jealousy) for Jews to accept Jesus as the Messiah of prophecy (cf. Rom. 11:25-32).
2. The gospel was made known to the nations, all of whom are included in Christ and through Christ (cf. Rom. 16:25-27; Col. 2:2).
3. Believers’ new bodies at the Second Coming (cf. I Cor. 15:5-57; I Thess. 4:13-18)
4. The summing up of all things in Christ (cf. Eph. 1:8-11)
5. The Gentiles and Jews are fellow-heirs (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13)
6. Intimacy of the relationship between Christ and the Church described in marriage terms (cf. Eph. 5:22-33)
7. Gentiles included in the covenant people and indwelt by the Spirit of Christ so as to produce Christlike maturity, that is, restore the marred image of God in fallen humanity (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 6:5,11-13; 9:6; Col. 1:26-28).
8. The end time Anti-Christ (cf. II Thess. 2:1-11)
9. An early church summary of the mystery is found in I Tim. 1:16

“we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed” This seems to assert that there will be Christians alive at the Second Coming (cf. I Thess. 4:13-18). Sleep is a biblical metaphor for death.

Does Paul expect to be alive at the Second Coming or is this an editorial “we” (alive at Jesus’ return, I Cor. 15:51-52; I Thess. 4:15,17 or raised at Jesus’ return, I Cor. 6:14; II Cor. 4:14; 5:1-10)? Like all NT authors and Jesus, he seems to have expected an imminent return of the glorified Christ. But only the Father knew the time (cf. Matt. 24:36; Mark 13:32; Acts 1:7). Believers are to live every day in light of the hope of the Second Coming, but plan and train for kingdom activities as if it will be delayed.

15:52 “in a moment” We get the English “atom” from the Greek term, which meant “undividable.”

“in the twinkling of an eye” This is used of the blinking of a star or the rapid movement of gnats’ wings. The implication of these two terms is that Jesus’ return will occur very rapidly once it begins. No time for last minute prayers.

“at the last trumpet” This was an OT way of announcing the end-time events by means of the shophar (i.e. left ram’s horn, cf. Isa. 27:13; Zech. 9:13; Matt. 24:31; I Thess. 4:16). It is surely possible that the trumpet was a metaphor for the voice of God (cf. Exod. 19:16,19; 20:18; Rev. 1:10), also used of prophets’ voices (cf. Isa. 58:1; Heb. 12:19).

15:54 This is a reference to Isa. 25:8, which is also alluded to in Matt. 5:11; I Pet. 4:14; Rev. 7:17; 21:4. Verses 54 and 55 are obviously Paul’s way of taunting mankind’s last great enemy—death, which has been completely vanquished in Christ’s resurrection from the dead and His followers having been freed from sin’s penalty and awaiting a certain resurrection themselves.

15:55 This is a reference to Hosea 13:14, which reverses the order by quoting the Septuagint. Most OT quotes in the NT are from the Greek translation of the OT. It was the Bible of the first century church.

15:56 In this verse Paul is asserting humanity’s broken relationship with God caused by sin (cf. Gen. 3). This rebellion has caused us to feel estranged from the very One who made us for Himself.

Sin entered the world through a willful act of disobedience. The term “law” does not refer to the Mosaic Law, but to God’s prohibitions in general. We are corrupt, but God has chosen to restore fellowship through Christ. What sin destroyed, Christ restores (i.e. permanent fellowship with God; the marred image is repaired).

15:57 “thanks be to God” This reminds me of Paul’s cry in Rom. 6:17 and 7:25. It foreshadows Paul’s great metaphor of a Roman triumphal march in II Cor. 2:14, as well as his outburst of gratitude in II Cor. 9:15. See Special Topic: Paul’s Praise, Prayer, and Thanksgiving at II Cor. 2:14.

“victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” All spiritual victory comes through Christ and Christ alone!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:58

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.

15:58 Paul concludes this tremendous theological discussion of the resurrection with a practical pastoral encouragement for the need for consistency and perseverance in our daily Christian lives. There is one PRESENT IMPERATIVE followed by two PARTICIPLES used as IMPERATIVES. It will be worth it all when we see Him and are welcomed into the eternal Kingdom!
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. List the four aspects of the Christian life found in vv. 1 and 2.
2. List the main tenets of the gospel found in vv. 3 and 4.
3. Why did Paul consider himself to be the least of the Apostles?
4. What was the basis of the members of the church at Corinth denying the resurrection.
5. What is the Adam-Christ typology?
6. What does it mean to baptize for the dead?
7. Will our resurrection bodies be humanoid?
I CORINTHIANS 16

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

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<thead>
<tr>
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READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.
INTRODUCTION

A. Chapter 15 is a highly developed theological argument dealing with the reality of resurrection, while chapter 16 is related to daily practical Christianity. Paul has no problem moving between truth and life. They must be held together. This type of sudden shift from one to the other characterizes Paul’s writings.

B. Brief Outline:
   1. vv. 1-4, collection for Judean poor
   2. vv. 5-9, tentative travel plans to Corinth
   3. vv. 10-12, other Christian workers
   4. vv. 13-18, final admonitions
   5. vv. 19-24, closing greetings

C. Paul’s relationship with Aquila and Prisca:
   1. They were Jewish tent makers (or leather workers) in Rome. Claudius’ edict of A.D. 49-50, which banned all Jewish worship practices (which at this period included church activities), forced them to move.
   3. They later moved to Ephesus and began a house church, I Cor. 16:19.
   4. They moved back to Rome after Claudius died in A.D. 54 and the edict was rescinded, Rom. 16:6.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:1-4

1Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. 2On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come. 3When I arrive, whomever you may approve, I will send them with letters to carry your gift to Jerusalem; 4and if it is fitting for me to go also, they will go with me.

16:1 “Now concerning” “Peri de” is a Greek phrase which introduces Paul’s answers to questions which the Corinthian church had sent Paul (cf. 7:1,25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1,12).

“the collection” Logia is a term which has been found in the Greek papyri in Egypt as a gift of money for a religious purpose, but not related to a regular tax (cf. Moulton, Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament, p. 377). It is uncertain if in this context it refers to a regular gift or extra gift to the church. Paul began this concern for the poor in Judea from a conversation with James, Peter, John, and Barnabas in Gal. 2:10; 6:10. This specific offering was begun by the church at Antioch where Paul and Barnabas served, Acts 11:27-30. This offering is mentioned in several NT books (cf. Rom. 15:26; II Cor. 8-9; I Cor. 16:1). It was an attempt to seal the relationship between the Hebrew mother church and the Gentile churches.

Paul calls this one-time contribution by several names.
1. alms giving, Acts 24:17
2. fellowship, Rom. 15:26;27; II Cor. 8:4; 9:13
3. an indebtedness, Rom. 15:27
4. service, Rom. 15:27; II Cor. 9:12

“for the saints” “Saints” (hagioi) is from the OT term “holy,” (kadosh) which meant “set apart for God’s service” (cf. I Cor. 1:2; II Cor. 1:1; Rom. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:2). It is always PLURAL in the NT except for one time in Philippians (4:21), but even there, it is used corporately. To be saved is to be part of the covenant community of faith, the family of believers.

God’s people are holy because of the imputed righteousness of Jesus (cf. Rom. 4; II Cor. 5:21). It is God’s will that they live holy lives (cf. 1:4; 4:1; 5:27; Col. 1:22; 3:12). Believers are both declared holy (positional sanctification) and called to lifestyle holiness (progressive sanctification). Justification and sanctification must be firmly held together! See Special Topic: Saints at I Cor. 1:2.

“as I directed the churches of Galatia” Paul was not treating the church at Corinth differently. There was a standard procedure (cf. 4:17; 7:17; 11:34; 14:33; Titus 1:5) in this offering. We do not know how Paul communicated this to the Galatian churches. As a matter of fact we are not sure to which churches this term refers. Some think this refers to the Roman province while others think it is to a language group.
16:2 “On the first day of every week” This pattern of worship was set by Jesus’ early post-resurrection appearances on Sunday night (cf. John 20:19,20). It developed into the regular worship day for the assembled church (cf. Acts 20:7; Rev. 1:10). Sunday was the first work day of the week up until the time of Constantine (Emperor of the Roman Empire from A.D. 306-337). The Christians met before work on Sundays for worship, preaching, and the Lord’s Supper.

The Jewish leaders reorganized after the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and inaugurated several reforms. One of them was an oath which cursed and rejected Jesus as the Messiah. The early believers met with the synagogue on the Sabbath and with the church on Sunday. However, this oath forced a split and believers made Sunday their designated worship day.

“each one of you is to put aside and save” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE followed by a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE used as an IMPERATIVE. This text seems to imply that as the first of the week came, each individual put an offering in a safe place at home, later to be taken to the church. However, the fact that it was on Sunday implies that they deposited the funds collected daily at the weekly worship service (cf. Justin Martyr, Apology 1.67-68). Notice that this brief verse combined with II Cor. 8 and 9 gives us the basic guidelines for NT giving: (1) regularly; (2) as a priority; (3) voluntarily; (4) joyfully; and (5) proportionally.

It is surprising that NT authors do not discuss regular Christian giving. Paul’s words of encouragement and procedure for the one-time gift of the Gentile churches to the mother church in Jerusalem are the only guidelines related to this subject. Christians realized that they were owners of nothing and stewards of all their resources. This understanding supercedes the OT concept of “tithing.” It is surely true that you can tell a person’s priorities by his checkbook and his calendar! Christian giving is an issue of an overflowing heart, not a calculator!

NASB, NKJV “as he may prosper”
NRSV “whatever extra you can”
TEV “in proportion to what you have earned”
NJB “as much as each can spare”

This is literally “whatever if he may be prospered” (A. T. Robertson, Word Pictures In the New Testament, says, “it is uncertain what grammatical form eudotai is, PRESENT PASSIVE SUBJUNCTIVE, PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE, or even PERFECT PASSIVE SUBJUNCTIVE” p. 200). This was a Greek idiom wishing one a happy, successful journey (for commercial purposes). Paul is using it as a principle of Christian giving (i.e. according to your ability, cf. II Cor. 8:3,11).

“so that no collection be made when I come” Paul was always cautious about the proper handling of money. Probably he had (1) seen problems develop in this area or (2) been personally accused in this area. He will take no money from the churches he is currently working with and also when this gift is taken to Jerusalem he wants representatives of the various churches to accompany him. He is not even sure he will go himself (cf. v. 4).

16:3 “whomever you approve, I will send them with letters to carry your gift” This verse is an interesting mixture of apostolic authority and congregational authority. It has been debated as to which one wrote the letters of recommendation, Paul or the church (cf. Acts 18:27). Both are grammatically possible. The King James Version and RSV assume it was the church while the Williams NT, TEV, NIV, NJB, and REB assume Paul. Paul wants the church to pick out representatives to accompany the offering lest he be accused of wrong motives, as he so often was by this church (cf. 9:3-18).

Paul often wrote letters of recommendation for his co-workers (cf. Rom. 16:1; II Cor. 3:1; 8:18-24; and other examples, Acts 9:2; 22:5; III John). Paul uses this concept metaphorically in II Cor. 3:1 in the sense that his functioning churches were his letter of recommendation. Apparently the Apostle John also employed this same type of letter (cf. III John 9). In a sense this was the method by which early churches affirmed their itinerant gospel ministers.

16:4 “if” This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence, which meant potential action.

NASB “it is fitting for me to go”
NKJV “it is fitting that I go”
NRSV “it seems advisable”
TEV “it seems worthwhile”
NJB “it is worth my going”

This seems to relate to (1) the size of the offering; (2) the one who started this offering accompanying it; or (3) Paul’ wanting this church, which had such problems with his authority, to recognize his proper role and trustworthiness.
16:5-9 Paul was writing from Ephesus on his third missionary journey. He was later attacked by a group within the church at Corinth because of his supposed “fickle” travel plans (cf. II Cor. 1:15ff). He first was going to take the sea route to Corinth and then pass through Macedonia, but since he wanted to stay longer, he decided to go by land route through Macedonia first and then to Corinth. He stayed the winter there (cf. Acts 20:2,3). Some in the church used Paul’s indecision in his travel plans to attack his theology (i.e. gospel).

16:6 “so that you may send me on my way wherever I may go” The verb propempō is used as a technical term for supplying the travel needs of God’s itinerant ministers (cf. v. 11, “send him on,” cf. Acts 15:3; Romans 15:24; II Corinthians 1:16; Titus 3:13; III John 6).

16:7 “if the Lord permits” This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence, which means potential action. This was not a trite phrase with the NT Christians. They believed their steps were providentially guided by the Lord (cf. Acts 18:21; I Cor. 4:19; James. 4:14; Heb. 6:3).

16:8 “Pentecost” This term usually means “fiftieth.” It refers to the wheat harvest festival (i.e. Feast of Weeks, cf. Num. 28:26) of the Jews that occurred 50 days after the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (i.e. Nisan 16). In this context it seems it is used as a method of dating Paul’s travel plans and not asserting that Paul still kept these Jewish feast days.

16:9 NASB, NKJV, NRSV “for a wide door for effective service has opened to me” TEV “There is a real opportunity here for great and worthwhile work” NJB “a very promising door is standing wide open to me”

This is a PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE. The use of the term “door” as a metaphor for opportunity is common in the NT (cf. Acts 14:27; II Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3; Rev. 3:8).

鼻 there are many adversaries” God’s opportunities are often accompanied by opposition. For the specific historical setting read Acts 19:19-20; 20:19,23.

16:10-11

10Now if Timothy comes, see that he is with you without cause to be afraid, for he is doing the Lord’s work, as I also am. 11So let no one despise him. But send him on his way in peace, so that he may come to me; for I expect him with the brethren.

16:10 “if” This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence meaning potential action. It seems that Paul had already sent Timothy and Erastus (cf. Acts 19:22), and possibly Titus (cf. II Cor. 2:13; 7:6,7) on to Corinth by the land route. He was sending his letter by sea and it would arrive quicker.

鼻 see that he is with you without cause to be afraid” Paul puts this in the form of a command (i.e. PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE). He knew personally how unloving the church could be. He did not want his young assistant to be slighted because of (1) his age; (2) his personality; or (3) their anger toward Paul (cf. v. 11).

16:11 NASB, NKJV, NRSV “So let no one despise him” TEV “No one should look down on him” NJB “nobody is to underrate him”

This is an AORIST ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE, which literally means “to make absolute nothing of” (cf. 1:28; I Tim. 4:12; Titus 2:15).
“with the brethren” We are not sure who this involved. It may possibly be Erastus (cf. Acts 19:22, and Titus, II Cor. 2:13; 7:6-7), but who else, if anyone, is uncertain.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:12**

12 But concerning Apollos our brother, I encouraged him greatly to come to you with the brethren; and it was not at all his desire to come now, but he will come when he has opportunity.

16:12 “But concerning” This is another answer to a question asked by the Corinthian church (cf. 7:1,25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1,12).

“Apollos” This was a highly educated and eloquent preacher from Alexandria, Egypt. He was in Corinth earlier (cf. Acts 18:24-19:1), but he refused to go back (cf. 16:12).

“and it was not at all his desire to come now” The text can be interpreted in two ways: (1) it was not Apollos’ will to come or (2) it was not God’s will for him to come. From this verse it seems that Apollos had left Ephesus between the time Paul talked to him and the writing of this letter.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:13-14**

13Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. 14Let all that you do be done in love.

16:13-14 This is a series of five PRESENT IMPERATIVES. They are very similar to the practical admonitions of 15:58. The first four are THIRD PERSON PLURAL and have a military background. The last is SECOND PERSON SINGULAR and seems to address the corporate church.

16:13

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<tr>
<td>NASB</td>
<td>“Be on the alert”</td>
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<tr>
<td>NKJV</td>
<td>“watch”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRSV</td>
<td>“keep alert”</td>
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<tr>
<td>TEV</td>
<td>“be alert”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NJB</td>
<td>“be vigilant”</td>
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This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. Its basic meaning is to awake, used in the sense of “watch out” (cf. Matt. 24:42; 25:13; 26:38,40,48; Mark 13:35,37; 14:34,37,38). Paul is admonishing them to be alert and watchful against a factious spirit, heresy, debauchery, and pride!

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<tr>
<td>NASB, TEV</td>
<td>“stand firm in the faith”</td>
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<tr>
<td>NKJV</td>
<td>“stand fast in the faith”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRSV</td>
<td>“stand firm in your faith”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NJB</td>
<td>“stay firm in the faith”</td>
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This is another PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. This is a military term for holding one’s position. “In the faith” refers to Christian truth or Christian doctrine (cf. Jude vv. 3, 20).

See Special Topic: Stand (Histami) at 15:1.

“keep on acting like men” This is a PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) IMPERATIVE. This is the only NT use of the term. It is the verb form of the term ἀνὴρ, which meant a mature man or a husband. It appears in the LXX in Josh. 1:6. It is not generic (i.e. referring only to males), but encourages the whole church to act appropriately as mature and brave believers.

“be strong” This is a PRESENT PASSIVE IMPERATIVE. This term (κραταιοῦ) in the PASSIVE voice is used several times in the NT in different senses.

2. believers strengthened by the Holy Spirit. Eph. 6:16
3. believers to be firm or resolute in their faith in the face of the internal struggles in the Corinthian church, I Cor. 16:13

16:14 “Let all that you do be done in love” Notice “all” is fronted in the Greek text for emphasis. In a religious and cultural situation as dynamic, diverse, and problematic as Corinth, love is crucial. This is another PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) IMPERATIVE. Orthodoxy and orthopraxy without love is not God’s will or way (cf. 14:1)! It is hard to realize that the means (for Christians) is as crucial as the ends.
Now I urge you, brethren (you know the household of Stephanas, that they were the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves for ministry to the saints), that you also be in subjection to such men and to everyone who helps in the work and labors. I rejoice over the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have supplied what was lacking on your part. For they have refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men.

16:15 “I urge you” This goes with v. 16. Paul has inserted a parenthetical thought about the household of Stephanas.

“brethren” The NRSV has “brothers and sisters,” which is Paul’s intent to address the entire church. Paul uses this word in his letters to introduce a new subject or a development of his presentation.

“the household of Stephanas” These early converts (i.e. first fruits) were apparently leaders in the local church. Paul mentions other early believers in Acts 17:34.

The concept of “households” converting all at once when the head of the family converts (cf. Cornelius, Acts 11:14-17; Lydia, Acts 16:14-15; Philippian jailer, Acts 16:31-33) is often difficult for evangelicals who emphasize individual conversions. Yet the culture is crucial in understanding not only how family faith works, but also tribal faith. God is not limited to or unduly impressed by modern western individualism! This is so painful for our parochial thinking and dogmatism.

The concept of “household” conversions is used by denominations to affirm infant baptism. Usually Israel’s circumcision rites are also noted as incorporating eight-day old children into the family of Israel. Probably biblically the beginning must be viewed from the end. True faith grows, repents, believes, obeys, and perseveres. True faith is seen by its fruits, not only its initiating rites (cf. v. 16b and James and I John).

“they devoted themselves for ministry” This is a very interesting phrase. The term “devoted” is tassō, which usually means “to appoint.” Faith, true faith, sees its purpose in service! To understand the gospel demands a willingness to give ourselves away in service for others as Jesus gave Himself away for us (cf. I John 3:16). This is the normal development of faith, not the exceptional. As the factions (i.e. Corinthian elite) pursued self-interest, self-promotion, self-direction, true faith pursues love (cf. 14:4; 16:14). Believers are saved and gifted for the Great Commission (cf. Matt. 28:19-20) and the common good of the body of Christ, the church (cf. 12:7).

Stephanas and his household decided to use their resources for the kingdom. If Stephanas was a wealthy member of the elite social class then his actions modeled Paul’s teachings. He became the model for other wealthy elite members of the church (cf. Bruce W. Winter, After Paul Left Corinth, pp. 184-205).


“saints” See Special Topic: Saints at I Cor. 1:2.

16:16 “that you also be in subjection to such men” This is a PRESENT PASSIVE SUBJUNCTIVE. “Subjection” (hupotassō) is a military term for aligning oneself within a chain of command. In Paul’s letters to the Corinthians it is used of

1. the spirits of prophets in subject to prophets, 14:32
2. all things subject to Jesus, 15:27
3. Jesus subject to the Father, 15:28
4. believers subject to godly leaders, 16:16

There may be a word play between leaders “devoted themselves to service” (from tassō) and “believers submitting themselves (hupo plus tassō) to the godly leaders” (cf. II Cor. 9:12-13). See Special Topic: Submission at II Cor. 9:13.

This church had problems in the area of the proper treatment and respect of its true leaders (cf. v. 18; I Thess. 5:12; Heb. 13:17). Clement of Rome’s letter, written to this same church 40 years later, shows that they still had the same problem.

16:17 “Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus” Some have asserted that the last two names, of whom we hear nothing else in the NT, were members of Stephanas’ family. Some assert that they were all three slaves, but this cannot be substantiated. They seem to have brought the letter from the Corinthian church to Paul. Paul had received some information about the church from Chloe’s people. Clement of Rome wrote to Corinth about 40 years later and he mentions a presbyter named Fortunatus.

“they have supplied what was lacking on your part” This phrase sounds negative in English, but it is not meant that way. Their report brought Paul news from this church which he loved, even with all of its problems (cf. v. 24). They functioned as the churches’ representatives to Paul. Exactly what they did for Paul, besides bring him joy (cf. v. 18) with their presence, is uncertain.
16:18 “my spirit and yours” It is obvious from the context Paul is using “spirit” as a way of referring to himself (cf. 2:11; 5:4; II Cor. 2:13; 7:13; Rom. 1:9; 8:16; Phil. 4:23).

NASB, NKJV “acknowledge such men”
NRSV “So give recognition to such persons”
TEV “Such men as these deserve notice”
NJB “you should appreciate people like them”

This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE of “ginásko” in the sense of acknowledge (cf. II Cor. 3:2) or to know so as to accept (cf. I Cor. 8:3).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:19-20

19 The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Prisca greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. 20 All the brethren greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

16:19 “The churches of Asia” This refers to the first century Roman province of the western one-third of the modern country of Turkey.

“Aquila and Prisca” Aquila was a Jewish tentmaker (or leather worker), like Paul. All Jews, even Rabbis, were taught a trade so that they would not take money for their teaching. Aquila’s wife, Priscilla or Prisca, is listed first four times out of the six that they are mentioned (cf. Acts 18:2,18,26; Rom. 16:3; I Cor. 16:19; II Tim. 4:19). Many have noticed that her name was a Roman noble name (gens Prisca). Since she is mentioned first, which is highly unusual for Jewish people, many have seen in them a great love story of a Roman wealthy lady and an itinerant Jewish tentmaker!

The Textus Receptus has Priscilla, which is her name in Acts 18:2,18,26. It also appears in Rom. 16:3 and here. This follows the Greek manuscripts A, C, D, F, G, K, L, the Syriac translations, and most later minuscule manuscripts. However, Paul calls her Prisca, which is found in manuscripts P46, N, B, M, and the Vulgate and Coptic translations.

“the church that is in their house” The early church had no buildings. They met in homes. This was because of (1) lack of money; (2) need for secrecy, since Christianity became an illegal religion in the Roman Empire at a very early time; or (3) the need for an appearance of legality since the early churches organized like Roman social societies. The house church concept begins in Acts 2:46; 5:4. It is continued and developed in Romans 16:5,23, Col. 4:15; Philem. 2.

“all the brethren greet you” This obviously refers to the whole church, not just the males.

16:20 “Greet one another with a holy kiss” This form of public greeting (kissing on one or both cheeks) and sign of fellowship can be seen in the OT in Exod. 4:27. It can be seen in the Gospels in Mark 14:45. It became standardized in the early church (cf. Rom.16:16; II Cor. 13:12; I Thess. 5:26; I Pet. 5:14), which followed the pattern of the Synagogue. Men kissed men and women kissed women. It came to be abused by some Christians and misunderstood by unbelievers and was dropped by the early church. However, it still continues on special occasions in the Eastern Church. Its modern equivalent would be a warm handshake or hug.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:21-24

21 The greeting is in my own hand—Paul. 22 If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed. Maranatha. 23 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. 24 My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

16:21 “The greeting is in my own hand Paul” This was the common practice of Paul after dictating his correspondence. It was a way of assuring its genuineness (cf. Gal. 6:11; II Thess. 2:2; 3:17; Col. 4:18; Philem. 19).

16:22 “if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence. Apparently some in the Corinthian church did not love the Lord!

“does not love” This is the Greek word “phileo.” Paul does not use this term for love very often (I Cor. 16:22 and Titus 3:15). Because of this, many have assumed that he is quoting a hymn or liturgical formula. It is the same root as “kiss” (philáma), “Phileo” in Koine Greek became synonymous with “agape” (cf. John 5:20; 16:27), but at times there can still be a contextual distinction (cf. John 21:15-17).
**“accursed” “Anathema”** is a Greek word which reflects the Hebrew term “herem” or something dedicated to God, which then becomes holy and must be destroyed (ex. Jericho in Josh. 6:17-19). It came to be used in the sense of a divine curse (cf. Acts 22:12,14; Rom. 9:31; I Cor. 12:3; 16:22; Gal. 1:8-9). This strong statement may reflect the presence of the false teachers at Corinth (cf. 12:3). It is possible that it reflects a current practice in Corinth. See note on the term at 12:3.

**“Maranatha”** This is an Aramaic phrase which reflects an early Palestinian church’s theological liturgical affirmation of (1) Jesus’ deity (Ps. 110) or (2) Jesus’ Second Coming (Acts 3:19-21). Its meaning depends on how one divides the word:

1. “Our Lord, come” (i.e. marana-tha) would be the meaning of a similar IMPERITIVAL phrase in Rev. 22:20. Therefore, most translations assume that meaning here. If so, then it would be a prayer for Jesus’ return.
2. “Our Lord has come” (i.e. maran-atha) would be an Aramaic PERFECT. This is the translation that Chrysostom (A.D. 345-407) preferred, which speaks of Jesus’ Incarnation.
3. “Our Lord is coming” would reflect a Hebraic prophetic PERFECT, which is used by many to assume a motive for Christian service. The Second Coming has always been an encouragement for believers in every age.
4. The Didache (written in the late first century or second century) 10:6, uses this same phrase in the context of the Lord’s Supper where Jesus’ current presence and future, eschatological coming are both emphasized in prayers.

16:23 **“the grace of the Lord Jesus”** The first step in interpreting the Bible is to establish the original wording. A helpful resource for this is the United Bible Societies’ *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, by Bruce M. Metzger. To show how helpful it can be let me quote the paragraph on this verse.

“The Textus Receptus, following Ν*: A C D F G K L M most minuscules, including 6 424 920 1739, it* g f syr*b cop* a ko arm eth, reads Ἰησοῦ Ἡρωδοῦ. The shorter reading Ἰησοῦ, which is supported by Ν* B 2 33 35 226 356 442 823 1611 1908 2002 vg goth ab, is to be preferred. In view of the presence of the longer reading in other Pauline benedictions (Ro 16.24; 2 Cor 13.13; Ga 6.18; Php 4.23; 1 Th 5.28; 2 Th 3.18; Phm 25), as well as the natural proclivity of scribes to expand the sacred name, it is perhaps remarkable that any witnesses should have resisted such pressures” (p. 570).

16:24 **“My love be with you all”** This is one of the rare expressions of Paul’s personal love. Notice his expressed love to all in a church which had been so factious and hateful.

**“Amen”** See note at 14:16.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. List the questions which the Church at Corinth had written to Paul.
2. What were the different sources of Paul’s information about current conditions in the Corinthian Church?
4. Why was Paul so interested in the contribution to the Church at Jerusalem?
5. Why did Paul still keep the Jewish feast days after he was saved?
6. How is 16:15 reconciled with Acts 17:34?
7. Who were Aquila and Prisca?
8. Why did Paul use an Aramaic phrase in a letter to a Greek church?
INTRODUCTION TO II CORINTHIANS

OPENING STATEMENTS

A. This book, more than any other letter of Paul, shows us the heart and mind of the Apostle to the Gentiles. It is the closest we have to his spiritual/pastoral autobiography.

B. This book may be Paul’s most accomplished rhetorical work. Raymond E. Brown, An Introduction to the New Testament, says, “it may well be the most oratorically persuasive of all Paul’s writings” p. 541. However, this was done to refute the Sophists who had come to Corinth and attacked Paul’s public speaking methods as well as his content (i.e. his attack on wisdom in I Cor. 1-4).

SPECIAL TOPIC: SOPHISTS

The Greek word sophia means wisdom. The related term sophistēs came to denote someone “skilled” or “educated in rhetoric.” It usually denoted a public speaker, often itinerant, who came to a town and tried to start a school to train the children of the elite class. This public speaking is what caused the parents to seek them out for private lessons or schooling of their children.

There was a tremendous competition between these “wise men” related to their reputations and ability to attract students. There was even a set of guidelines for their initial speaking opportunities. One of these set procedures was a time for the philosopher to list his qualifications and strength.

Paul’s problems at Corinth seem to be related to
1. factions in the Church, each claiming to follow a particular teacher (I Cor. 1-4)
2. Hellenistic-trained Jewish false teachers from Jerusalem (II Cor. 10-13)

Paul’s disclaimer of “wisdom” in I Cor. 1-4 set the stage for his being attacked by those who gloried in their philosophical, rhetorical training and judged all others in light of these criteria. It is surprising that Jewish teachers would have gloried in philosophical categories, but a precedent is set in Judaism by Philo of Alexandria and possibly even the training and background of Apollos of Alexandria.

Paul was not a polished public speaker. He was attacked for this. He retaliates by writing polished, balanced, well-constructed, rhetorical form in II Cor. 10-13. He uses their terms, their forms and exposes their improper attitudes and arrogance.

C. This book is a strange combination, like Paul himself, of spiritual highs and lows, of free-flowing emotions ranging from anger to great joy.

D. This book is truly a letter and as a letter it is only one half of a conversation. Many of the logical antecedents and circumstances behind Paul’s responses have been lost. This is a good example of the truth that the epistles of the New Testament were originally written as correspondence to specific needs, not independent theological dissertations.

E. This book has been neglected by scholarship and in preaching. This is unfortunate because it is the source of Paul’s most definitive discussion on suffering in the Christian life.

F. For pastors, this book offers insightful guidelines on how to deal with problems within local churches. Paul gives us all an example to follow amidst personal attacks and misunderstandings.

AUTHOR

A. Even amidst all of the modern denials of the traditional authorship of biblical books, this book has never been denied to Paul.
B. It is so autobiographical and so difficult to understand some of its phrases that the possibility of someone trying to mimic Paul by writing a book like this is highly improbable. The difficulty and specificity of the letter speak of its genuineness. It is true that many NT scholars think that II Corinthians is a composite letter combining several separate letters of Paul into one. I hold to its unity because
1. There is no hint of disunity in any of the ancient Greek manuscripts.
   a. No variations of the literary units
   b. No manuscript which does not contain all thirteen chapters.
2. Although II Cor. 13 was apparently unknown to Clement of Rome in A.D. 96, it is quoted by Polycarp in A.D. 105.
3. The book is understandable as a unit. There seem to be certain themes which show its unity, such as “suffering.”
4. The internal evidence is too limited to defend a radical dissection of II Corinthians.

C. Paul is stated to be the author in 1:1 and 10:1.

**DATE**

A. The date of II Corinthians is inseparably linked to I Corinthians and the book of Acts.

B. Acts 18:1-18 and 20:2-3 relate Paul’s being in Corinth, but there also seems to have been at least one unrecorded trip (II Corinthians 2:1; with a third visit mentioned in 12:14; 13:1-2).

C. The major question is the time relationship between Paul’s visits and his letters to Corinth.

D. The real problem with dating the events related to Corinth is that we have no external evidence or information between Acts 18:1-18 and Acts 20:2-3, except the ambiguous internal evidence of the Corinthian letters themselves.

E. Paul’s contacts with the Corinthian Church—A proposed reconstruction

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<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>VISIT</th>
<th>LETTER</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.D. 52</td>
<td>Gallio was proconsul from A.D. 52 (cf. Acts 18:12-17)</td>
<td>a. I Cor. 5:9-11 seems to refer to a letter about an immoral situation in the church. This letter is unknown unless: (1) as some suppose, that II Cor. 6:14-7:1 is part of it or (2) that II Cor. 2:3,4,9 are epistolary aorists and refer to II Corinthians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.D. 56 (Spring)</td>
<td>Paul hears about problems in the church while he is in Ephesus from two sources: (1) Chloe’s people, I Cor. 1:11 and (2) Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, I Cor. 16:17. They apparently brought a letter from the Corinthian house churches containing questions</td>
<td>b. Paul answers these questions (cf. I Cor. 7:1,25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1,2) by writing I Corinthians. Timothy (cf. I Cor. 4:17) takes the response from Ephesus (cf. I Cor. 16:8) to Corinth. Timothy was not able to solve the problems in the church.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A.D. 56 (Winter) or A.D. 57 (Winter)</td>
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<td>b.</td>
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c. Paul made an emergency, painful visit to Corinth (not recorded in Acts, cf. II Cor. 2:1). It was not successful, but he vowed to return.

d. Paul planned to meet Titus in Troas, but Titus did not come, so Paul went to Macedonia (cf. II Cor. 2:13; 7:5,13), possibly Philippi (cf. MSS B', K, L, P).

e. Paul’s last recorded visit to Corinth seems to be referred to in Acts 20:2-3. Although it does not mention Corinth by name, it is assumed. He stayed there during the winter months.

A.D. 57-58 (Winter)

c. Paul wrote a severe letter (cf. II Cor. 2:3-4,9; 7:8-12) to the Corinthian house churches which was delivered by Titus (cf. II Cor. 2:13; 7:13-15). This letter is unknown, unless, as some suppose, part of it is in II Cor. 10-13.

d. He found Titus and heard that the church had responded to his leadership and he then wrote II Corinthians in great thanksgiving (cf. 7:11-16). It was delivered by Titus.

e. The marked mood change exists between chapters 1-9 and 10-13.
This is explained by some scholars: (1) more bad news (itinerant false teachers from Jerusalem) from the Corinthian house churches after Paul had written chapters 1-9 (F. F. Bruce) or (2) chapters 1-9 are Paul’s message to the faithful believers in Corinth, while chapters 10-13 are Paul’s message to the rebellious believers in Corinth (from J. W. MacGorman).

HOW MANY LETTERS DID PAUL WRITE TO CORINTH?

A. Just two, I and II Corinthians
B. Three, with one letter being lost
C. Four, with two lost letters
D. Some modern scholars find the lost letters in II Corinthians
1. previous letter (I Cor. 5:9) in II Cor. 6:14-7:1
2. severe letter (II Cor. 2:3-4,9; 7:8-12) in II Cor. 10-13
E. Five, with II Cor. 10-13 being the fifth letter, sent after Titus’ report relating the further bad news
F. I hold to C (see also H. C. Thiessen, Introduction to the New Testament, p. 209)
1. previous letter—lost (I Cor. 5:9)
2. I Corinthians
3. severe letter—lost (II Cor. 2:1-11, 7:8-12)
4. II Corinthians

PAUL’S ENEMIES AT CORINTH

A. In II Corinthians the problem seems to be with several factions dominating the different house churches (not necessarily the same factions as in I Corinthians, but probably).
1. a group of believers supporting traditional Roman culture and customs
2. a group of believers supporting traditional Greek rhetorical training
3. a group of believers supporting traditional Jewish culture and customs
4. a group of believers from the powerless and the disenfranchised of society

B. The arrival of Jewish troublemakers from Palestine caused additional controversy (cf. II Cor. 10-13). They are different from the Judaziers of Galatians and the Jewish/Greek legalists of Colossians. They were probably rhetorically trained, charismatic teachers, similar to Apollos.

C. Here are some of the charges leveled against Paul to which he responds.
1. Paul was fickle (i.e. his travel plans changed, cf. 1:15ff).
2. Paul was a powerful writer, but weak in personal speech (cf. 10:10).
3. Paul was not a polished orator (cf. 10:10; 11:6).
5. Paul was not a true Apostle (cf. 11:5,13; 12:4).
6. Paul was not an orthodox Jew (cf. 11:21ff).
7. Paul did not have direct revelation and spiritual visions as they had (cf. 12:1ff).

OCCASION AND PURPOSE OF II CORINTHIANS

A. Thankfulness for the church’s positive response to Paul’s leadership (cf. 2:12,13; 7:11-16)

B. Preparation for Paul’s third visit (cf. 10:1-11). His second was apparently painful and unsuccessful. The changed emotional tone of chapters 10-13 is obvious. Some have asserted that it is the result of several of Paul’s letters to the church at Corinth being combined into II Corinthians. It is also possible that Paul wrote these after he heard about a new outbreak of opposition within the Corinthian fellowship. It is an emotional addendum.

C. Refuting the itinerant Jewish false teachers (cf. 10-12) who had rejected Paul’s:
1. person
2. motives
3. authority
4. delivery style
5. gospel message

POSSIBLE LITERARY UNITS

A. Outlining this book is extremely difficult because of:
1. mood swings
2. variety of subjects
3. extended parentheses (2:14-7:1 or 7:4)
4. our limited knowledge of the local situation

B. However, there are obviously three major subject divisions:
1. Paul responds to Titus’ message and relates his travel plans, chapters 1-7 (there is a major parenthesis dealing with Paul’s apostolic ministry, 2:14-7:1 or 7:4)
2. Paul’s encouragement for the completion of the contribution for the Jerusalem church, chapters 8-9
3. Paul’s defense of his leadership, chapters 10-13

C. I affirm the unity of II Corinthians because
1. There is no hint of disunity in any of the ancient Greek manuscripts
   a. no variations of the literary units
   b. no manuscript which does not contain all thirteen chapters
2. Although II Cor. 13 was apparently unknown to Clement of Rome in A.D. 96, it is quoted by Polycarp in A.D. 105.
3. The book is understandable as a unit. There seems to be certain themes which show its unity, such as “suffering.”
4. The internal evidence is too limited to defend a radical dissection of II Corinthians.
READING CYCLE ONE (see p. vi)

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the entire biblical book at one sitting. State the central theme of the entire book in your own words.

1. Theme of entire book
2. Type of literature (genre)

READING CYCLE TWO (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” pp. vi-vii.)

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the entire biblical book a second time at one sitting. Outline the main subjects and express the subject in a single sentence.

1. Subject of first literary unit
2. Subject of second literary unit
3. Subject of third literary unit
4. Subject of fourth literary unit
5. Etc.
II CORINTHIANS 1

PARAGRAPHS DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS*

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<th>UBS⁴</th>
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<th>NRSV</th>
<th>TEV</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Greetings</td>
<td>Salutation and Thanksgiving</td>
<td>Salutation</td>
<td>Address and Greetings</td>
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<td>1:1b</td>
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<td>Comfort in Suffering</td>
<td>Paul Gives Thanks to God</td>
<td>Thanksgiving</td>
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<td>Delivered from Suffering</td>
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<td>Paul’s Sincerity</td>
<td>Recent Relations with the Church</td>
<td>The Change in Paul’s Plans</td>
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READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. vii)
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph

* Although they are not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraphs. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth, or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own distinct way. As you read the text, ask yourself which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions.

In every chapter we must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs), then compare our understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation can we truly understand the Bible. Only the original author is inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility of applying the inspired truth to their day and their lives.

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in Appendices One, Two, and Three.
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

A. II Corinthians was written about six to eighteen months after I Corinthians, following Paul’s visit in Macedonia with Titus, who reported the response of the church to Paul’s overtures (cf. 2:12-12; 7:11-16).

B. This is a very intense personal letter. Paul’s emotional state can even be observed in the grammar (i.e. lack of conjunctions and incomplete sentences).

C. Paul was being viciously attacked by a minority within the church. The minority seems to be both from the local Corinthian congregation and an itinerant Jewish group. Their charges were:
   1. Paul had impure motives, 1:12
   2. Paul was fickle, 1:15ff
   3. Paul was weak, 10:10
   4. Paul was physically ugly, 10:10
   5. Paul was not a good orator, 10:10; 11:16
   7. Paul was not a true apostle, 11:5,13; 12:4
   8. Paul was not an orthodox Jew, 11:21ff
   9. they had direct revelation, but Paul did not, 12:1ff.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:1

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother.

1:1 “Paul” Saul of Tarsus is first called Paul in Acts 13:9. It is probable that most Jews of the “diaspora” had a Hebrew name and a Greek name. If so, then Saul’s parents gave him this name but why, then, does “Paul” suddenly appear in Acts 13? Possibly (1) others began to call him by this name or (2) he began to refer to himself by the term “little” or “least.” The Greek name Paulos meant “little.” Several theories have been advanced about the origin of his Greek name: (1) the second century tradition that Paul was short, fat, bald, bow-legged, bushy eye-browed, and had protruding eyes is a possible source of the name, deriving from a non-canonical book from Thessalonica called Paul and Thekla; (2) passages where Paul calls himself the “the least of the saints” because he persecuted the Church as in Acts 9:1-2 (cf. I Cor. 15:9; Eph. 3:8; I Tim. 1:15). Some have seen this “leastness” as the origin of the self-chosen title. However, in a book like Galatians, where he emphasized his independence and equality with the Jerusalem Twelve, this rationale is somewhat unlikely (cf. II Cor. 11:5; 12:11; 15:10).

“an apostle” This is a common Greek word for “send” (i.e. apostelló). This term has several theological usages.

1. The rabbis used it as one called and sent as an official representative of another, something like our English “ambassador” (cf. II Cor. 5:20).
3. The NT used it for disciples.
   a. the original Twelve who were an inner circle of disciples (cf. Luke 6:13; Acts 1:21-22)
   b. a special group of Apostolic helpers and co-workers
      (1) Barnabas (cf. Acts 14:4,14)
      (2) Andronicus and Junias (KJV, Junia, cf. Rom. 16:7)
      (3) Apollos (cf. I Cor. 4:6-9)
      (4) James, the Lord’s brother (cf. Gal. 1:19)
      (5) Silvanus and Timothy (cf. I Thess. 2:6)
(6) possibly Titus (cf. II Cor. 8:23)
(7) possibly Epaphroditus (cf. Phil. 2:25)
c. an ongoing gift in the church (cf. I Cor. 12:28-29; Eph. 4:11)

4. Paul uses the noun as a title for himself in most of his letters as a way of asserting his God-given call and authority as Christ’s representative (cf. Rom. 1:1; I Cor. 1:1; II Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; I Tim. 1:1; II Tim. 1:1; Titus 1:1).

“by the will of God” This same introductory phrase is used in I Cor. 1:1; II Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1 and II Tim. 1:1. Paul was convinced that God had chosen him to be an Apostle. This special sense of calling started at his Damascus road conversion (cf. Acts 9:1-22; 23:3-16; 26:9-18). Paul often asserted his God-given authority and calling to affirm his writings as being uniquely from God (i.e. inspired, cf. II Tim. 3:16; I Cor. 2:9-13; 1 Thess. 2:13).

“Christ” This is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew term messiah, which meant “an anointed one.” It implies “one called and equipped by God for a specific task.” In the OT three groups of leaders were anointed: priests, kings, and prophets. Jesus fulfills all three of these anointed offices (cf. Heb. 1:2-3).

“Jesus” The Hebrew name meant “YHWH saves” or “YHWH brings salvation.” This name was revealed to his parents by an angel (cf. Matt. 1:21). “Jesus” is derived from the Hebrew word for salvation, hosea, suffixed to the covenant name for God, YHWH. It is the same as the Hebrew name Joshua.

The Greek manuscripts are divided as to the order of these terms:
1. Jesus Christ, A, D, G, K, L (Peshitta, KJV, NKJV)
2. Christ Jesus, P46, N, B, M, P (NASB, NRSV, TEV, NJB, NIV)

There seems to be no theological significance to the order.

“Timothy our brother” In I Cor. 1:1 “Sosthenes” is mentioned; here Timothy is named, possibly as co-worker, co-author, or scribe. Also it is possible that Paul mentioned Timothy because this church was so unresponsive to him when he delivered Paul’s letter of I Corinthians to them.

SPECIAL TOPIC: TIMOTHY

A. His name means “one who honors God.”
B. He was the child of a Jewish mother and a Greek father and lived in Lystra (cf. Acts 16:1). The Latin translation of Origen’s commentary on Rom. 16:21 says Timothy was a citizen of Derbe. This is possibly from Acts 20:4.
C. He was instructed in the Jewish faith (or Christian faith) by his mother and grandmother (cf. II Tim. 1:5; 3:14-15).
E. He was asked to join Paul and Silas’ missionary team on the second journey (cf. Acts 16:1-5), apparently to take over John Mark’s duties. He was confirmed by prophecy (cf. I Tim. 1:18; 4:14).
F. He was circumcised by Paul in order to work with both Jews and Greeks (cf. Acts 16:3).
G. He was a dedicated companion of Paul and became his Apostolic delegate. He is mentioned by name more than any other of Paul’s helpers (17 times in 10 letters, cf. Rom. 16:21; I Cor. 4:17; 16:10; Phil.1:1; 2:19,22; Col. 1:5; I Tim. 1:2; II Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4).
H. Paul affectionately calls him “my true child in the faith” (cf. I Tim. 1:2); “my beloved son” (cf. II Tim. 1:2); “my true child in a common faith” (cf. Titus 1:4). Also notice I Cor. 4:17.
I. Apparently he was in Rome when Paul was released from prison and may have accompanied him on his fourth missionary journey (cf. Col. 1:1; Philemon 1).
J. He is called an “apostle” in I Thess. 2:6 in the sense of an ongoing spiritual gift for the churches (cf. Eph. 4:11).
K. Two of the three Pastoral Letters are addressed to him.
L. He is last mentioned in Heb. 13:23 (but chronologically in II Tim. 1:2).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1b

To the church of God which is at Corinth with all the saints who are throughout Achaia:
1:1b “church” This is the Greek term *ekklesia*. It is from two words, “out of” and “called,” therefore, the term implies the divinely called-out ones. The early church took this word from secular use (cf. Acts 19:32,39,41) and because of the Septuagint’s use of this term for “congregation” of Israel (cf. Num. 16:3; 20:4). They used it for themselves as a continuation of the OT people of God. They were the new Israel (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 6:16; I Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6), the fulfillment of God’s worldwide mission (cf. Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 5:6).

□ “of God which is at Corinth” This phrase expresses two distinct senses about “the church.”
1. It is a local body of born again, baptized believers. Most of the places in the NT that the word *ekklesia* is used reflect this local sense.
2. It is also the universal expression of the body of Christ. This is seen in Matt. 16:18 (i.e. the first of the rare usage of this term by Jesus, cf. Matt. 18:17 [twice]); Acts 9:31 uses the singular “church” for all the local congregations in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria; and finally the use of the term in Ephesians, which is a cyclical letter to the churches of Asia Minor (cf. 1:22; 3:10,21; 5:23-32).

There is one large body of Christ made up of all believers (some now dead, some alive) and there are local expressions of that universal body.

□ “with all the saints who are throughout Achaia” This greeting shows that the letter was for a wider audience than one church, as all of Paul’s letters came to be. It may have functioned as a cyclical letter to a whole region as did Galatians and Ephesians. However, it uniquely focuses on problems at Corinth.

□ “saints” This means they have been declared holy by the work of Jesus through the agency of the Spirit (cf. 6:11). The VERB (*hagiaz*) is related to the word “holy” (*hagios*) and “saints” (i.e. “holy ones” *hagioi*). It speaks of our separation to God for service. Here it refers to our position in Him as verse 3 does, but in other places in the NT believers are to strive toward “holiness.” It is a position to be possessed. Paul encourages this factious, prideful church by calling them “saints,” in spite of their failures and sins! See Special Topic: Saints at I Cor. 1:2.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:2

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1:2 “Grace to you and peace from God” The traditional opening of Hellenistic letters was “greetings” (cf. Acts 23:26; James 1:1), not “grace.” Paul made a word play from “chairein” to “charis,” which made it uniquely Christian (cf. I Thess. 1:1; Gal. 1:3). Some assert that “peace” reflects a Hebrew term “shalom.” It is possible that Paul knew this combination of terms from the Aaronic blessing of Num. 6:24-26. Most Hellenistic letters and NT epistles begin with a prayer of thanksgiving, but because of the problems between Paul and this congregation, the opening prayer of thanksgiving is directed toward God (cf. 1:3-7).

□ “from God our Father” This puts the emphasis on intimate family interpersonal relationships (cf. Matt. 6:9). In the OT God is the father of Israel (cf. Isa. 64:8; Hos. 1-3,11). Because God is personal the best metaphors to describe His relationship with other members of the Trinity and His people are Jewish family terms. As the Father relates to Jesus in an analogous way, He relates to believers.

Both “grace” and “peace” come from the Father and the Son. The Father and Jesus are linked grammatically as one unit (i.e. one PREPOSITION, but two OBJECTS). This is a common way for NT authors to assert Jesus’ deity (cf. I Thess. 1:1; 3:11; II Thess. 1:2,12; 2:16). The use of the OT titles of God applied to Jesus is another way to assert the same truth (i.e. LORD); also an OT event “Day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (cf. v. 8), now attributed to Jesus.

□ “the Lord Jesus Christ” These terms are part of the fuller title “the Lord Jesus Christ” (cf. vv. 2,3,7,8,9,10). These three (cf. vv. 2,3,7,8,9,10) titles all have individual significance.

“Christ” is the Greek translation of the Hebrew *Messiah* (i.e. an Anointed One). It asserts Jesus’ OT title as YHWH’s promised One sent to set up the new age of righteousness. “Jesus” is the name given to the baby in Bethlehem by the angel (cf. Matt. 1:21). It is made up of two Hebrew nouns: “YHWH,” the covenant name for deity, and “salvation” (i.e. *hosea*). It is the same Hebrew name as Joshua. When used alone it often identifies the man, Jesus of Nazareth, son of Mary (ex. Matt. 1:16, 25; 2:1; 3:13,15,16). “Lord” (used in 1:1 in KJV) is the translation of the Hebrew term *adon*, which meant “owner, husband, master, or lord.” The Jews became afraid of pronouncing the sacred name YHWH lest they take it in vain and break one of the Ten Commandments. Whenever they read the Scriptures, they substituted *Adon* for YHWH. This is why our English translations use all capitals LORD for YHWH in the OT. By transferring this title (*kurios* in Greek) to Jesus, the NT authors assert His deity and equality with the Father.
NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:3-7

1:3 “Blessed” We get the English word “eulogy” from this Greek word. This term (following the Septuagint) is always used of man blessing God (cf. Luke 1:68). In Mark 14:61 is a periphrasis for the name of God (i.e. “the Blessed One”). Paul uses the term for the Father in Rom. 1:25; 9:5; II Cor. 1:3; 11:31; and Eph. 1:3.

“the God” This prayer of praise, vv. 3-11, describes God in three ways: (1) He is the Father of Jesus; (2) He is the Father of all mercy; and (3) He is the God of all comfort! The usual Greek letter form was a prayer of thanksgiving for the recipients of the letter, but in this letter the prayer of thanksgiving was directed to God.

YHWH as the Father of Yeshua (i.e. Hebrew for Jesus), is known only by revelation. No argument from philosophical necessity or design could ever give this relational theology. Be careful of “proofs” for God that are logic-based instead of Scripture based, but they do help many people who refuse to accept Scripture as truth. See Elton Trueblood, The Logic of Belief.

“the Father of mercies” There are three Greek terms which are related to “mercy” or “compassion”:
1. eleos, usually referring to feelings of mercy or piety (cf. 4:1; Rom. 9:15, which is a quote from Exod. 33:19)
2. splanchna, which refers to the supposed physical location of compassion or mercy in the lower viscera (cf. Phil. 2:1; Col. 3:12)
3. oiktirmos, to feel or express a sense of mercy or compassion at another’s condition (cf. 1:3,4-6; Rom. 12:1)
This term characterizes God’s actions and feelings toward fallen humanity. This is our great hope—the unchanging mercy and grace of God.

The NT often uses “Father” plus a GENITIVE to describe deity.
1. Father of mercies (cf. II Cor. 1:3)
2. Father of glory Eph. 1:17 (cf. Acts 7:2; I Cor. 2:8)
3. Father of all (cf. Eph. 4:6)
4. Father of spirits (cf. Heb. 12:9; Rev. 22:6)
5. Father of light (cf. James 1:17)
6. again and again in Paul’s writings, “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”

1:4-11 “comfort” This term, paraklēsis, in its different forms, is used ten times in vv. 3-11. It is the key term throughout the entire passage and also in chapters 1-9, where it is used twenty-five times. The word means “to call alongside.” It was often used in a judicial sense of an advocate who rendered legal aid, comfort, and guidance.

In this context it is used in the sense of encouragement and consolation. A related term, parakletos, is used of the Holy Spirit in John 14:16; 26; 15:26; 16:7; and of Jesus in I John 2:1. In this context it is used of the Father.

The verb form of parakaleō is used in several senses.
1. the Septuagint
   a. exhort, Deut. 3:28
   b. comfort, Gen. 24:67; 37:35; Ps. 119:50 (in a Messianic sense; Isa. 40:1; 49:13; 51:3; 61:2)
   c. have compassion, Deut. 32:36; Jdgs. 2:18; Ps. 135:14
   d. console, Isa. 35:4
   e. call, Exod. 15:13
2. Paul’s writings to Corinth
   a. exhort, I Cor. 1:10; 4:16; 14:30-31; 16:15-16; II Cor. 2:8; 5:20; 6:1; 8:4-6; 10:1
   b. comfort, cheer up, II Cor. 1:4,6; 2:7; 7:6,7,13; 13:11
   c. have compassion, console, I Cor. 4:13
   d. implore, entreat, request, I Cor. 16:12; II Cor. 9:5; 12:18

1:4 “so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction” There are two reasons stated in this context why Christians suffer: (1) so they can comfort others, v. 4 and (2) to keep us from depending on ourselves, v. 9. Believers live in a fallen world. Bad things happen; some are statistical, some are personal evil, but all can be used (not sent, but allowed) by God for our maturity and ministry (cf. Rom. 8:28-29).

The term, affliction, (i.e. thlipsis), etymologically meant “to squeeze or crush” (i.e. like processing grapes or crushing wheat to make flour), but came to be used figuratively for physical (cf. 1:6) or emotional (cf. 2:4; 11:28) trauma (cf. 4:8; 7:5).
Just a brief personal comment. It is so difficult in this book to know who Paul refers to by the plural pronouns, “we,” “us,” and “our.” It can refer to (1) himself alone; (2) him and his mission team; (3) him and the other Apostles; or (4) all believers. Only context can determine and sometimes it is ambiguous.

SPECIAL TOPIC: TRIBULATION

There needs to be a theological distinction between Paul’s use of this term (thlipsis) and John’s:

A. Paul’s usage (which reflects Jesus’ usage)
   1. problems, sufferings, evil involved in a fallen world
      a. Matt. 13:21
      b. Rom. 5:3
      c. I Cor. 7:28
      d. II Cor. 7:4
      e. Eph. 3:13
   2. problems, sufferings, evil caused by unbelievers
      a. Rom. 5:3; 8:35; 12:12
      b. II Cor. 1:4; 8:6; 7:4; 8:2,13
      c. Eph. 3:13
      d. Phil. 4:14
      e. I Thess. 1:6
      f. II Thess. 1:4
   3. problems, sufferings, evil of the end-time
      a. Matt. 24:21,29
      b. Mark 13:19,24
      c. II Thess. 1:6

B. John’s usage
   1. John makes a specific distinction between thlipsis and orgê or thumos (wrath) in Revelation. Thlipsis is what unbelievers do to believers and orgê is what God does to unbelievers
      a. thlipsis - Rev. 1:9; 2:9-10,22; 7:14
      b. orgê - Rev. 6:16-17; 11:18; 16:19; 19:15
      c. thumos - Rev. 12:12; 14:8,10,19; 15:2,7; 16:1; 18:3
   2. John also uses the term in his Gospel to reflect problems believers face in every age - John 16:33.

1:5 “the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance” Paul mentions believers as co-sufferers with Christ several times (cf. 4:10-11; Rom. 8:17; Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24). As we share His death and resurrection, so too, we share His suffering and persecution. The concept of the suffering Christian is often spoken of (cf. Rom. 8:17; Gal. 6:17; Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24; Heb. 13:13; I Pet. 2:19-23; 4:12-19). This is the norm for all Christians. This subject seems to be a unifying theme of II Corinthians. Christ’s sufficiency is also abundant and running over! Yes, believers will suffer in a fallen world for being Christian, but our God will supply our every need, physically, emotionally, and spiritually through Christ. Christ’s death and resurrection are not only for heaven, but for now also!

“abundance” Paul’s literary style in II Corinthians can be illustrated by his use of “abundance.”
   1. perissos, over and above (cf. 2:7; 9:1)
   2. perissoterês, more abundantly (cf. 2:4; 7:13)
   3. perisseuô, over and above (cf. 1:5; 3:9; 4:15; 8:2; 9:8)
   4. perisseuma, more than enough (cf. 8:13,14)
   5. perisseia, superabundance (cf. 8:2; 10:15)

When it comes to what God in Christ has done for believers, it is always “superabundant,” “extravagant,” “above and beyond”! See full note at 2:7.
1:6 “if” These are two FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentences. In this fallen world Christian leaders will be afflicted, but this provides a wealth of help and salvation to those who hear. Suffering has a divine purpose (cf. v. 7).

- “it is for your comfort and salvation” Because comfort is linked to salvation, it seems that this is following the OT sense of the term, σωτήρ, which means physical deliverance (cf. Matt. 9:22; Mark 6:56; James 5:20).

- There are several Greek manuscript variants connected to vv. 6-7. The most obvious reason is that the word “comfort” (παρακλησία) in v. 6a is confused with the very same form in 6b, which the intervening text left out. With the omission, other words are added by scribes to make the text understandable.

- “patient enduring” In the Septuagint this term was used of hope or expectation (cf. Jer. 14:8; 17:13; 50:7). In Paul’s writings it implies an “active, steadfast, voluntary endurance,” which is only produced by the sufferings caused by the gospel: being believed, being lived, and being proclaimed. There is an association in Paul’s writings between “hope” (cf. v. 7) and “patient endurance” (cf. Rom. 5:3-5; 8:25; 15:4-5; and I Thess. 1:3; I Tim. 6:11).

1:7 As believers share persecutions, as Jesus did, they also share God’s comfort, as Jesus did.

- Paul’s hope for them was:
  - NASB “firmly grounded”
  - NKJV “steadfast”
  - NRSV “unshaken”
  - TEV “never shaken”
  - NJB “secure”

This is the same term (bebaios) used in I Cor. 1:8 and II Cor. 1:21.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:8-11**

1:8 “we do not want you to be unaware, brethren” Paul uses this phrase often to introduce either new information or a conclusion (cf. Rom. 1:13; 11:25; I Cor. 10:1; 12:1; II Cor. 1:8; I Thess. 4:13).

- “our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; 9indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; 10who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us, 11you also joining in helping us through your prayers, so that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the favor bestowed on us through the prayers of many.”

1:9 “we had the sentence of death within ourselves” This is a strange statement. First, the word “sentence” is used only here in all ancient Greek writing, only later does it mean “death sentence” (cf. Josephus, Antiquities 14:10:6). Paul does not seem to be referring to a judicial decree, but to a personal sense of his impending death. This forced him and his companions to throw themselves totally on God’s help, compassion, and power.

- The verb is PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE. Some have seen this as a way of referring to a disease which Paul and his mission companion encountered, which had continuing results. However, it can be interpreted as an AORIST, the same form as in 2:13.

All of this adds up to make this phrase quite ambiguous with many different interpretations. Although the exact physical circumstances are uncertain, Paul’s spiritual meaning is clear—suffering helps believers trust more fully and completely in God, in Christ!

- “we would not trust in ourselves” As v. 4 expresses the first purpose of Christian suffering, this verse expresses the second purpose. This same truth can be seen in Paul’s “thorn in the flesh” (cf. 12:7-9). In the spiritual realm human weakness accompanied with faith releases the power of God.
“God who raises the dead” Is Paul thinking of (1) OT examples of people God brought back to physical life (cf. I Kgs. 17:17-22; II Kgs. 4:32-37); (2) OT theological statements (cf. Deut. 32:39; I Sam. 2:6; II Kgs. 5:7); or (3) his discussion of resurrection in I Cor. 15?

1:10 “He on whom we have set our hope” The pronoun refers to God the Father (cf. v. 9; I Tim. 4:10). What a wonderful descriptive title for God. Paul coins this powerful, wonderful, descriptive title for God often, such as (1) “the Father of mercies and God of all comfort” (cf. 1:3) and (2) “unto Him who is able” (cf. Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:20).

The verb is a PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE, which implies a past completed act with abiding results (cf. I Cor. 15:19; I Tim. 5:5; 6:17).

“deliver” This term is used three times in v. 10. This follows the OT sense of physical, social, emotional, spiritual deliverance. Paul used this term several times (cf. Rom. 7:24; 11:26; 15:31; II Cor. 1:10; Col. 1:13; I Thess. 1:10; II Thess. 3:2; II Tim. 3:11; 4:17-18). He really thought that he was going to die at Ephesus (cf. vv. 8-10).

NASB “from so great a peril of death”
NKJV “from so great a death”
NRSV “from so deadly a peril”
TEV “from such terrible dangers of death”
NJB “from such a death”

There is a Greek manuscript variant between the SINGULAR “so great a death” (i.e. MSS N, A, B, C, D, F, G) and the PLURAL (i.e. MS P* and the Syriac translation, as well as the Greek text used by Origen, Basil, Chrysostom, Theodoret, Jerome, and Augustine). The PLURAL (cf. TEV) is the most unusual and the most ancient. This PLURAL may be seen in Paul’s list of problems he faced internally and externally in 4:8-12; 6:3-10; 11:23-29.

1:11
NASB “joining in helping us through your prayers”
NKJV “helping together in prayer for us”
NRSV “join in helping us by your prayers”
TEV “help us by means of your prayers for us”
NJB “your prayers for us will contribute to this”

Several scholars believe this grammatical construction (Murry J. Harris in The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, vol. 10, p. 322) is used in a conditional sense (The Anchor Bible, vol. 32A, p. 115). If believers do not pray, somehow the Sovereign God has chosen not to act (cf. James 4:2). This shows the benefits of intercessory prayer (cf. Eph 6:18-20). Paul felt that the prayers of Christians linked with God’s graciousness saved him from death and it continued to protect and deliver him. Paul’s deliverance by God would be acknowledged and praised by many who would be blessed by Paul’s ongoing ministry.

“persons” This is literally “face” (i.e. prosopon) Paul uses this term often in II Corinthians (cf. 2:10; 3:7 [twice],13,18; 4:6; 5:12; 8:24; 10:1,7; 11:20). It may be an OT allusion to the standard physical position of prayer with head lifted, which exactly fits this context.

Paul uses this term in several senses in II Corinthians.
1. for persons, 1:11; 2:10; 4:6
2. for the face of a person, 3:7 (twice),13,18; 10:1,7; 11:20
3. metaphor for before in the sense of “in front of” (i.e. position, not time), 8:24
4. metaphor for outward appearance (cf. NRSV), 5:12

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:12-14

12 For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you. 13 For we write nothing else to you than what you read and understand, and I hope you will understand until the end; 14 just as you also partially did understand us, that we are your reason to be proud as you also are ours, in the day of our Lord Jesus.

1:12 “our proud confidence” These Greek terms kauchaomai, kauch, and kauch is are used about thirty-five times by Paul and only twice in the rest of the NT (both in James). Its predominate use is in I and II Corinthians.

There are two main truths connected to boasting.
1. no flesh shall glory before God (cf. I Cor. 1:29; Eph. 2:9)
2. believers should glory in the Lord (cf. I Cor. 1:31; II Cor. 10:17, which is an allusion to Jer. 9:23-24)
Therefore, there is appropriate and inappropriate boasting/glorying (i.e. pride).

1. **appropriate**
   a. in the hope of glory (cf. Rom. 4:2)
   b. in God through the Lord Jesus (cf. Rom. 5:11)
   c. in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ (i.e. Paul's main theme, cf. I Cor. 1:17-18; Gal. 6:14)
   d. Paul boasts in
      1. his ministry without compensation (cf. I Cor. 9:15,16; II Cor. 10:12)
      2. his authority from Christ (cf. II Cor. 10:8,12)
      3. his not boasting in other men's labor (as some at Corinth were, cf. II Cor. 10:15)
      4. his racial heritage (as others were doing at Corinth, cf. II Cor. 11:17; 12:1,5,6)
      5. his churches
         a. Corinth (cf. II Cor. 7:4,14; 8:24; 9:2; 11:10)
         b. Thessalonika (cf. II Thess. 1:4)
   6. his confidence in God's comfort and deliverance (cf. II Cor. 1:12)

2. **inappropriate**
   a. in relation to Jewish heritage (cf. Rom. 2:17,23; 3:27; Gal. 6:13)
   b. some in the Corinthian church were boasting
      1. in men (cf. I Cor. 3:21)
      2. in wisdom (cf. I Cor. 4:7)
      3. in freedom (cf. I Cor. 5:6)
   c. false teachers tried to boast in the church at Corinth (cf. II Cor. 11:12)

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**“the testimony of our conscience”** Paul uses the term “conscience” often in the Corinthian letters (cf. 4:4; 8:7,10,12; 10:25,27,28,29; II Cor. 1:12; 4:2; 5:11). It refers to that moral inner sense of what is appropriate or inappropriate (cf. Acts 23:1; Rom. 2:15). The conscience can be affected by our past lives, our poor choices, or by the Spirit of God. It is not a flawless guide (cf. I Cor. 4:4; 8:7; I Tim. 4:2), but it does determine the boundaries of individual faith (cf. I Tim. 1:5,19). Therefore, to violate our conscience, even if it is in error or weak, is a major faith problem.

The believer’s conscience needs to be more and more formed by the Word of God and the Spirit of God (cf. I Tim. 3:9). God will judge believers by the light they have, but all believers need to be increasingly open to the Bible and the Spirit for more light and in order to continue to grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. In this context, the end-time judgment is in view (cf. vv. 13-14). God will judge humans in light of their understanding, their conscience (cf. Rom. 2:15-16; 9:1; 13:5).

Paul’s motives and actions were severely criticized by a minority of false teachers at Corinth (cf. chapters 10-13). It seems that there were two groups: (1) a local group of opponents and (2) an itinerant Palestinian Jewish group of false teachers.

For a fuller note on the term conscience, see I Cor. 8:7b.

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**“holiness”** Some Greek manuscripts have “holiness” (i.e P46, N*, A, B, C, K, P, and Coptic NASB, NIV, and NJB translations). Others have “simplicity” (i.e. N*, D, F, G, and the Vulgate, Peshitta, NKJV, NRSV, and TEV translations). Bruce Metzger in A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, comments that the translation committee for the UBS preferred “simplicity” (haplōtētē), but gave it a “D” rating, meaning a very high degree of doubt (p. 575). However, the UBS edition gives it a “B” rating, meaning only some degree of doubt (p. 612). This increased certainty comes from the fact that Paul uses the term “simplicity” in 11:3 (and the same term translated “liberality” in 8:2; 9:11,13), but never in any of his writings does he use hagiōtētē.

**“sincerity”** This term had two connotations, “generous” or “sincere.” It was a metaphor related to vision. In the OT the eye was used as a metaphor for motive in two ways (1) evil eye (stingy, cf. Deut. 15:9 and Ps. 23:6), and (2) good eye (generous, cf. Prov. 22:9). Jesus followed this usage (cf. Matt. 6:22-23; 20:15). Paul used this term in two senses (1) “simplicity, sincerity, purity” (i.e. no hidden agendas or false pretenses, cf. II Cor. 1:12; 11:3; Eph. 6:5; Col. 3:22) and (2) “liberality” (cf. Rom. 12:8; II Cor. 8:2; 9:11,13).

**“not in fleshly wisdom”** Paul discusses worldly wisdom extensively in I Corinthians (cf. 1:18-31; 2:1-16; and 3:18-23 and sarcastically in 4:10; 6:5 and possibly 10:15). Paul uses similar phrases referring to human wisdom in I Cor. 1:17; 2:4,13-14. In this paragraph he makes a play on worldly wisdom versus grace living in the world. Paul’s evidence of his leadership is not in logic or rhetoric only, but godly living and a clear conscience before God. Paul claims to have written to them in plain, obvious, east-to-understand terms. If they are so wise they should have quickly and effortlessly understood his words, motives, and lifestyle implications, but they did not. Paul uses this term “flesh” in several ways: (1) physical body (cf. I Cor. 1:26,29; 5:5; 6:16; 7:28; 10:18; 15:29; II Cor. 1:17; 4:11; 5:16; 7:1,5; 11:18; 12:7) and (2) Adamic, fallen nature (cf. II Cor. 5:16; 10:2,3; Rom. 7:18,23; 8:3-9; 13:14; Gal. 5:16-17,19,24). Here it refers to #2.
“we are your reason to be proud as you also are ours” The church at Corinth is confirmation of Paul’s apostolic effectiveness. Paul desires that their words, motives, and actions will be a source of pride and appropriate boasting when the Lord returns to judge (i.e. “the day of our Lord Jesus,” cf. I Cor. 1:8; 5:5; Phil. 1:6,10; 2:16; I Thess. 5:2; II Thess 2:2).

1:13-14 These verses are in a parallel structure and seem to refer to Paul’s previous letters to Corinth (which one is uncertain). He wrote to be understood. However, their attitudes and lifestyles show they only partially understood.

Does the term *telous* in this context mean “complete” (TEV, NJB, NIV) or “end” (NASV, NKJV, NRSV)? Both make sense. If “complete” (i.e. completely in contrast to partially) it would link up with the first part of v. 14. If “end” it would parallel “the day of our Lord Jesus” at the last of verse 14.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:15-22**

15In this confidence I intended at first to come to you, so that you might twice receive a blessing; 16that is, to pass your way into Macedonia, and again from Macedonia to come to you, and by you to be helped on my journey to Judea.

**1:15-22**

15 In this confidence I intended at first to come to you, so that you might twice receive a blessing; 16 that is, to pass your way into Macedonia, and again from Macedonia to come to you, and by you to be helped on my journey to Judea.

17Therefore, I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I? Or what I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, so that with me there will be yes, yes and no, no *at the same time*? 18But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no. 19For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us—by me and Silvanus and Timothy—was not yes and no, but is yes in Him. 20For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us. 21Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, 22who also sealed us and gave *us* the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.

1:15 “In this confidence” See full note at 3:4.

1:16 “and you to be helped on my journey to Judea” Paul would not take any money from the Corinthian church while he was ministering to them. He was afraid he would be attacked over this issue. As it turns out he was attacked for not taking money from them.

This phrase implies that he was going to let this church provide his missionary travel needs (cf. I Cor. 16:6; Rom. 15:24). This may have been a way to test their loyalty to him and the gospel and to silence his critics.

1:17 “do I purpose according to the flesh” This phrase may reflect Paul’s critics (cf. 10:2-3; 11:18) or Paul seeking after the will of God in all that he does, including travel (cf. I Cor. 4:19; 16:7; Acts 18:21; Rom. 1:10; 15:32).

That the second option fits this context best can be seen from v. 18a. God’s faithfulness is a recurrent theme in Paul’s writings (cf. I Cor. 1:9; 10:13; I Thess. 5:24; II Thess. 3:3).

1:18 “God is faithful” Faithful is placed first for emphasis. In Paul’s writings this becomes a descriptive title for God (cf. I Cor. 1:9; 10:13; I Thess. 5:24; II Thess. 3:3). In the OT faith is usually understood as faithfulness. This is the crucial characteristic of God (cf. Deut. 7:9; Isa. 49:7). His gracious, faithful character is unchanged (cf. Mal. 3:6). Mankind’s hope is not in human performance or devotion, but in the character and promises of God (cf. 1:12,15,20).

1:19 “the Son of God, Christ Jesus” Paul does not use the phrase “Son of God” often (cf. Rom. 1:4; here, and Gal. 2:20). However, the concept and related phrasing is very common.

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“Silvanus” Silas, or Silvanus, was the man Paul chose to go with him on the second missionary journey after Barnabas and John Mark went back to Cyprus:

1. He is first mentioned in the Bible in Acts 15:22 where he is called a chief man among the brethren of the Jerusalem Church.
2. He was also a prophet (cf. Acts 15:32).
3. He was a Roman citizen like Paul (cf. Acts 16:37).
4. He and Judas Barsabbas were sent to Antioch by the Jerusalem Church to inspect the situation (cf. Acts 15:22,30-35).
5. Paul mentions him in II Cor. 1:19 as a fellow gospel preacher.
6. Later he is identified with Peter in writing I Peter. (cf. I Pet. 5:12).
7. Both Paul and Peter call him Silvanus while Luke calls him Silas (the Aramaic form of Saul). It is possible that Silas was his Jewish name and Silvanus his Latin name (cf. F. F. Bruce, Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free, p. 213).

1:19-20 “but is yes in Him” Verses 19 and 20 are theologically packed! Paul is asserting that the mission team (Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy) preached Jesus as God’s fulfilling promise as God’s Son and as mankind’s only hope to them as the apex of OT revelation! Their preaching was not wishy-washy, but definite (cf. v. 18). Jesus is the Father’s “yes” for every promise, every need, every hope (i.e. PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE of ginomai). By affirming Jesus, they give glory to the Father’s provision.

All of their knowledge of God, of His Son, of His promises (cf. Rom. 9:4) and provisions of grace come through the mission team. If they start doubting the motives and message of Paul, they lose confidence in the gospel!

1:20 “Amen” See fuller note at I Cor. 14:16c.

“glory” See Special Topic: glory at I Cor. 2:7.

1:21-22 There is a definite structure to these two verses that describes what God (i.e. “The One who”) has done to equip and affirm the missionary team.

1. God establishes us, v. 21 (cf. I Cor. 1:8). This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE which points toward a continuing action. It means to confirm, establish, make constant, unwavering (cf. 1:7; Rom. 4:16). This term is used in the papyri to denote a legal guarantee (cf. Moulton and Milligan, p. 107).
2. God anointed us, v. 21 (cf. I John 2:20,27). This is an AORIST ACTIVE PARTICIPLE. The tense points to a completed, one-time act. The term itself reflects an OT concept of God’s choosing and equipping for ministry of certain leaders of Israel (i.e. (1) prophets, cf. I Kgs. 19:16 and possibly parallelism of 1 Chr. 16:22; Ps 105:15; (2) priests, cf. Exod. 40:15; Lev. 4:3; Ps. 105:15; and (3) kings, cf. I Sam. 9:16; Ps. 2:2; 18:50; 20:6; Hab. 3:13). It is the term that in Greek is translated “Christ” when referring to the Messiah (i.e. the Anointed One). Believers are also chosen and equipped by God to serve His kingdom purposes.
3. God sealed us, v. 22 (cf. John 3:33; 6:27; Rom. 4:11; 15:28; I Cor. 9:2; Eph. 1:13; 4:30; II Tim. 2:19; Rev. 7:3-8). This is an AORIST MIDDLE PARTICIPLE which means to mark something or someone as one’s property, or genuine, or as safely delivered. Believers belong to God!
4. God gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge, v. 22 (cf. 5:5; Rom. 8:9-16,23,26-27; Eph. 1:13-14).

The term “given” is another AORIST ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, implying a completed action. God has fully provided for His children:

- establishes (PRESENT tense)
- anointed (AORIST tense)
- sealed (AORIST tense)
- given the Spirit (AORIST tense)

All of these provisions relate to Paul’s confidence in vv. 15,19-20. Paul’s confidence was in the Father’s and the Son’s and the Spirit’s actions and provisions.

“Christ...God...Spirit” Notice that the Trinity is active in our assurance. Although the term “Trinity” does not appear in the Bible, the concept is recurrent (cf. I Cor. 12:4-6; II Cor. 13:14). Christianity is a monotheistic faith (cf. Deut 6:4). However, if Jesus is divine and the Holy Spirit is a person we have three persons of one divine essence. A Triune Unity! See Special Topic at I Cor. 2:10.

1:22 “as a pledge” (cf. 5:5; Eph. 1:14). It speaks both of promise of full payment in the future and partial payment now. God’s down payment was the life of His Son and the full presence of His Spirit (cf. Eph. 1:3-14).

“heart” See Special Topic at I Cor. 14:25.
**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:23-24**

23But I call God as witness to my soul, that to spare you I did not come again to Corinth. 24Not that we lord it over your faith, but are workers with you for your joy; for in your faith you are standing firm.

1:23
NASB “But I call God as my witness to my soul”  
NKJV “Moreover I call God as witness against my soul”  
NRSV “But I call on God as witness against me”  
TEV “I call God as my witness—he knows my heart”  
NJB “By my life I call on God to be my witness”

This is an oath of truthfulness. Paul often uses oaths to confirm his words (cf. Rom. 1:9; Gal. 1:20; Phil. 1:8; I Thess. 2:5).

“to spare you” Paul’s change of travel plans was not an example of his fickleness, but of his love. He chose not to return in an atmosphere where his only option was judgment and contention. The false teachers had impugned his motives and actions. Paul sets the record straight!

“I did not come again to Corinth” There is much debate about the number of visits Paul made from Ephesus to Corinth and the number of letters he wrote to the church in Corinth. For more information see the introduction.

1:24 “Not that we lord it over your faith” Here we see the balance between Paul as an authoritative Apostle, 1:1, and the liberty of this local congregation. Biblical faith, covenant faith, starts and develops through volitional choices which are meant to produce joy, stability, and maturity.

“for in your faith you are standing firm” Paul mentions this concept in I Cor. 15:1 (cf. Rom. 5:2; 11:20). This may have an OT background (cf. Ps. 76:7; 130:3; Nah. 1:6; Mal. 3:2). It speaks of confident faith in God’s presence. In light of the problems at Corinth this is a shocking statement. The Corinthian church was at least not as affected by the arrival of false teachers as the Galatian churches had been. Some of the house churches were strong and pure (i.e. PERFECT tense, “you have been and continue to stand firm”). See Special Topic: Stand (Histami) at I Cor. 15:1.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. If Paul is writing to a local problem in Corinth, why was the letter to be read throughout Achaia? (v. 1)
2. What are the two benefits of suffering mentioned in vv. 4 and 9?
3. What did Paul suffer in Asia that almost killed him? (vv.8-10)
4. Why was Paul attacked for his change in travel plans? (I Cor. 16:1-8 versus II Cor. 1:12-20)
5. Why do we believe in a Trinity?
II CORINTHIANS 2

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UBS⁴</th>
<th>NKJV</th>
<th>NRSV</th>
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<td>Paul’s Anxiety and Relief</td>
<td>Triumph in Christ</td>
<td>Paul’s Anxiety in Troas</td>
<td>From Troas to Macedonia—the Apostolate: Its Importance</td>
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<td>Our Ministry</td>
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READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

A. There is much discussion among the commentators on I and II Corinthians as to how many visits and letters Paul made to this church. This chapter is the crux of this discussion because it seems to refer to a previous letter and a painful visit. There is much ambiguity in both the text and our knowledge of Paul’s life; dogmatism is inappropriate.
B. Another area of contention involving this chapter is whether the offender mentioned in vv. 5 and 6 is (1) synonymous with the incestuous man of I Cor. 5; (2) a leader of one of the factions or house churches spoken of in I Corinthians (1-4); or (3) a ringleader of the false teachers from Jerusalem who confronted Paul personally on this painful visit (II Cor. 10-13).

C. The chapter division is obviously inappropriate. Chapter 2 is integrally linked with the discussion of Paul’s travel plans mentioned in II Cor. 1:15ff.

D. There is a major digression or parenthesis beginning in II Cor. 2:14. Paul does not return to his discussions concerning the meeting with Titus in Macedonia until II Cor. 7:5. I thank God for this digression because it shows us the heart of Paul and his intense love for Jesus Christ!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

<table>
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<th>NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:1-4</th>
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<td>1But I determined this for my own sake, that I would not come to you in sorrow again. 2For if I cause you sorrow, who then makes me glad but the one whom I made sorrowful? 3This is the very thing I wrote you, so that when I came, I would not have sorrow from those who ought to make me rejoice; having confidence in you all that my joy would be the joy of you all. 4For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not so that you would be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you.</td>
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2:1
NASB, NKJV “But”
NRSV, TEV, NIV “So”
NJB “then”
RSV “For”

There is a Greek manuscript variant between “for” (i.e. ἐνδυνάμωσα, cf. P46 and B) and “but” (i.e. ἀλλά, cf. A, C). Often conjunctions are crucial in interpretation, but in this case the sense of the sentence defines the issue.

| “I determined this for my own sake” |
| “I determined this within myself” |
| “I made up my mind” |

This seems to imply that Paul did not have special insight from the Spirit about this matter. He mentions several times how the Spirit had led his travel plans (cf. Acts 16:9-10; 18:21; Rom. 1:10; 15:32; I Cor. 4:19), but this time he has no specific guidance and decides not to come.

“that I would not come to you in sorrow again” Paul mentions a third visit to Corinth in 12:14; 13:1. The book of Acts does not record this second painful visit. His initial stay in Corinth is recorded in Acts 18:1-11. See chart in Introduction, Date, E. “visit” c. It probably occurred between the writing of I and II Corinthians.

2:2 “if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes. Paul’s second visit had made the church sad. I like the NJB translation of this verse, “for if I cause you distress I am causing distress to my only possible source of joy.” Paul did not enjoy the confrontational aspect of his apostolic responsibility.

2:3 “This is the very thing I wrote you” There are several theories that try to explain these verses: (1) some call this an EPISTOLARY AORIST, which means it would refer to II Corinthians (cf. NJB); (2) some believe this refers to I Corinthians; (3) others believe that this refers to the previous lost letter mentioned in I Cor. 5:9; and (4) others think this refers to a severe lost letter, possibly partially preserved in II Corinthians 10-13.

2:4 This verse so clearly reveals Paul’s heart and the emotional pain he felt about what happened during his painful visit. Yet, he spoke the truth, as painful as it was. Like a good medical doctor, Paul knew sometimes pain is necessary for long term healing.

Paul uses two SUBJUNCTIVE VERBS in this sentence because sometimes people do not respond well to correction. God had created all humans with free will, which is both a precious and a dangerous thing. It holds the potential of joy and restoration or embitterment and continuing rebellion.
This verse also includes one of Paul’s characteristic terms which he uses so often in his Corinthian letters (i.e. perissotēs).

See full note at 1:5 or 2:7.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:5-11**

5But if any has caused sorrow, he has caused sorrow not to me, but in some degree—in order not to say too much—to all of you. 6Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority, 7so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, otherwise such a one might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. 8Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm your love for him. 9For to this end also I wrote, so that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things. 10But one whom you forgive anything, I forgive also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ, 11so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes.

2:5 This verse is very difficult to translate! I believe the sense of the RSV and Phillips translation are probably best: “but if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure (not to put it too severely) to you all.” There is no object mentioned in this sentence; therefore, some relate it to (1) the entire church (cf. NKJV, NJB, RSV, Phillips, NIV, NEB) or (2) the offending person (cf. KNOX translation).

Who is this “he” who caused trouble? There have been several suggestions: (1) it refers to I Cor. 5:9 and the man who married his father’s wife; (2) it refers to a ringleader of one of the factions or house churches; or (2) it refers to the spokesperson for the group of supposed “leaders” from Palestine who confronted Paul on his return to Corinth and apparently the church did not defend Paul as it should have.

“if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence. Someone had caused sorrow, both to Paul and to the entire church (PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE) and the consequences remained.

2:6 “this punishment which was inflicted by the majority” The decision was not unanimous. Paul, when attacked, even cared for the attacker (cf. v. 7) and the spiritual consequences which controversy and confrontation can cause (cf. v. 11).

The mention of “the majority” shows how Paul viewed church polity. He felt himself called as an Apostle to the Gentiles, but this did not remove the congregational aspect of responsibility to lead. Paul has a great balance in his letters between authoritative commands (i.e. Galatians and I Cor. 5), and the need for local leadership. The NT has all three forms of polity: apostolic (i.e. Episcopal); local leaders (i.e. Presbyterian); and congregational (i.e. every believer). Acts 15 has all three levels involved in the ecclesiastical process. It is not an issue of which one is biblical; they all are. It is an issue of godly believers leading within biblical priorities, not personal agendas!

2:7 “rather forgive and comfort him” These are both AORIST INFINITIVES. Church discipline is never vindictive, but always redemptive (cf. Gal. 6:1). Sin must be exposed, but also to be covered (i.e. forgiven by God, forgiven by church) after it is exposed.

For “comfort” see full note at 1:4-11.

**NASB**

“might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow”

**NKJV**

“be swallowed up with too much sorrow”

**NRSV**

“may not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow”

**TEV**

“from becoming so sad as to give up completely”

**NJB**

“may be overwhelmed by the extent of his distress”

Literally “lest by more abundant grief such a one should be swallowed up.” The first term is perissos. It and its related forms are used often by Paul in his letters to Corinth.

1. *perissos/perissotēs*
   a. exceedingly (cf. I Cor. 12:23,24; 15:10)
   b. excessive (cf. II Cor. 2:7; 10:8)
   c. superfluous (cf. II Cor. 9:1)


3. *perisseuō*
   a. to abound (cf. II Cor. 1:5; 3:9; 9:8,12)
   b. abundantly gifted (cf. I Cor. 14:12; II Cor. 8:7)
   c. to abound in performance (cf. I Cor. 15:58)
   d. abound in food (cf. I Cor. 8:8)
   e. cause to be abundant (cf. II Cor. 4:14; 9:8)
4. *perisseuma*, superabundance (cf. II Cor. 8:13,14)
5. *perisseia*, superabundance (cf. II Cor. 8:2; 10:15)

These usages show how Paul often used this term to express positive spiritual abundance. So when he uses it negatively it shows the depth of his concern for the sinning person. Paul’s sorrow and pain were extreme. Paul feared how Satan could take advantage of a spiritually “crushed” person (possibly from personal experience).

The second term, *katapín*, is also an intense metaphor. It is literally “to gulp down.” It is used in a positive sense in II Cor. 5:4 (i.e. swallowed-up life). Negatively it could mean to destroy (cf. I Cor. 15:54; II Cor. 2:7; Heb. 11:29; I Pet. 5:8).

Paul’s personal experience and theological training made him acutely aware of the depths of sin and the heights of the grace and mercy of God. His choice of words reveals the depth of his feelings.

2:8 “I urge you to reaffirm your love for him” This refers to reinstatement or legal act by an official vote (cf. use of term in Gal. 3:15) of the church through the motive of love. It is possible it is metaphorical of the reality of something (cf. Louw and Nida, p. 668).
   For “urge” see full note at 1:4-11.

2:9 “I wrote” See note at 2:3.

[Box: “the test” This refers to a test of metal coins to make sure of their genuineness. It seems to have the connotation in the NT of “to test with a view toward approval.” See Special Topic on “Testing” at I Cor. 3:13.

“whether you are obedient in all things” This was a test of their loyalty to Paul’s authority. This was THE issue (cf. 7:15; 10:6).

2:10 “forgive” This term, *charizomai* (cf. vv. 7,10; 12:13) is from the root *chairô*, which means to rejoice, be glad. In this context it means to graciously forgive or remit (cf. 2:7,10 [thrice]).
   Paul asks the majority to forgive in v. 7 (AORIST MIDDLE INFINITIVE); in v. 10 he repeated the ongoing request (PRESENT MIDDLE INDICATIVE); in v. 10 he assures them of his (i.e. personal pronoun, *ego*) gracious and ongoing forgiveness of the offender (two PERFECT MIDDLE INDICATIVES).

“if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence. Paul reiterates his own personal forgiveness of the offender.

“for your sakes in the presence of Christ” This is Paul’s way of asserting that the restoration of the offender will strengthen the church. He himself is able to do it because of his love for Christ.

2:11
   NASB “so that no advantage would be taken by Satan”
   NKJV “lest Satan should take advantage of us”
   NRSV “so that we may not be outwitted by Satan”
   TEV “in order to keep Satan from getting the upper hand”
   NJB “to avoid being outwitted by Satan”

This verse affirms the personal force of evil in our world out to thwart God’s plan. Paul calls him by several titles in II Corinthians: (1) Satan in 2:11; 11:14; 12:7; (2) “the god of this age” in 4:4; (3) “Belial” in 6:15; and (4) “the serpent” in 11:3.

The “us” could refer to Paul himself, or to Paul and the Corinthian church. It is interesting to know that Satan tempts both by inclination to evil and by the perversion of the good. An inappropriate, unforgiving, angry, or prideful attitude on the part of the church could open the door for Satan to disrupt the fellowship. See Special Topic: Personal Evil at I Cor. 7:5.

“for we are not ignorant of his schemes” The evil one tries to affect our lives (cf. Eph. 4:14; 6:10-18). Often believers are ignorant (i.e. *agnœo*) of his schemes.

### SPECIAL TOPIC: SCHEMES

This is the Greek word *no'ma*. It is used by Paul five times in II Corinthians and only one other time in Phil. 4:7. It is from the root *nous*, which means mind or thoughts. Paul develops this in two ways.

A. evil or destructive thinking
   1. schemes of Satan, II Cor. 2:11
   2. minds hardened and veiled in unbelief, II Cor. 3:14
3. minds blinded by Satan (the god of this world), II Cor. 4:4
4. minds deceived by Satan (like Eve) and led astray, II Cor. 11:3

B. godly thinking
1. taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, II Cor. 10:5
2. the peace of God which passes all comprehension (i.e. nous) will guard your hearts and your minds (i.e. noemata)

Human thinking and language skills are part of the image of God. These wonderful gifts can be used for good or evil. Believers must guard their thoughts and words. Our mind can be tricked, blinded, and manipulated by Satan. They can also be wonderfully energized by God to His glory and for His Kingdom. We are stewards of our thoughts, plans, and motives!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:12-13

12Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened for me in the Lord, 13I had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went on to Macedonia.

2:12 “when I came to Troas” This follows the itinerary of I Cor. 16:5 (cf. Acts 16:8-11). Paul was apparently attacked by some at Corinth because his travel plans did not materialize. Paul tries to explain why.

“and when a door was opened for me in the Lord” This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE implying that God opened this opportunity for the gospel and that it remains open! “Open door” is a very popular metaphor of Paul (cf. I Cor. 16:9; Col. 4:3; and also Acts 14:27 and Rev. 3:8). This phrase emphasizes the effective power of God through the redemptive accomplished ministry of the Messiah and the wooing of His Spirit for evangelism and Christian discipleship (cf. Matt. 28:19-20 and Acts 15:3-4, 12; 21:19).

2:13 “I had no rest for my spirit” This is the use of “spirit” as synonymous with a person or human self (cf. 7:13; I Cor. 16:18). Paul was continually worried (PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE) about Corinth (cf. 7:5). Paul’s imagination ran wild; watch out for yours. He left an open door in Troas because of his concern and fearfulness about the church at Corinth. Paul loved this factional, prideful church!

“not finding Titus” Paul had earlier sent Timothy to Corinth, but he was apparently not received well by the church so Paul had sent Titus with a severe letter (cf. 2:3-4). Paul had not heard from him at the expected time and became very concerned. Titus is mentioned several times in II Corinthians (cf. 2:13; 7:6,13,14; 8:6,16,23; 12:18).

SPECIAL TOPIC: TITUS

A. Titus was one of Paul’s most trusted co-workers. This is evidenced by the fact that Paul sent him to the trouble spots of Corinth and Crete.
B. He was a full Gentile (Timothy was only half-Greek), converted under Paul’s preaching. Paul refused to circumcise him (cf. Gal. 2).
C. He is mentioned often in Paul’s letters (cf. II Cor. 2:13; 7:6-15; 8:6-24; 12:18; Gal. 2:1-3; II Tim. 4:10) and it is very surprising that Luke does not mention him in Acts. Some commentaries theorize that (1) he may have been a relative of Luke (possibly a brother) and to include his name would have been seen as an act of cultural impropriety on Luke’s part or (2) Titus is Luke’s major source of information about Paul’s life and ministry and, therefore, like Luke, would not be named.
D. He accompanied Paul and Barnabas to the all important Jerusalem Council, recorded in Acts 15.
E. The book of Titus focuses on advice Paul gives Titus about his work on Crete. Titus is acting as Paul’s official surrogate.
F. The last information in the NT about Titus is that he was sent to work in Dalmatia (cf. II Tim. 4:10).

“I went on to Macedonia” There is a parenthesis in Paul’s thought until II Cor. 7:5. It is a digression of praise to God for Christ! The digression is so beautiful and so helpful that we thank God for it. Many of Paul’s most memorable quotes come from this digression.
NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:14-17

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things? For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.

2:14 “thanks be to God” See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: PAUL’S PRAISE, PRAYER, AND THANKSGIVING TO GOD

Paul was a man of praise. He knew the Old Testament. Each of the first four divisions (i.e. books) of the Psalter end with doxologies (cf. Ps. 41:13; 72:19; 89:52; 106:48). He praises and extols God in several different ways.

1. opening paragraphs in his letters
   a. opening benedictions or greetings (cf. Rom. 1:7; I Cor. 1:3; II Cor. 1:2)
   b. opening blessings (eulogēōs, cf. II Cor. 1:3-4; Eph. 1:3-14)

2. short outbursts of praise
   a. Rom. 1:25; 9:5
   b. II Cor. 11:31

3. doxologies (characterized by use of (1) doxa (i.e. glory) and (2) “forever and ever”
   a. Rom. 11:36; 16:25
   b. Eph. 3:20-21
   c. Phil. 4:20
   d. I Tim. 1:17
   e. II Tim. 4:18

4. thanksgivings (i.e. eucharistēē)
   a. letter openings (cf. Rom. 1:8; I Cor. 1:4; II Cor. 1:11; Eph. 1:16; Phil. 1:3; Col. 1:3,12; I Thess. 1:2; II Thess. 1:3; Philemon v. 4; I Tim. 1:12; II Tim. 1:3)
   b. call to give thanks (cf. Eph. 5:4,20; Phil. 4:6; Col. 3:15,17; 4:2; I Thess. 5:18)

5. short outbursts of thanksgiving
   a. Rom. 6:17; 7:25
   b. I Cor. 15:57
   c. II Cor. 2:14; 8:16; 9:15
   d. I Thess. 2:13
   e. II Thess. 2:13

6. closing benedictions
   a. Rom. 16:20ff
   b. I Cor. 16:24
   c. II Cor. 13:14
   d. Gal. 6:18
   e. Eph. 6:24

Paul knew the Triune God theologically and experientially. In his writings he starts out with prayer and praise. In the middle of his presentations he breaks out in praise and thanksgiving. At the conclusion to his letters, he always remembers to pray, praise and thank God. Paul’s writing breathes with prayer, praise, and thanksgiving. He knew God, he knew himself, and he knew the gospel.

[“always”] God always leads us (1) through Christ; (2) in Christ’s victory; and (3) for the purpose of witness (i.e. “manifests through us” PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, cf. vv. 15-16).
NASB, NKJV  “who always leads us in triumph in Christ”
NRSV  “who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession”
TEV  “led by God as prisoners in Christ’s victory procession”
NJEB  “who always gives us in Christ a part in his triumphal procession”

This phrase refers to the Roman military practice of the triumphal march for victorious legion commanders through the streets of Rome, which would emphasize Christ as victor (the PARTICIPLE is SINGULAR). He has destroyed all hostile powers (cf. Col. 2:15). Believers follow Him, not as prisoners (TEV, NEB, and REB translate this explicitly as “prisoners,” but this goes against the obvious victory of the context, unless Paul is referring to his sufferings and humiliations as an evangelist compared to the prisoners in a Roman parade), but as fellow soldiers! We are overcomers because of and through Him! Our victory is won, but we must choose to claim it and walk in it daily.

“us” The PLURAL pronouns in vv. 14-17 refer to (1) the Apostles; (2) Paul and his mission team; or (3) all believers who spread the gospel. To me option #2 is the focus, but option #3 is the implication.

Evangelists are victorious, but there is a price to be paid (cf. 4:7-12; 6:3-10; 11:23-30).

“manifest” Paul uses this word so often in II Corinthians (cf. 2:14; 3:3; 4:10,11; 5:10,11[twice]; 7:12; 11:6). The term means to clearly display or make known. Paul’s great desire was to fully, publicly, and clearly reveal God by revealing Christ’s person and work (i.e. the gospel).

“of the knowledge of Him in every place” The Corinthian church was proud of their intellectual heritage. Paul was proud of his knowledge of God through Christ. Knowledge was not for personal glory, but for evangelism. As we are “always” (i.e. pantote) led in triumph in Christ, we also are expected to clearly reveal (i.e. manifest) the message of Christ “in every place” (i.e. panti). The universal gospel of Christ is to be shared by His victorious followers in every place (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8).

Paul uses this little phrase “in every place” often (cf. I Cor. 1:2; I Thess. 1:8; I Tim. 2:8). I wonder if it is not an allusion to Mal. 1:11, which prophesies a world-wide worship of God’s Messiah?

2:15 “For we are a fragrance of Christ to God” This phrase has two possible backgrounds: (1) in the OT the smoke from a sacrifice and incense rose to God and was accepted as a sweet aroma (cf. Gen. 8:21; Exod. 29:18,25; in LXX in Lev. 1:9,13,17; 2:2; also used metaphorically by Paul in Phil. 4:18); or (2) in the first century incense was burned along the route of Roman military parades into Rome.

The spreading of the gospel is YHWH’s accepted sacrifice of praise. Believers are accepted in Christ for the purpose of becoming like Christ and sharing His gospel.

“who are being saved and among those who are perishing” The distinction seems to be that those who are perishing are perishing by a continuing act of their own will (PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE), and those who are saved are being saved by the will of God through Christ (PRESENT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE). For the theological significance of “who are being saved” see Special Topic: Greek Verb Tenses Used for Salvation at I Cor. 3:15.

For the concept of “perishing” see the full theological discussion at I Cor. 1:18, which is a parallel to this text.

2:16 “and who is adequate for these things” The preaching of the gospel divides humanity eternally. From II Cor. 3:5-6 we understand that God equips His children for this awesome witnessing responsibility. Each believer’s life is an aroma to God that others react to, either in trust toward Christ or rejection of Christ. It is important how we live; others are watching (cf. 2:16; 3:2,3).

2:17 “we are not like many” Paul is referring to (1) itinerant teachers in the Greco-Roman world who traveled from place to place teaching and (2) philosophers where were compared with the false teachers who came from Palestine (like those in Gal. 1:6-9) and attacked Paul, his gospel, and his apostleship (cf. 4:2).

“peddling the word of God” This is a term from the wine industry. It was used in two ways: (1) to water down wine so as to make more money (i.e. adulterate) or (2) to hawk one’s product for profit (i.e. a huckster). Paul did not change his message (the gospel) for different audiences (i.e. Greeks, Jews), but he did customize his approach (see Paul’s sermons in Acts).

“but as from sincerity” This term is from a root “to be unmixed” (cf. 1:12). This would be the opposite of “peddling.” This rare word for sincerity is possibly a compound term from “sunshine” and “judge.” It conveys the concept of unhidden, pure motives (cf. I Cor. 5:8; II Cor. 1:12; 2:17; Phil. 1:10; II Pet. 3:1). Notice the parallel between “but as from sincerity” and “but as from God.”
“the word of God . . . from God . . . in the sight of God” Paul affirms his gospel message is God’s message and that the message is Christ! Paul thanks God (cf. v. 14) for:

1. our triumph in Christ (cf. v. 14)
2. our manifesting a knowledge of Him in every place (cf. v. 14)
3. our message about Him produces life or death (cf. vv. 15-16)
4. our unmixed message is from God, before God, about Christ, and in Christ (cf. v. 17)

“we speak in Christ in the sight of God” This exact phrase is repeated in 12:19. It seems to be an idiomatic way of asserting the trustworthiness and truthfulness of the gospel.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why does Paul discuss his travel plans so extensively?
2. How many letters did Paul write to the Corinthian church?
3. Explain the background of triumph in v. 14.
4. How does one stand the spiritual pressure involved in vv. 15-16 when we know that sharing the Gospel can mean the difference between heaven and hell?
II CORINTHIANS 3

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

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READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

A. The emphasis of this chapter is very similar to the emphasis of the Book of Hebrews. It is a comparison between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. How are sinful humans made right with God? Performance of the Mosaic Law or faith in the atoning work of God in Christ? This comparison is used by Paul to defend his gospel and himself against the Jewish Oriental false teachers who have arrived in Corinth.

B. This chapter’s use of the term “spirit” is highly ambiguous. There has been much discussion over vv. 6, 8, 17, and 18. Are they relating to the “Holy Spirit” or the concept of “the spiritual”? There seems to be an intentional fluidity between the two. The new age is the age of the Spirit, which inaugurate a spiritual relationship with God versus a legal, performance-based relationship.

C. Paul’s use of the term “law”
   1. law = wrath; Rom. 3:20; 4:15; Gal. 3:10-13; Col. 2:14
   2. law = spiritually good; Rom. 7:14
3. contrast between Rom. 1:5; 2:13; Gal. 3:12; and Rom. 3:2 or 8:7; II Cor. 3:6; Gal. 3:21
4. Paul uses Abraham and Moses as two typological symbols of the relationship between “faith” and “law”
The Law is good. It is from God. It served, and continues to serve, a divine purpose (cf. 7:7, 12, 14, 22, 25). It can
not bring peace or salvation. James Stewart in his book A Man in Christ, shows Paul’s paradoxical thinking and
writing:
“You would naturally expect a man who was setting himself to construct a system of thought and
doctrine to fix as rigidly as possible the meanings of the terms he employed. You would expect him to aim
at precision in the phraseology of his leading ideas. You would demand that a word, once used by your
writer in a particular sense should bear that sense throughout. But to look for this from Paul is to be
disappointed. Much of his phraseology is fluid, not rigid. . . .’The law is holy.’ he writes. ‘I delight in the
law of God after the inward man’ (cf. Rom. 7:12-13) but it is clearly another aspect of nomos that makes

D. Paul uses three major metaphors in this chapter:
1. letters, vv. 1-3
   a. letters of recommendation, v. 1
   b. they are letters, v. 2
   c. OT tablets, v. 3
2. Old and New Covenants, vv. 6-11
   a. written versus spiritual, v. 36
   b. kills versus gives life, v. 36
3. veil, vv. 7, 12-16
   a. Moses, v. 12
   b. Jews of Paul’s day, v. 14
   c. believers, vv. 14-16

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:1-3

1Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some, letters of commendation to you or from
you? 2You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; 3being manifested that you are a letter of
Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of
human hearts.

3:1 The grammatical form of both questions in v. 1 expects a “no” answer. It is hard to know if Paul is being sarcastic or heart
broken.

“to commend” This word is a compound of “to place” and “together,” which is used metaphorically to demonstrate, to frame
together, or to recommend.
  1. to demonstrate (cf. Rom. 3:5; 5:8; II Cor. 7:11; Gal. 2:18)
  2. to endure (cf. Col. 1:17)
  3. to commend (cf. Rom. 16:1; II Cor. 3:1; 4:2; 5:12; 6:4; 10:12,18; 12:11)

“as some” Paul uses this term often in II Corinthians because of the conflict with the aggressive false teachers from Palestine
who tried to elevate themselves by contrasting themselves to Paul and his background and his gospel (cf. v. 2; 2:17; 10:2). He
also used the same expression in a negative sense in I Corinthians to relate to the actions and beliefs of some church members (cf.
4:18; 15:12).

“letters of commendation” The early church adopted the procedure of letters of recommendation to assure the orthodoxy and
trustworthiness of itinerant ministers (cf. Acts 18:27; Rom. 16:1; I Cor. 16:3,15-18; Phil. 2:29-30; III John v. 12).

3:2 “You are our letter, written in our hearts,” Paul is asserting that he does not need a letter to recommend himself to this
church (or from this church), because he is its spiritual founder as Christ is its savior and Lord. They were his flesh-and-blood
letter (cf. v. 3).

The phrase “written in our hearts” is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. Paul loved this church. They were permanently
in his heart and mind. The PASSIVE voice implies that God/Christ/Spirit is the agent (cf. v. 3), which produces Paul’s love.
See Special Topic: Heart at I Cor. 14:25.
known and read” There is a sound play between these two Greek words (i.e. ginaskenen and anaginaskomen, cf. 1:13). Both are PRESENT PASSIVE PARTICIPLES.

“by all men” This is the use of the term “all” where it is not inclusive (cf. Rom. 11:26). This is obviously a hyperbole, so common in Jewish literature (cf. Matt. 5:29-30,38-42; 6:24; 7:3-5; 23:23-24).

3:3 “being manifested” See note at 2:14.

“you are a letter of Christ” Believers are meant to clearly reveal Christ by their motives, words, and actions. How we live reflects on His reputation!

“the Spirit of the living God” The terminology referring to the Triune God is very fluid. The Spirit is often referred to as the Spirit of Jesus (cf. Rom. 8:9; II Cor. 3:17; Gal. 4:6; I Pet. 1:11). Here the same type of fluidity is directed toward the Father. The title “living God” is a play on YHWH, which is from the Hebrew verb “to be” (cf. Exod. 3:14). The descriptive title is common for the Father in the NT (cf. Matt. 16:16; 26:63; Acts 14:15; Rom. 9:26; II Cor. 6:16; I Thess. 1:9; I Tim. 3:15; 4:10; Heb. 3:12; 9:14; 10:31; 12:22; Rev. 7:2). In the OT the pagan idols were lifeless. They could not respond or they were dead part of the year (i.e. the winter) following the fertility cycles of nature. YHWH was the only truly alive, always-alive God!

“not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts” This seems to relate to the giving of the law in Exod. 31:18 and to the promise of a New Covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-33 and Ezek. 36:22-38). This is an obvious contrast between the Old Covenant as external law versus the New Covenant as internal (i.e. new heart, new mind, and new spirit).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:4-6

4Such confidence we have through Christ toward God. 5Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, 6who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

3:4 “confidence” This is another Pauline term used mostly in II Corinthians. It comes from the same Greek root as faith, trust, believe (i.e. peitho and pistis, pisteuō). It basically means trust, confidence, or reliance.

1. positive context
   a. Paul’s travel plans, II Cor. 1:15
   b. Paul’s confidence in God through Christ, II Cor. 3:4
   c. Paul’s confidence in Titus, II Cor. 8:22
   d. Paul’s confidence in Christ, Eph. 3:12

2. negative context
   a. Paul wants to be gentle with them, II Cor. 10:2
   b. Paul’s reluctant comparison of his credentials with the false teachers, Phil. 3:4

3:5 “Not that we are adequate in ourselves” The Greek term hikanos is common in the NT and is used in two senses: (1) as a large number of something (cf. 11:30), even time and (2) fit, appropriate (cf. 2:6), competent, qualified, able, or adequate.

   The second sense is used here. Paul expresses his sense of unworthiness using this term in I Cor. 15:9. He also asserts that gospel ministers are not worthy in themselves in II Cor. 2:16 and 3:5.

   Yet, even as we are inadequate in ourselves, God has called us and empowered us as His representatives (cf. II Cor. 3:6; II Tim. 2:2). We are qualified in Him (cf. Col. 1:12).

“to consider” This is the term logizomai, which is used thirty-four times by Paul, but less than seven in the rest of the NT (cf. 3:5; 5:19; 10:2,7; 11:5; 12:6). It reflects Paul’s logical presentation of truths and then as encouragement to think through the issues clearly.

   The term is a major theological word because of:
   1. its use in the Septuagint for personalized truth (cf. the New International Dictionary of NT Theology, vol. 3, p. 823)
   2. its use in Gen. 15:6, which Paul uses to justify OT righteousness based on a free gift of God through faith (cf. Rom. 4:3)
   3. it may have been a technical term used by Sophists in their rhetorical presentations

   Modern believers should also carefully consider what they believe about the faith and why. Our mental and verbal abilities are part of the image of God in mankind. We must worship God with our minds (cf. LXX Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:37). We need to be able to give an account of the hope that is in us (cf. I Pet. 3:15). We must think through our faith beliefs for our own stability and for evangelism.
“servants of a new covenant” See Special Topic: Servant Leadership at I Cor. 4:1.

“not of the letter but of the Spirit” There is a series of comparisons.
1. written versus spiritual, vv. 3 and 6
2. letter versus spirit, v. 6
3. old service versus spiritual service, v. 7
4. the service connected with condemnation versus the service connected with right-standing, v. 9
5. what has passed away versus what is permanent, v. 11
6. the veil remains unlifted versus the veil is removed, v. 14

Paul is contrasting the old and new covenants, but really heart faith (cf. Rom. 2:29; 7:6) versus head faith (i.e. legalism, human performance, self-righteousness).

“the letter kills” This seems to relate to the primary purpose of the Mosaic law. It was given not to give life, but to accentuate and reveal our sinfulness (cf. Rom. 7:9-11; Gal. 3:10). The Law brings condemnation (cf. Rom. 5:13), wrath (cf. Rom. 4:15), and death (cf. Rom. 7:19; II Cor. 3:6). See George E. Ladd’s A Theology of the New Testament, pp. 495-510. The place of the law is also clearly seen in Rom. 3:20; 5:20; 10:4; Gal. 3:24-25. The relationship between the NT believer and the OT Law has been a greatly confused issue. It seems to me, based on all the passages of the NT, that the Christian is not under OT law (cf. Rom. 6:14; Gal. 5:18). This is not because the OT law has passed away, but because the NT Christian fulfills the OT law in God’s love relationships with us seen in believers’ love for others (cf. Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:14). The purpose of the law is to bring fallen mankind to Christ, so as to redeem them. However, just because the OT law is not a means of salvation does not mean it is not God’s will for humanity in society (cf. Matt. 5:17; Rom. 8:4). See Special Topic: Paul’s Views of the Mosaic Law at I Cor. 9:9.

“the Spirit gives life” This context does not provide hemeneutical method! This paragraph does not relate to the historical-grammatical method of biblical hermeneutics versus the allegorical method. It relates primarily to the distinction between the purpose of the OT and the purpose of the NT.

Even more to the point, the role of heart-felt faith in God’s resources (cf. John 6:63) versus trusting in human resources (i.e. knowledge, works, racial standing). The key is God’s love, Christ’s work, and the Spirit’s enabling. Notice that both the killing of the letter and life giving of the Spirit are both PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVES.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:7-11

7But if the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was, how will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory? 8For if the ministry of condemnation has glory, much more does the ministry of righteousness abound in glory. 9For indeed what had glory, in this case has no glory because of the glory that surpasses it. 10For if that which fades away was with glory, much more that which remains is in glory.

3:7 “if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence which is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective.

“the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones” The purpose of the law was to show sinfulness (cf. Gal. 3:24). This section, vv. 7-18, is a rabbinical type Midrash on Exod. 34:23-35. There is a threefold use of “the veil” metaphor: (1) Moses; (2) contemporary Jews; (3) believers.

“came with glory” See Special Topic: Glory at I Cor. 2:7.

“could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was” This relates to Exod. 34:30-35. There has been much discussion about this passage. Some think Moses veiled his face to keep the Israelites from seeing the fading glory (cf. vv. 7,13). Others, however, think that Moses veiled his face because the Israelites could not stand the glory of God because of their sins.

3:8 This verse is contrasting the ministry of Moses, which reflected God’s glory with the ministry of the Spirit who shares the Father’s glory.

3:9 “if” This is another FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence which is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes.

“the ministry of condemnation” What a strong, shockingly negative way to describe the Old Covenant.
“the ministry of righteousness” The OT produced condemnation for most of the children of Abraham. The NT produces righteousness for all the children of Adam if only they will trust in God’s finished work in Christ and to the wooing of the Spirit. See Special Topic: Righteousness at I Cor. 1:30.

“abound” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE of perisseuó, which emphasizes its ongoing nature. See fuller note at 1:5.

3:10
NASB “For indeed what had glory, in this case has not glory because of the glory that surpasses it”
NKJV “For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect because of the glory that excels”
NRSV “Indeed, what once had glory has lost its glory because of the greater glory”
TEV “We may say that because of the far brighter glory now the glory that was so bright in the past is gone”
NJB “Indeed, what was once considered glorious has lost all claim to glory, by contrast with the glory which transcends it”

The OT is characterized as “had glory” (PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE). It was surely from God and reflected God. However, the fuller revelation is in Christ, the glory of the NT (PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE). This comparison of YHWH’s covenants is also developed in the book of Hebrews. See Special Topic: Glory at I Cor. 2:7.

“surpasses” This is an intensified term from “over” or “beyond” and “to throw.” Paul uses it here and in 9:14 (i.e. “The surpassing grace of God”). He also uses both perisseuó and huperballó in 11:23, where he compares his background and ministry with the credentials of the false teachers. Paul speaks with intense feelings and words! See Special Topic: Paul’s Use of Huper Compounds at I Cor. 2:1.

3:11 “if” This is another FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence.

“that which fades away” This is the term katargeó, which is used so often by Paul in his Corinthian letters (cf. I Cor. 1:28; 2:6; 6:13; 13:8,10,11; 15:24,26; II Cor. 3:7,11,13,14). For the Special Topic see I Cor. 1:28.

“that which remains is in glory” The contrast is not between that which is from God or has God’s glory, but which has the greater glory and the abiding glory. The answer is the New Covenant in Christ, the New Age of the Spirit, and the now complete predestined eternal plan of redemption (cf. Acts 2:22-24; 3:18-21; 4:28; 13:29-41).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:12-18
12 Therefore having such a hope, we use great boldness in our speech, 13 and are not like Moses, who used to put a veil over his face so that the sons of Israel would not look intently at the end of what was fading away. 14 But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ. 15 But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; 16 but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. 18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

3:12 “Therefore having such a hope” This seems to relate to eschatological glory (cf. v. 11). See Special Topic: Hope at I Cor. 13:13.

“we use great boldness in our speech” See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: BOLDNESS (PARRHŚIA)

This Greek term is a compound of “all” (pan) and “speech” (rhēsis). This freedom or boldness in speech often had the connotation of a boldness amidst opposition or rejection (cf. John 7:13; I Thess. 2:2).

In John’s writings (used 13 times) it often denotes a public proclamation (cf. John 7:4, also in Paul’s writings, Col. 2:15). However, sometimes it simply means “plainly” (cf. John 10:24; 11:14; 16:25,29).

In Acts the Apostles speak the message about Jesus in the same manner (i.e. with boldness) as Jesus spoke about the Father and His plans and promises (cf. Acts 2:29; 4:13,29,31; 9:27-28; 13:46; 14:3; 18:26; 19:8; 26:26; 28:31). Paul also asked for prayer that he might boldly preach the gospel (cf. Eph. 6:19; I Thess. 2:2) and live the gospel (cf. Phil. 1:20).
Paul’s eschatological hope in Christ gave him boldness and confidence to preach the gospel in this current evil age (cf. II Cor. 3:11-12). He also had confidence that Jesus’ followers would act appropriately (cf. II Cor. 7:4).

There is one more aspect to this term. Hebrews uses it in a unique sense of boldness in Christ to approach God and speak to Him (cf. Heb. 3:6; 4:16; 10:19,35). Believers are fully accepted and welcomed into intimacy with the Father through the Son!

3:13 This verse refers to verse 7, which is an allusion to Exod. 34:29-35. In the OT the reason for Moses wearing a veil is the fear of what his glowing face might cause the Israelites (cf. Exod. 34:30). Paul interprets the reason so as to accentuate his depreciation of the Old Covenant. As Moses’ face fades, so too, Moses covenant!

Paul makes several comparisons between Moses’ covenant and Jesus’ covenant.

1. the Lord of Exodus = the Spirit of Jesus
2. only Moses could approach God intimately versus all believers in Christ can approach God
3. Moses’ glory faded versus Jesus’ glory never fades
4. Moses’ followers cannot see Christ in the OT versus Jesus’ followers through the Spirit can correctly interpret the OT in light of Christ
5. Moses brought the bondage of performance versus Christ brings the freedom of grace
6. the letter of the Mosaic Law brings death versus the Spirit of the New Covenant brings life, life eternal, life abundant
7. Moses’ covenant was unable to produce a righteous people versus Jesus’ covenant does produce righteous people (both objectively in justification and subjectively in sanctification)

3:14 “But their minds were hardened” This is an AORIST PASSIVE INDICATIVE. This Greek term comes from the idea of “thick skinned” or “callousness” (cf. Mark 6:52; 8:17; Rom. 11:7,25). Spiritual blindness has both a spiritual origin (i.e. [1] God by the use of the PASSIVE VOICE, cf. Isa. 6:9-10; 29:10; John 12:40; Rom. 9:18 and [2] Satan, cf. II Cor. 4:4) and human origin (cf. John 3:19-20). For a good discussion of the theological mystery of Israel’s hardening read Rom. 9-11 and Hard Sayings of the Bible from Inter Varsity Press, pp. 619-621. The verb “lies” in v. 15 can be either PRESENT PASSIVE (i.e. #1) or PRESENT MIDDLE (i.e. #2).

See Special Topic: Schemes at 2:11.

“the same veil remains unlifted” Moses used a literal veil; this term is now used to describe the inner blindness of contemporary rabbinical Judaism. Jews are walking in the judgment of Isa. 6:9-10 and 29:10. This also relates to the Jews of our day who refuse to accept Jesus as the Messiah (cf. v. 15).

“because it is removed in Christ” Only the grace of God can remove the blindness of tradition, self-righteousness, and sin. Religious people are as prone to spiritual blindness as non-religious people. Fallen mankind’s only hope is:

1. the unchanging mercy of the Father
2. the full and finished atonement of the Son
3. the universal wooing/work of the Spirit

Salvation is a spiritual gift and not a matter of family, tradition, intellect, performance, or preference.

What Paul may be asserting in this context is the believer’s ability through the Spirit to see the life, teachings, and work of Jesus in the OT. Jesus Himself opened the minds of the two on the road to Emmaus (cf. Luke 24:13-35, especially vv. 25-27).

NASB, TEV “removed”
NKJV “taken away”
NRSV “set aside”
NJB “done away”

See Special Topic: Katargeo at I Cor. 1:28.


3:16 “but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away” This could be a quote from Exod. 34:34. If so it relates to Moses’ actions when approaching God. It also seems to be a universal appeal and invitation for anyone and everyone to turn to the Lord. The term “turn” in Hebrew (shub) refers to repentance. The term, “the Lord,” here could refer contextually either to YHWH or to Jesus. The ambiguity is probably purposeful. Notice the combined emphasis on human response and divine action (i.e. covenant).

3:17 “Now the Lord is the Spirit” The ministry of Jesus and the Spirit are inseparably linked (cf. vv. 17-18). The ministry of the Spirit is to magnify Jesus. It is described in John 16:8-14.
In context it is possible that Paul is not commenting on the connection between Jesus and the Spirit, but defining the word “Lord” in v. 16, which in the context of Exod. 34:34, refers to YHWH, but Paul is using it in the sense of the REB translation, “Now the Lord of whom this passage speaks is the Spirit.” If this is accurate then the entire section is not referring to Jesus by the term “Lord,” but to the Spirit (cf. Gen. 1:2 also note Gordon D. Fee, To What End Exegesis, pp. 218-239). It is a contrast between the OT law code and the then unwritten gospel (i.e. written versus living).

SPECIAL TOPIC: JESUS AND THE SPIRIT

There is a fluidity between the work of the Spirit and the Son. G. Campbell Morgan said the best name for the Spirit is “the other Jesus.” The following is an outline comparison of the work and titles of the Son and Spirit.

1. Spirit called “Spirit of Jesus” or similar expressions (cf. Rom. 8:9; II Cor. 3:17; Gal. 4:6; I Pet. 1:11).
2. Both called by the same terms
   a. “truth”
      1) Jesus (John 14:6)
      2) Spirit (John 14:17; 16:13)
   b. “advocate”
      1) Jesus (I John 2:1)
      2) Spirit (John 14:16,26; 15:26; 16:7)
   c. “Holy”
      1) Jesus (Luke 1:35; 14:26)
      2) Spirit (Luke 1:35)
3. Both indwell believers
   a. Jesus (Matt. 28:20; John 14:20,23; 15:4-5; Rom. 8:10; II Cor. 13:5; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 3:17; Col. 1:27)
   b. Spirit (John 14:16-17; Rom. 8:9,11; I Cor. 3:16; 6:19; II Tim. 1:14)
   c. Father (John 14:23; II Cor. 6:16)

“there is liberty” This refers to freedom from spiritual blindness, self-righteousness, and legalism caused by a personal faith relationship with Jesus Christ (cf. John 8:32,36; Rom. 14: I Cor. 8; 10:23ff; Gal. 5:1,13).

One of my favorite commentators, F. F. Bruce, in his book, Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free, says “Paul certainly knew the love of Christ to be the all-compelling power in life. Where love is the compelling power, there is no sense of strain or conflict or bondage in doing what is right: the man or woman who is compelled by Jesus’ love and empowered by his Spirit does the will of God from the heart. For (as Paul could say from experience) ‘where the Spirit of the Lord is, there the heart is free’” (p. 21).

3:18 “with unveiled face” This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE implying a permanent unveiling. Also note the inclusive “we all” referring to the believers in the confused and factious Corinthian church.

“beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord” The gospel has fully revealed both YHWH and Jesus of Nazareth (cf. 4:6). As we respond in repentance and faith the revelation changes us into His image. This same metaphor is found in 4:4. These Corinthian Christians had clearly seen God in Christ through the gospel.

The term “beholding” is a rare term. The Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature by Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Danker lists the possible uses based on the voice (p. 424).
1. ACTIVE, produce a reflection
2. PASSIVE, what is seen in a mirror
3. MIDDLE, look at oneself in a mirror

“are being transformed” This is a PRESENT PASSIVE INDICATIVE. All of the verbals in this context are PASSIVE VOICE, implying God’s activity on our behalf, transforming believers into Christ’s likeness (cf. Rom. 12:2). This same verb is used of the Transfiguration (cf. Matt. 17:2; Mark 9:2). We get the English word metamorphosis from this Greek term.

“into the same image” Jesus is the image of God (cf. 4:4; John 1:14-18; 14:9; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3). Humans were created in the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). Believers are in the image of Christ (cf. Rom. 8:29-30). Christlikeness is God’s primary goal for all believers (cf. Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4).
“from glory to glory” There are stages in God’s plan of restoration and renewal. Believers are in a process that leads to Christlikeness (cf. I John 3:2). See Special Topic: Glory at I Cor. 2:7.

“the Lord, the Spirit” Some possible translations: (1) King James, “even as by the Spirit of the Lord”; (2) Vulgate, “even as from the Lord (who is) the Spirit”; (3) Westcott and Hort, “even as from the sovereign Spirit” and (4) from the context of vv. 16-17, “even as from the Lord who is Spirit” (cf. TEV, NJB, and NIV). See note at v. 17.

It is hard in some contexts to know if pneuma (i.e. spirit) should be (1) little “s,” referring to the human spirit (cf. KJV of vv. 6,8; Rom. 7:6; I Cor. 15:45) or (2) capital “S,” referring to the Holy Spirit, the third person of the eternal Trinity (cf. v. 3; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6; I Pet. 1:11).

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Describe the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant?
2. Why is the OT said to be death? Does this mean the OT is evil?
3. What is the relationship between the OT and the NT?
4. Does this passage speak of the Holy Spirit or the spiritual?
5. What is the metaphor of “the veil” trying to communicate to modern day Christians?
II CORINTHIANS 4

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

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READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

BRIEF CONTEXTUAL OUTLINE

A. Presentation of the message, v. 2
B. Opposition to the message, vv. 3-4a
C. The message veiled, vv. 4b-6
D. Paradox of the message, vv. 7-13
E. Results of the message, vv. 14-18
4:1 “we” It is obvious that Paul is using the PLURAL pronoun to refer to himself, as he does throughout this chapter.

“we have this ministry” Paul is referring to “the ministry of the Spirit” (cf. 3:8), also called “the ministry of righteousness” (cf. 3:9). Paul uses this word for service, diaconia, so often in II Corinthians.

1. diakonos, 3:3; 8:19,20
2. diaconia, 3:7,8,9; 4:1; 5:18; 6:3; 8:4; 9:1,12,13; 11:8
3. diakonos, 3:6; 6:4; 11:15,23

Christians are saved to serve (cf. Eph. 2:10). Christianity is not a “what’s in it for me” focus as much as “what can I do for others because of what Christ has done for me” focus. Paul served and called to service (cf. Gal. 2:20). See Special Topic: Servant Leadership at I Cor. 4:1.

“as we received mercy” God’s mercy for Saul, who was such a staunch, militant, anti-Christian (cf. I Tim. 1:13,16), on the road to Damascus (AORIST PASSIVE INDICATIVE) encouraged him to continue to preach the Good News in the face of adversity.

Paul wrote in Greek, but thought in Hebrew. The Greek term eleēō (i.e. mercy, pity, compassion) is used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew term hesed, which relates to covenant fidelity. YHWH is faithful to His covenant promises, even when humanity is not! Paul’s dramatic conversion clearly reveals the compassion of God. He acts in mercy to Jews (cf. Rom. 9:15,16,18,23-24; 11:30) and to Gentiles (cf. Rom. 11:32) for His own covenant purpose, which is the restoration of His image in mankind through the work of Christ and the ministry of the Spirit. God’s loyalty to His covenant and His unchanging character of mercy is mankind’s only hope.

“we do not lose heart” This is PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE. This must be understood in the light of Paul’s overall ministry and this particular context (cf. v. 16). Paul did feel like giving up several times. Jesus appeared to him in visions several times to encourage him (cf. Acts 18:9-10; 23:11; 27:24; II Tim. 4:17). In this particular context, in the face of physical trials and problems with the church at Corinth, Paul had confidence that the merciful, covenantal God was there and in control (cf. 3:12). The task was too important to lose heart (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8).

4:2 “we have renounced” This is AORIST MIDDLE INDICATIVE. There is a series of things which Paul personally refused to use in his own ministry: (1) no underhanded means; (2) no disgraceful methods; (3) no cunning; (4) no tampering with or watering down God’s message. Each of these methods reflect the false teachers’ charges or their actions.

NASB “the things hidden because of shame”
NKJV “the hidden things of shame”
NRSV “the shameful things that one hides”
TEV “secret and shameful deeds”
NJB “shameful secrecy”

Paul uses similar phrases to describe slavery to sin in Rom. 6:21 and sins of humanity which will be revealed in I Cor. 4:5 (also see I Cor. 14:25). In this context the phrase seems to describe the methodology of the itinerant false teachers.
This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE. Paul uses the term “crafty” (i.e. “all” plus “work”) several times in his letters to Corinth (cf. I Cor. 3:19; II Cor. 4:2; 11:3; 12:16). We must be very careful about our methods as well as our goals. For in Christianity the means determine the end. This same word is used by Paul (1) in a quote from Job 5:13 referring to human wisdom (cf. I Cor. 3:19); (2) of Satan tempting Eve (cf. II Cor. 11:3); (3) of the trickery of Satan and the false teachers (cf. Eph. 4:14); and (4) here of the methods of false teachers.

NASB “or adulterating the word of God”
NKJV “nor handling the word of God deceitfully”
NRSV “to falsify God’s word”
TEV “nor do we falsify the word of God”
NJB “or to falsify the word of God”

This term and its related forms mean (1) watered down (cf. 2:17); (2) entrapped with bait (cf. Matt. 26:4; Mark 14:1); or (3) defrauded or deceived (cf. II Cor. 11:13; Rom. 3:13). It refers to a changing message based on the hearer’s sensibilities or trying to trick the hearers (cf. I Cor. 1:23).

NASB “by the manifestation of truth”
NKJV “by manifestation of truth”
NRSV “by the open statement of the truth”
TEV “in full light of truth”
NJB “by showing the truth openly”

For “manifestation” see full note at 2:14. The term “truth” has the ARTICLE and refers to the gospel of Christ, the New Covenant. The false teachers acted in shameful ways, secret ways, but Paul preached the full truth publicly. See Special Topic: “Truth” in Paul’s Writings at 13:8.

“commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God” Paul is referring to his self-limiting love for others. This does not speak of compromise, but voluntary self-limiting of freedom because of the cultural hang-ups or personal preferences of others. His intentionality was evangelism, not personal freedom (cf. Rom. 14; I Cor. 8; 10:23ff).

Paul uses these same terms in 5:11-21, which also emphasize the gospel and our part in its proclamation. See fuller note on “commend” at 3:1. See fuller note on “conscience” at I Cor. 8:7 and 10:25.

“in the sight of God” This seems to be an idiomatic phrase parallel to “God is my witness.” Other Pauline texts also use this phrase in a similar way (cf. Gal. 1:20; I Tim. 5:21; 6:13; II Tim. 2:14; 4:1), also notice Paul’s oath formula in 1:23; 11:31; and I Thess. 2:5,10).

4:3 “if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE, which is assumed to be true. Some people just do not get it (cf. Matt. 13).

“our gospel is veiled” This is a PERIPHRASTIC PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE of “veiled” (cf. 3:14; 16). It is obvious to Paul that when he preached the gospel some men absolutely could not respond to it. As the Jews are “hardened” (cf. 3:14; and Isa. 6:9-10), hearers in every age are also “blinded” (cf. 4:4). This is the mystery of predestination versus free will, the paradox of the gospel (cf. John 6:44,65).

“those who are perishing” Paul is continuing his analogy of the gospel as an aroma of life and of death (cf. 2:15; I Cor. 1:18-19; 8:11; 10:9-10; 15:18). The proclamation of the gospel is serious business, to some life, but to some death.

For the concept of “perishing” see Special Topic at I Cor. 8:11 and a discussion at I Cor. 1:18.

4:4 “the god of this world” This evil personality is called by several names by Paul.
1. Satan (cf. Rom. 16:20; I Cor. 5:5; 7:5; II Cor. 2:11; 11:14; 12:7; I Thess. 2:18; II Thess. 2:9; I Tim. 1:20; 5:15)
2. Devil (cf. Eph. 4:27; 6:11-12; I Tim. 3:6,7; II Tim. 2:26; the plural used of the demonic, I Cor. 10:20-21; I Tim. 4:1)
3. “the prince and power of the air” (cf. Eph. 2:2)
4. “the god of this age/world” (cf. I Cor. 4:4, John calls him “the ruler of this age/world,” John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11)
5. “the tempter” (cf. I Thess. 3:5)
6. “the evil one” (cf. II Thess. 3:3, this title is common in Matthew’s and John’s writings)
7. “an angel of light” (cf. II Cor. 11:13)

This verse caused great concern to the early Church Fathers because it seemed to add fuel to the fire of the Gnostic and Arian false teachers. Therefore, unfortunately, they (Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen, Chrysostom, Abrase, Theodoret, and Augustine)
changed the Greek of this text to: “in who God has blinded the mind of the unbeliever of this world.” Now Satan is obviously referred to as the prince and power of this world (cf. John 12:31; 14:30; Eph. 2:2). These early Church Fathers were not reacting to the concept of a personal force of evil, but to the theological concept of the Gnostic Demiurge and the Arians’ view of a less-than-divine Christ. See Special Topic: Personal Evil at I Cor. 7:5.

“in this world” This is also the Greek term for “age” (i.e. aion houtos) This seems to refer to the Jewish view of two ages: the current evil age dominated by sin and the age to come, set up and dominated by the Messiah (cf. Matt. 28:20; Eph. 2:2). For the full discussion of the two ages see Special Topic at I Cor. 1:21. The terms “this world” (kosmos houtos) and “this age” (aion houtos) are used interchangeably (cf. George E. Ladd’s A Theology of the New Testament, p. 223).

“has blinded the minds of the unbelieving” This is an AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE. The term is used of spiritual blindness in Matt. 15:14; 23:16; I John 2:11 and the concept is in John 9. This same term is used in a quote from the Septuagint of Isa. 6:10 in John 12:40. It is a rather rare term in Paul’s writings (cf. Rom. 2:19 and here), but common in the Gospels.

In the Isaiah passage (i.e. 6:9-10) it is God’s judgment that blinded the Israelites’ spiritual eyes because of their continual unbelief. This same truth is expressed in Rom. 1:21, where the PASSIVE VOICE implies God (cf. Rom. 11:8-10, quoting Isa. 29:10 and Ps. 69:22-23). It is difficult to balance:

1. human unbelief
2. divine hardening
3. satanic blinding

Belief is a gift and a necessary response. The covenantal paradox is the mystery of predestination and free will. We must let God be God and demand human accountability.

Can you imagine the power that the evil one must have that he is able to blind the eyes of humans to the compelling beauty of the gospel (cf. Matt. 13:19) and the wooing of the Holy Spirit to respond to it (cf. John 6:44, 65)? Paul uses several metaphors to describe unbelief: (1) hardened hearts; (2) blinded minds; (3) seared consciences; and (4) blinded eyes.

NASB “so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ”
NKJV “lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. . .should shine on them”
NRSV “to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ”
TEV “He keeps them from seeing the light shining on them, the light that comes from the Good News about the glory of Christ”
NJB “so that they cannot see shining the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ”

If you will notice in this context, there are several words that relate to light. This refers to (1) Jesus, often called “light” (cf. John 1:4,9; 3:19; 8:12); (2) possibly Paul’s experience on the Damascus road (cf. Acts 9); or (3) possibly an allusion to the Shekinah glory of God from the Exodus mentioned in v. 6; 3:7).

To not see Christ in the Scriptures is to miss salvation. The NT proclaims the glory of Christ, the gospel. The OT is fulfilled and completed in Him. He is the necessary foundation, cornerstone, cap stone, top stone. To miss Him is to shipwreck one’s faith.

“who is the image of God” To see Jesus is to see the Father (cf. John 1:18; 14:8,9; Phil. 2:6; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3). The NT asserts that Jesus was incarnated to serve three purposes: (1) to fully reveal the Father; (2) to atone for sin; and (3) to give believers an example to follow.

4:5 “we do not preach ourselves” Trying to interpret Paul’s letter is like listening to only half of a phone conversation. We assume from Paul’s statements the things that might have caused them. From 3:1 and here and chapters 10-13, it is obvious that Paul had those at Corinth who attacked him personally and his gospel. Paul is forcefully asserting Jesus’ Lordship and his servanthood (cf. I Cor. 3:5-9). He only defends himself (i.e. “ourselves” is emphatic) or magnifies his credentials (cf. chapter 12) in order to protect the validity of his gospel. For an interesting discussion on the limits of apostolic authority see George Ladd’s A Theology of the New Testament, p. 382.

“Christ Jesus as Lord” This phrase was the early church’s profession of faith at baptism (cf. Rom. 10:9-13; I Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:9-11). All three of the major terms used in the NT to designate the Promised One, the Suffering Servant, are used in this phrase: 1. Christ—This is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew term “messiah,” which meant “an anointed one.” It implies “one called and equipped by God for a specific task.” In the OT three groups of leaders: priests, kings, and prophets were anointed. Jesus fulfills all three of these anointed offices (cf. Heb. 1:2-3). 2. Jesus—This Hebrew name meant “YHWH saves” or “YHWH brings salvation.” It was revealed to his parents by an angel (cf. Matt. 1:21). “Jesus” is derived from the Hebrew word for salvation, hosea, suffixed to the covenant name for God, “YHWH.” It is the same as the Hebrew name Joshua.
3. Lord—The term “lord” (*kurios*) can be used in a general sense or in a specific theological sense. It can mean “mister,” “sir,” “master,” “owner,” “husband,” or “the full God-man.” The OT usage of this term (*adon*) came from the Jews’ reluctance to pronounce the covenant name for God, YHWH, which was the CAUSATIVE FORM of the Hebrew verb “to be” (cf. Exod. 3:14). They were afraid of breaking the commandment which said, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain” (cf. Exod. 20:7, Deut. 5:11). They thought if they did not pronounce it, they could not take it in vain. So, they substituted the Hebrew word, *adonai*, which had a similar meaning to the Greek word, *Kurios* (Lord). The NT authors used this term to describe the full deity of Christ. The phrase “Jesus is Lord” was the public confession of faith and baptismal formula of the early church (cf. Rom. 10:9-13; I Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:11).

4:6 “For God who said, ‘Light shall shine out of darkness’” This is an allusion to Gen. 1:3 and a personal allusion to Paul’s Damascus road experience (cf. Acts 9). For Peter the same kind of revelatory experience involving Jesus and light (i.e. glory) occurred on the Mount of Transfiguration (cf. II Pet. 1:19).

- “heart” See Special Topic at I Cor. 14:25.
- “glory of God” This seems to relate to the Shekinah cloud of glory that symbolized the presence of YHWH in the book of Exodus (cf. 3:17). This symbol of God’s presence was transferred to the Ark of the Covenant after the crossing of the Jordan River into the Promised Land. YHWH is fully known, not as a visible, physical object, but in Jesus, the incarnation of deity. See Special Topic: Glory at I Cor. 2:7.
- “in the face of Christ” This is the continuing comparison between the veil of Moses (cf. 3:13) and the perfect reflection of Jesus Christ (cf. Heb. 1:3). Believers have seen the glory of Christ in the gospel (cf. 3:18).

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:7-12

> But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves; we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death works in us, but life in you.

4:7 “But we have this treasure” This refers to God’s indwelling Spirit that magnifies, reveals, and forms the person of Christ in our lives (cf. John 16:8-14; Rom. 8:9; Col. 1:27; II Pet. 1:3-4).

- “in earthen vessels” This is an emphasis on the human body (cf. v. 10,16; 5:1ff; Gen. 2:7; 3:19; 18:27). This entire context is a dialectic between Paul’s physical earthly condition and the tremendous spiritual power of the gospel and the indwelling Holy Spirit in his life.

- “the surpassing greatness” *Huperbolē*, see Special Topic: Paul’s Use of *Huper* Compounds at I Cor. 2:1.

4:8-11 “we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed” Verses 8-10 contain a series of nine PRESENT (mostly PASSIVE) PARTICIPLES which are word plays on Koine Greek words describing Paul’s difficult ministry. The first eight PARTICIPLES are in contrasting pairs. The first describes Paul’s ministry experience and the second limits the consequences. Examples of this word play are: (1) “at loss but not utter loss” and (2) “knocked down but not knocked out.” This section can be compared to II Cor. 1:6; 6:4-10; 11:23-28.

4:9 “destroyed” For the concept of “destroyed” see Special Topic at I Cor. 8:11 and the discussion at I Cor. 1:18.

4:10 “always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus” This refers to the paradox of our being rightly related to God, but exposed to physical problems because of a fallen world. We have eternal life, but we are physically dying (cf. 1:8). As Jesus was rejected and persecuted (cf. John 15:20), so too, are believers (cf. I Cor. 15:31; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:10; Col. 1:24; I Pet. 4:12-19).

- “so that the life of Jesus” This refers to (1) the resurrected Christ, which was Paul’s hope or (2) the faithfulness of Jesus under persecution. Paul wanted to exhibit Jesus’ faithfulness (cf. v. 11) and participate in the resurrection of His followers (cf. v. 14; I Cor. 15).
“may be manifested in our body” This is an AORIST PASSIVE SUBJUNCTIVE. Read Gal. 6:17, which obviously refers to Paul’s physical scars in Jesus’ service. As our earthly vessel is broken, the treasure inside is more visible (cf. 12:9-10).

Paul uses the Greek term sarp (i.e. flesh) in several senses.
1. the human body (“body” of v. 10 parallel to “flesh” of v. 11; also II Cor. 7:5; 10:3; 12:7)
2. human person (cf. II Cor. 5:16; 11:18)
3. human descent (i.e. father – son, cf. Rom. 1:3; 4:1)
4. humanity as a whole (cf. I Cor. 1:26,29)
5. human sinfulness (cf. Rom. 7:5,18; 8:3,4,5,8,9,12,13; II Cor. 7:1; 10:2)

4:11 “we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus’ sake” Theological insight into this verse can be seen in I Cor. 4:9, where the Apostles are on exhibition both to angels and men. Believers also are on exhibition to a lost world and the angelic world (cf. Eph. 2:7; 3:10).

The term “constantly” (cf. 6:10) is parallel to “always” of v. 10. The call to ministry is a call to intentional daily death to self (cf. 5:14-15; Rom. 6:7; I Cor. 15:31; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:8,10; I John 3:16). This attitude is the reversal of the fall of mankind. It is evidence of Christlikeness, which is the restoration of the image of God in humanity.

The term “given up” (paranididomi) was used of Judas handing over Jesus to the authorities (cf. Matt. 20:18-19; Mark. 10:33). It is used by Jesus in a prophetic sense describing His followers in Matt. 10:17; 24:9; Mark 13:11-12.

The phrase “for Jesus’ sake” is to be understood as causality. Our ministry burdens do not benefit Christ, but they are ours because we follow Him. As they persecuted Him, they will persecute us. However, it is also true that the things we suffer as Christ’s followers are the very things that can help us grow more and more like Him.

Paul’s identification with Jesus’ death functions theologically on several levels.
1. sacramental theology (cf. Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12; 3:1,3-5)
2. church doctrine (cf. I Thess. 4:14-15)
3. personal experience (cf. II Cor. 4:10-11; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:10)

4:12 “So death works in us, but life in you” This is a PRESENT MIDDLE (deponent) INDICATIVE which personifies death. This refers to physical persecution for Paul and his mission team (cf. v. 16) and spiritual life in them to whom he preaches the gospel.

In The Anchor Bible series on II Corinthians Victor Furnish believes it is PASSIVE VOICE (p. 257) because that VOICE dominates vv. 10-11, where the understood subject is the power of God (cf. v. 7). This would imply that God uses trials and persecutions as a means of producing Christlikeness in His followers. Leaders’ lives give power to their messages (cf. 1:3-11; II Tim. 2:9-10).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:13-15

13But having the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, “I BELIEVED, THEREFORE I SPOKE;” we also believe, therefore we also speak, 14knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you. 15For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God.

4:13 “having the same spirit of faith” The significant thing here is that the same faith that made a person right with God in the OT (i.e. the writer of Ps. 116) is the faith that makes a person right with God in the NT (i.e. Abraham in Gen. 5:6, quoted by Paul in Rom. 4:3,9,22).

Paul is using the term “spirit” in the sense of a person’s self. He often uses “spirit” as a way of referring to the inner qualities of a human person. This is not related to the similar phrase found in I Cor. 12:9, which refers to the Spirit gifting believers with faith. This refers to saving faith such as Abraham’s (cf. Gen. 15:6). Interestingly, in Word Studies in the New Testament, vol. 2, M. R. Vincent says, “not distinctly the Holy Spirit, nor, on the other hand, a human faculty or disposition, but blending both; faith as a gift of the Spirit of God” (p. 82).

In Synonyms of the Old Testament, Robert Girdlestone has in interesting discussion of the uses of the term “spirit” in the NT (pp. 61-63).

“1. evil spirits
2. the human spirit
3. the Holy Spirit
4. things that the Spirit produces in and through human spirits
   a. ‘not a spirit of slavery vs. a spirit of adoption’ - Rom. 8:15
   b. ‘a spirit of gentleness’ - I Cor. 4:21
   c. ‘a spirit of faith’ - II Cor. 4:13
   d. ‘a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him’ - Eph. 1:17
e. ‘not a spirit of timidity vs. power, love and discipline’ - II Tim. 1:7
f. ‘spirit of error’ vs. ‘spirit of truth’ - I John 4:6

“according to what is written” This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE, which is used by OT authors to refer to the givenness and relevance of Scripture (cf. Matt. 5:17-19).

“I BELIEVED, THEREFORE I SPOKE” This is a quote from the Septuagint of Psalm 116:10, which speaks of God’s rescue of a saint.

4:14 “that He who raised the Lord Jesus” This phrase is an excellent opportunity to show that the NT often attributes the works of redemption to all three persons of the Godhead: (1) God the Father raised Jesus (cf. Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30,33,34,37; 17:31; Rom. 6:4,9; 10:9; I Cor. 6:14; II Cor. 4:14; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12; I Thess. 1:10); (2) God the Son raised Himself (cf. John 2:19-22; 10:17-18); (3) God the Spirit raised Jesus (cf. Rom. 8:11).

“will raise us . . . will present us” These are both FUTURE ACTIVE INDICATIVES. Believers will be raised from the dead (syn with Jesus) and presented to the Father (syn with all believers).

Paul’s understanding as to the time of the Second Coming is ambiguous. In some texts it seems that he expected to be alive at the parousia (cf. I Thess. 4:15,17; I Cor. 15:51-52; and Phil. 3:20; 4:5), but in other texts he seems to identify himself with those believers who have died (cf. I Cor. 6:14; II Cor. 4:14; 5:1-10). Only the Father knows the time of the Second Coming (cf. Matt. 24:36; Mark 13:32; Acts 1:7). The Second Coming is the hope of every generation of believers, but the reality of only one generation. Believers are to live ready, ready by being active in Christ’s service.

4:15 Paul’s heart was to help sinful people come to faith in Christ and find true peace and joy and give God praise (cf. 1:11 and NASB, NRSV, TEV, NJB). The NKJV is a bit more literal “to the majority.” This may refer to Paul’s supporters in the Corinthian church. It would be opposite of the “some” (cf. 3:1; 10:12; I Cor. 4:18; 6:11; 8:7; 10:7,8,9,10; 15:6,12,34,35). Verse 15 is obviously a doxological summary.

“the glory of God” See Special Topic: Glory at I Cor. 2:7.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:16-18

16Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.
17For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, 18while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

4:16 “Therefore we do not lose heart” This is a recurrent theme in Paul’s writings (cf. 4:1; Gal. 6:9; Eph. 3:13; II Thess. 3:13). Circumstances are, in reality, strengthening our spiritual stamina and fruitfulness.

“but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day” These are both PRESENT PASSIVE INDICATIVES, which denote ongoing action. The PASSIVE VOICE is hard to translate and understand in this context. Most English translations translate them as ACTIVE VOICE, but they also may denote divine action in using physical problems and persecutions as a means to strengthen and mature Jesus’ followers (cf. Matt. 5:10-12; John 15:18-21; 16:1-2; 17:14; Acts 14:22; Rom. 5:3-4; 8:17; II Cor. 4:16-18; Phil. 1:29; 3:11; I Thess. 3:3; II Tim. 3:12; Heb. 5:8; James 1:2-4; I Pet. 4:12-19).

In Eph. 3:16 and 4:24 there is a comparison of the old man and the new man, but the contrast here is between our outer physical body and our inner spiritual nature.

“day by day” Paul uses Hebrew idiomatic (cf. Gen. 39:10; Esther 3:4; Ps. 68:19) repetition in v. 16, “day by day,” and a similar Hebraic repetition in v. 17, “excessively to excess” (i.e. huperbolan eis hperbolan). Remember, NT authors (except Luke) are Hebrew/Aramaic thinkers writing in Koine Greek. There are many Hebraic idioms and grammatical constructions, as well as numerous OT allusions and quotes.
This Greek term in its various forms (anakainoā, anakainizō) has two basic meanings.

1. “to cause something to become new and different (i.e. better)” - Rom. 12:2; Col. 3:10
2. “to cause a change to a previous preferable state” - II Cor. 4:16; Heb. 6:4-6

(taken from Louw and Nida’s Greek-English Lexicon, vol. 1, pp. 157, 594)

Moulton and Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament, say that this term (i.e. anakkainōsis) cannot be found in Greek literature earlier than Paul. Paul may have coined this term himself (p. 34).

Frank Stagg, New Testament Theology, has an interesting comment.

“Regeneration and renewal belong to God alone. Anakainōsis, the word for “renewal,” is an action noun, and it is employed in the New Testament, along with verb forms, to describe a continuing renewal, as in Romans 12:2, ‘Be ye transformed according to the renewing of your mind’ and 2 Corinthians 4:16, ‘Our inward man is being renewed day by day.’ Colossians 3:10 describes the ‘new man’ as ‘the one being renewed unto thorough knowledge according to the image of the one having created him.’ Thus the ‘new man,’ the ‘newness of life,’ the ‘regeneration,’ or ‘renewal,’ however designated, is traced to an initial act and a continuing act of God as the giver and sustainer of eternal life” (p. 118).

4:17-18 Verse 17 is very similar to Rom. 8:18, while v. 18 is similar to Rom. 8:24. Paul wrote Romans from Corinth! He had been thinking about his call and the problems connected to it. There was, in reality, no comparison between the momentary light affliction and the eternal glory! This is the biblical world view that sustains God’s people in this fallen world. He is with us, for us, and will bring us to His personal presence to remain forever!

4:17 “is producing” This same verb is used in Rom. 5:3-4 and James 1:2-4, which also speaks of the benefits of suffering and persecution.

“an eternal weight of glory” See Special Topic: Glory at I Cor. 2:7.

“far beyond all comparison” Huperbolē. See Special Topic: Paul’s Use of Huper Compounds at I Cor. 2:1.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How does v. 1 speak of the methods of the false teachers?
2. Were the early church fathers justified in changing the Greek text of v. 4 to meet the problem of their day?
3. What does it mean that Satan is the “god” of this world?
4. Why is Paul drawing such attention to his physical problems versus his spiritual strengths?
II CORINTHIANS 5

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

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READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

A. Paul discusses his death in vv. 1-10.
   1. He uses two metaphors.
      a. an earthly tent versus a permanent, God-made building
      b. clothed versus unclothed (i.e. naked)
   2. It is very difficult to follow Paul’s antecedent thoughts. Is he talking about
      a. our being clothed in Christ at baptism (cf. vv. 2-4)
      b. the Spirit’s indwelling at salvation (cf. v. 5)
      c. our receiving a new spiritual body at Christ’s return (cf. vv 3 and 10)
3. The best Pauline parallels to interpret this text are found in Rom. 8:18-25,26-30 (i.e. groaning) and I Cor. 15:53-54 (i.e. “swallowed up”).

4. Somehow this text must be related to Paul’s discussion of suffering in chapters 4 and 6. Faithful, godly living amidst difficult circumstances is a recurrent theme.

B. Paul makes a major theological assertion in vv. 6 and 8. Previously believers and non-believers were thought to go to Hades at death to await judgment. Rabbinical Judaism even asserted a division in this holding place of the dead (i.e. OT Sheol) between the righteous and the wicked. Paul asserts that at Jesus’ resurrection He took the righteous with Him to heaven. Now believers do not go to hades, but are with the Lord. Whether this implies a full fellowship or a limited fellowship is uncertain. The Bible does not reveal detailed information about the afterlife.

C. Paul makes another startling statement in v. 10. Apparently all believers and unbelievers will stand before Christ as Judge. Is this a parallel to the sheep and goat judgment of Matt. 25? If believers are forgiven of all sin through Christ, what will they be judged for? Again these specific questions cannot be answered biblically. The logical assumption is that they are responsible for (1) the gospel message; (2) their spiritual giftedness; (3) their use of physical resources; and (4) their availability for service. But, this is only conjecture based on the content of vv. 11-21.

D. Paul’s discussion of spiritual responsibility in vv. 11-21 obviously reflects the false teachers’ selfish, possibly immoral actions/teachings.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:1-5

1 For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, 3 inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. 4 For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. 5 Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.

5:1 “we know” It is difficult in this book to know the antecedent to Paul’s PLURAL PRONOUNS. Sometimes he refers to (1) himself; (2) his mission team; or (3) all believers. Context alone must determine which is implied. Here I assume it is #3.

“if” This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL which means potential action. Paul’s death was certain unless the Second Coming occurred first. He had thought he was going to die in Asia (cf. 1:8-10). His life as an Apostle had not been easy or painless (cf. 4:7-12; 6:3-10; 11:24-28). Paul simply did not know the time or circumstances of his death. He may have thought or hoped he would be alive when Christ returned (cf. I Cor. 15:51-52; Phil. 3:20; I Thess. 4:15,17). However, in other passages he expected to be raised from the dead (cf. I Cor. 6:14; II Cor. 4:14. For a good discussion see F. F. Bruce’s Answers to Questions, pp. 200-201).

“tent” This is one of several biblical metaphors for the frailty of the human body (i.e. grass, pottery). Paul knew his body was wearing out. He had tried to repair many an old tent!

NASB, TEV “is torn down”
NKJV, NRSV “is destroyed”
NJB “is folded up”

This is an AORIST PASSIVE SUBJUNCTIVE. Paul knew that life and death were in the hand of God (i.e. PASSIVE VOICE). He knew he would die, but he did not know when or how (i.e. SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD).

This term has a wide semantic field. In the OT and the NT kataluma was used for a lodging place and kataluò for a place to live or settle or rest. However, it is also used of the destruction or abrogation of something (which is the metaphorical extension of ἐλυσι, i.e. loose). In Isa. 38:12 it is used of taking down a tent. This seems to be the best parallel of Paul’s usage here.

“we have a building from God” This is a permanent building (cf. John 14:2-3; Heb. 11:10) compared with a moveable, transient tent (cf. Heb. 11:9). This is a PRESENT tense. Paul is stating a prophetic truth as if it were a current reality.

“house not made with hands” Our new bodies will be spiritual (cf. I Cor. 15:35-49), like Jesus’ (cf. Mark 14:58; I John 3:2).
“eternal in the heavens” This is referring to the dwelling place of God. The term “heaven” is plural because the rabbis debated over how many “heavens” there were. In Gen. 1 the term heaven refers to the atmosphere above the earth. So the rabbis used their knowledge of biblical numerology to assert a third heaven or a seventh heaven as the place where God dwelt.

Heaven is not up or out. It probably is another dimension without time and space. Jesus was able after the resurrection to appear and disappear, as well as move from place to place. Once the size of the physical universe is understood the awesomeness of the spiritual realm is staggering.

5:2 “in this” This is NEUTER in gender, which refers to “house” in v. 1.

“groan” This word is a PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE, believers continue to groan or sigh deeply for God’s new order and our new spiritual bodies (cf. Rom. 8:18-27).

“longing” This is a strong term for desire (cf. 9:14). The noun form is in 7:7 and 11. Paul was a man of strong feelings.

5:3-4 “Put it on” Paul often uses clothing as a metaphor for the spiritual life. The garment referred to here was the outer or upper tunic (ependutēs, cf. John 21:7). He used clothing as a metaphor for a person’s lifestyle choices. Believers are encouraged to take off the old life and lay it aside like a garment (cf. 3:8, 9; Eph. 4:22, 25, 31; James 1:21; I Pet. 2:1). They are to put on Christ (cf. 3:10, 12, 14; Eph. 4:24; Rom. 13:14; Gal. 3:27). These believers were once controlled and dominated by their evil desires, but now, through Christ, they can turn from them (cf. Rom. 5-6). This terminology of putting on Christ may have even been connected to the ordinance of baptism in the early church, where new converts put on clean, white clothing after baptism. Paul did not want to experience a disembodied state between death and the resurrection, but wanted to participate in the events related to the Second Coming (cf. I Thess. 4:15-17), one of which is the new spiritual body.

The theological concept of a disembodied state is not specifically stated in Scripture, but is only a reluctant implication because the concept is used in Greek philosophy as a permanent state conceived of as superior to physical embodiment. In Word Pictures in the New Testament A. T. Robertson says “Paul does not wish to be a mere disembodied spirit with his spiritual garment” (vol. 4, p. 228). The following is a brief note from my commentary, vol. 7, I Thess. 4:16.

“And the dead in Christ will rise first’ This phrase causes confusion about where the dead go between their death and resurrection day. This verse implies that they will remain in the grave (cf. Matt. 27:52-53).

However, II Cor. 5:8 implies that they are with the Lord. The solution may be in postulating a disembodied state. The physical body remains in the grave, the life force goes to be with the Lord. There are many unanswered questions here. The Bible does not provide a clear teaching passage on this subject.

Most translations translate it as if the saints are with God/Jesus and return with Him (cf. NASB). Another view is found in TEV, “Those who have died believing in Christ will rise to life first.”

5:3 Verse three is possibly a parenthesis. It is difficult to know exactly what Paul is referring to because (1) the text mixes metaphors; (2) the uncertainly of how “naked” relates to “put on”; and (3) the contextual relationship to Apostolic suffering (death) or opposition (false teachings).

There is also the added problem of a textual variant. The best textual evidence is behind evdusamenoi (i.e. MSS Π46, Ν, B, C, D2), but the very similar term ekdusamenoi (i.e. MS D*) makes more sense in the context. If one chooses by the criteria of (1) better, older Greek manuscripts and (2) the most unusual is probably original, then Paul has written a tautology (i.e. “put off. . .naked”).

“naked” This word is often used in Greek literature for the preferred disembodied state at death (cf. Vincent, Word Studies, vol. 2, p. 822; Frank Stagg, New Testament Theology, pp. 322-324; George E. Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament, pp. 552-554). The Greeks longed for this incipient release from the physical body; however, Christianity, like Judaism, asserts that we will always have a bodily expression (both believers and unbelievers, cf. Dan. 12:1-2; Matt. 25:46; John 5:28-29). Possibly Paul is again refuting the false teaching (i.e. incipient Gnosticism).

5:4 This brief and cryptic verse must be interpreted in light of Rom. 8:18-25,26-30 (i.e. “groaning”) and I Cor. 15:53-54 (i.e. “mortal,” “swallowed up”). It seems to be a restatement of verse 2.

5:5 “prepared” Paul uses this word often in II Corinthians (cf. 4:17; 5:5; 7:10,11; 9:11; 12:12). Our lives are not controlled by luck, chance, fate, but by God. Even our trials can be the means of maturity and greater faith.

The giving of the Spirit is (1) the sign the New Age has dawned; (2) the evidence of personal salvation; (3) the means of ministry; (4) the means for maturity; and (5) the surety of heaven.
This concept of a pledge had an OT precedent: (1) a promise to pay a debt (cf. Gen. 38:17,18,20; Deut. 24:10-13); (2) a promise of providing sustenance (cf. I Sam. 17:18); and (3) a personal promise (cf. II Kgs. 18:23; Isa. 36:8).

This Greek term refers to a “down-payment” or earnest money (cf. II Cor. 1:22; 5:5). In modern Greek it is used of an engagement ring, which is the promise of a marriage to come. The Spirit is the fulfilled promise of a new age of righteousness. This is part of the “already” and “not yet” tension of the NT, which is the overlapping of the two Jewish ages because of the two comings of Christ (see the excellent discussion in How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth by Fee and Stuart, pp. 129-134). The Spirit is a pledge given now for a future consummation.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:6-10**

“Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord—

7 for we walk by faith, not by sight—

8 we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. 

9 Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.

10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

5:6

NASB “good courage”

NKJV, NRSV “confident”

TEV “full of courage”

NJB “full of confidence”

This term is used several times in II Corinthians in two senses.

1. confidence, good cheer (cf. 5:6,8; 7:16)
2. boldness (cf. 10:1,2)

Our ongoing confidence (i.e. PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) in Christ gives us boldness in prayer and ministry.

“at home. . .absent” There is a word play between these two related terms (also in vv. 8 & 9).

1. endamountes, being at home (PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE)
2. ekdamounen, we are away from home (PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE)

When you know who you are in Him, you are always at home with Him, although, while on earth, we live by faith (cf. v.7).

5:7 “For we walk by faith, not by sight” This is a recurrent NT theme (cf. 4:18; Heb. 11:1,10,27; I Pet. 1:8). “Walk” is a biblical metaphor for lifestyle. Believers live in the physical realm, but by faith realize and trust in the invisible realm.

5:8 This is such a wonderful verse for Christians. It asserts that we will be with the Lord in some sense at death. This refutes the concept of soul sleep. Although our fellowship with other believers is uncertain at this stage and our fellowship with the Lord is not all it will be after we receive our new bodies on Resurrection Day, the great confidence is that we will be with Him! This truth is not clearly taught elsewhere in the Bible except possibly Phil. 1:21-23, which makes this a very significant verse! In light of this truth Paul and all believers can face any and every circumstance in life.

5:9 “we have as our ambition. . .to be pleasing to Him” This is the ambition and motivation for believers (cf. Eph. 5:8-10; Col. 1:10).

The term “well pleasing” has been found in several inscriptions, even before Paul’s day. It was a slogan of loyalty and fidelity in the Hellenistic first century cultural milieu (cf. Moulton and Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament, p. 259). Paul was a well-read scholar of both Greek and Hebrew thought.

5:10 “all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” The immediate context is written to believers; even believers will stand before God (cf. Rom. 14:10; I Cor. 3:10-17). Apparently, we will be judged/rewarded for our motives, availability, and use of spiritual gifts. Sin and sins have been completely dealt with in Christ’s substitutionary death, but discipleship is an issue! On the concept of Jesus as Judge, here is a brief note from my commentary on John 3:17.

“There are several passages in John that assert that Jesus came as Savior, not Judge (cf. 3:17-21; 8:15; 12:47). However, there are other passages in John that assert that Jesus came to judge, will judge (cf. 5:22-23,27; 9:39; and in other parts of the NT Acts 10:42; 17:31; II Tim. 4:1; I Pet. 4:5).
Several theological comments are in order: (1) God gave judgment to Jesus as He did creation and redemption as a sign of honor (cf. 5:23); (2) Jesus did not come the first time to judge, but to save (cf. 3:17), but by the fact that people reject Him, they judge themselves; (3) Jesus will return as King of Kings and Judge (cf. 9:39).

These seemingly contradictory statements are similar to the statements about John the Baptist being or not being Elijah.

“according to what he has done, whether good or bad” It is a universal principle that humans are responsible for their actions and will give an account to God (cf. Job 34:11; Prov. 24:12; Eccl. 12:14; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Matt. 16:27; 25:31-46; Rom. 2:6; 14:12; I Cor. 3:8; Gal. 6:7-10; II Tim. 4:14; I Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12; 22:12). Even believers will give an account of their lives and service to Christ (cf. II Cor. 5:10). Believers are not saved by works but are saved unto works (cf. Eph. 2:8-10; James and I John). See Special Topic: Christian Freedom vs. Christian Responsibility at I Cor. 10:23.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:11-15

11Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest to God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences. 12We are not again commending ourselves to you but are giving you an occasion to be proud of us, so that you will have an answer for those who take pride in appearance and not in heart. 13For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are of sound mind, it is for you. 14For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; 15and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.

5:11 “the fear of the Lord” This phrase relates to the judgment seat of Christ mentioned in v. 10. There is a respect and awe (cf. Acts 5:11; 9:31) due the Judge of the Universe (cf. Heb. 10:31; 12:29; Jude 22-23)! The title “Lord” can refer to YHWH or Jesus. The phrase “fear of the Lord” is common in the Septuagint, referring to YHWH. However, it is also a common NT title for Jesus. Judgment belongs to YHWH, but He has allocated it to His incarnated Son.

“we persuade men” In context this could refer to several specific groups of people: (1) unbelievers (cf. v. 10); (2) false teachers (cf. v. 12); or (3) weak believers (cf. vv. 11-12). Paul’s ministry fulfilled the Great Commission both in evangelism (cf. Matt. 28:19) and also discipleship (cf. Matt. 28:20).

“we are made manifest to God” This is a PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE. Paul boldly asserts that God fully and completely knows his motives and intents (cf. 4:2). See note at 2:14.

“we are made manifest also in your consciences” This is a PERFECT PASSIVE INFINITIVE. Paul is returning to a previous thought expressed in 4:2. His ministry with them had been completely open and honest. Paul wanted this church to understand his ministry motives and actions as clearly as God knew them.

“consciences” See full note at 1:12.

5:12 “commending ourselves” See full note at 3:1.

“so that you will have an answer for those who take pride in appearance and not in heart” Ministry motives and methods are crucial! Apparently Paul is comparing his with other leaders in the Corinthian church (cf. 4:2). Some leaders were all show and no substance.

“proud. . pride” These are both forms of the term kauchema. There is an appropriate boasting (i.e. the church is proud of Paul) and inappropriate pride (i.e. the boasting of the false teachers). See Special Topic: Boasting at I Cor. 5:6.

“appearing” See full note at 1:11.

5:13 “if. . .if” These are both FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentences, which are assumed true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purposes.
This is the Greek term “stand” (histημι) with the preposition “out of” (ek). It can be used of (1) amazement (cf. Matt. 12:23; Mark 5:42); (2) fear (cf. Mark 16:8; Luke 5:26); (3) a trance (cf. Acts 10:10; 11:5; 22:17); or (4) loss of senses or mad (cf. Mark 3:21; II Cor. 5:13). It is difficult to know exactly to what Paul is referring. Many commentators relate it to 11:1,16; 12:11.

However, a different word is used: “foolish.” In these chapters Paul compares his spiritual experience and qualifications to the charismatic false teachers. Possibly this is a comment that these fake teachers had made referring to Paul.

“we are of sound mind, it is for you” Paul certainly had his moments of spiritual ecstasy (cf. Acts 9; I Cor. 14:5,18; II Cor. 12), but for ministry he lived and presented the gospel with clarity and thoughtfulness.

5:14 “For the love of Christ” Grammatically this is either: “Christ’s love for us” (i.e. SUBJECTIVE GENITIVE) or “our love for Christ” (i.e. OBJECTIVE GENITIVE). In this context Paul mentions the motivations for ministry: fear and love.

5:15 Verse 15 parallels and defines v. 14. This is such an important truth. Salvation is free, but Christlike living costs everything we are and have (cf. Gal. 2:20)!
NASB, NKJV “rose again”
NRSV, TEV, NJB “was raised”

This is an AORIST PASSIVE PARTICIPLE with an unexpressed agent. The NT often attributes the works of redemption to all three persons of the Godhead: (1) God the Father raised Jesus (cf. Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30-33,34,37; 17:31; Rom. 6:4,9; 8:11; 10:9; I Cor. 15:4; II Cor. 4:14; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12; I Thess. 1:10); (2) God the Son raised Himself (cf. John 2:19-22; 10:17-18); (3) God the Spirit raised Jesus (cf. Rom. 8:11).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:16-19

16Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. 17Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. 18Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

5:16 “Therefore from now on” Christ’s life and death inaugurated a new age. Everything is different in light of Him (cf. Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11).

5:17 “if” This is another FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence like those in vv. 13 and 16.

“in Christ” This is one of Paul’s favorite metaphors to describe the Christian. It speaks of our position in Christ.

“new creature”

This term, ktisis, is used in a variety of senses in the NT. The lexicon by Louw and Nida lists the following possibilities.
1. creation (the act of creation, cf. Mark 13:19; Rom. 1:20; Eph. 3:9)
2. creature (that which is created alive, cf. Mark 10:6; Rom. 1:25; 8:39; Col. 1:15:23)
3. universe (all that was created, cf. Mark 13:19; Rom. 8:20; Heb. 9:11)
4. institution (cf. I Pet. 2:13)
5. authority (cf. I Pet. 2:13)

Paul also personifies creation in Rom. 8:18-25. He characterizes God’s new creation, new age, age of the Spirit in II Cor. 5:17 and Gal. 6:15. Believers should live like citizens of the new age (cf. Rom. 6:4).

“the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” Notice the purposeful interchange of verb tenses.
1. “old things passed away” This is AORIST tense and it refers to a completed act in past time. This refers to conversion.
2. “new things have come” This is PERFECT tense which refers to a past completed act with abiding results. This refers to discipleship.
There is a Greek manuscript variant which reflects “all things” in the final clause (i.e. MS D\(^3\)). This type of clarifying addition is common for the later scribes. The oldest Greek manuscripts (i.e. MSS P\(^6\), \(\text{\text{}}}\), B, C, D\(^*\), F, G) end with \(\text{kaina}\.

This concept of “new” is part of OT terminology for the \text{eschaton}. The OT prophets spoke of this new age.

1. “new things” (cf. Isa. 42:9; 43:19; Jer. 31:22)
2. “new covenant” (cf. Jer. 31:31-34)
3. “new heart, new spirit” (Ezek. 11:19; 18:31; 36:26)
4. “new name” (cf. Isa. 62:2; 56:5; 65:15)
5. “new song” (cf. Ps. 96:1; Isa. 42:10)

This eschatological newness had come in Jesus, but the old was still present. The new has not been fully consummated. The overlapping of the Jewish “two ages” by Jesus’ two comings was unforeseen by OT prophets though they depicted the Messiah in lowly servant terms as well as victorious royal terms.

5:18 “Now all \textit{these} things are from God” It is God’s love that sent the Son into the world (cf. John 3:16). Salvation is totally from God (cf. John 6:44, 65; Eph. 2:8-9), but believers must respond and continue to respond to the new covenant in repentance, faith, and good works (cf. Mark 1:15; John 1:12; Acts 20:21; Eph. 2:10).

“\textit{reconciled}” This is a major theological truth. The word basically means to exchange or change and thereby to bring together that which was alienated. Rebellious humans have been brought back into fellowship with God through Christ. God exchanged Christ’s righteousness (cf. v. 21) for their sin. Christ died in our place (cf. vv. 14-21).

This context (i.e. vv. 16-21) and Rom. 5:10-11 are the definitive passages on this theological term. Sinners are now friends, even family, with the Holy One. Restoration of the fellowship damaged in the Fall (cf. Gen. 3) has been made complete in Christ.

A discussion of “reconciliation” as a theological concept is in Frank Stagg’s \textit{New Testament Theology}, pp. 102-104, 142.

“\textit{and gave us the ministry of reconciliation}” Theologically this is parallel to vv. 14-15. Jesus became believers’ reconciliation, now they must become the means of sharing the gospel of reconciliation with others. Believers share in Jesus’ death and we share in His ministry (cf. v. 19). Christlike service is the goal (cf. I John. 3:16). See Special Topic: Servant Leadership at I Cor. 4:1.

5:19 “\textit{God was in Christ}” This is the main issue of Christianity. Was God (i.e. the God, the OT YHWH), in Jesus of Nazareth, reconciling the world to Himself (cf. Gal. 1:3-4)? If so, Christianity is true; if not, it is false. Is Jesus truly the image of God (cf. John 1:1-14; Col. 1:15-16; Phil. 2:6-11; Heb. 1:2-3)? Is He truly the only way to reconciliation and forgiveness (cf. John 14:6)? If so, then the gospel is the most important information that people will ever, can ever, hear! We must tell the truth; we must preach the gospel; we must lift up Christ; we must offer a free salvation to a lost world.

“\textit{the world}” God loves the world (cf. John 3:16). The world can be saved (cf. I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9).

“\textit{not counting their trespasses against them}” This may reflect Ps. 32:2, which is quoted in Rom. 4:6-8. Before the Law, sin was not imputed to individuals (cf. Rom. 4:15; 5:13-14; Acts 17:30). But this text has an even greater truth. In the face of known human rebellion there is forgiveness in Christ. Jesus’ blood cleanses from all sin! Sin is no longer the barrier between God and mankind, but now it is unbelief, rejection of faith in Christ, unwillingness to respond to God’s offer.

“\textit{not counting}” This is the term \textit{logizomai}, which is used thirty-four times by Paul, but in two completely different senses. The first can be seen in 3:5, “consider.” See the full note there.

The second is “counting” or “imputing.” This sense is clearly seen in Rom. 4:3,4,5,6,8,9,10,11,22,23,24, and Gal. 3:6. This theological usage implies depositing something into someone else’s account.

God imputes the righteousness of Jesus into our account (cf. v. 21). Also God does not count or impute sin to our account. What an amazing God! What an effective Savior!

“\textit{He has committed to us the word of reconciliation}” A lost world is not on the doorstep of a powerless, loveless God, but is on the doorstep of an apathetic, unconcerned church. We have the message; we have the keys of the Kingdom (cf. Matt. 16:19; Rev. 1:18; 3:7). We have the indwelling Holy Spirit (cf. Rom. 8:9,11; I Cor. 3:16; 6:19; II Tim. 1:14). We have the marching orders of Jesus (cf. Matt. 28:18-20). What will we do?
**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:20-21**

20Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>verse</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5:20</td>
<td>“we are ambassadors for Christ” To whom does the “we” and “you” in this verse refer? Is Paul speaking to the church? If so the “we” is Paul and his missionary team and the “you,” believers at Corinth. These people did not need to be saved, but they did need to be brought back into unity. Notice that Paul does not say believers should be ambassadors, but that they are ambassadors. This is similar to Jesus’ statements in Matt. 5:13-16. Believers are salt and light. The question is what kind of salt and light. This is the questions here. Believers are Christ’s representatives, but what kind of ambassadors are they: factious, heretical, unloving, etc.?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5:21</td>
<td>This text has several great truths. 1. God sent Jesus to die for us (cf. John 3:16). Jesus came to die for us (cf. Mark 10:45). 2. Jesus knew no sin (cf. John 8:46; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; I Pet. 1:19; 2:22; I John 3:5). 3. The goal is personal righteousness, serving Christlikeness (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; II Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; I Thess. 3:13; 4:3; I Pet. 1:15). However, there is a note of contingency (SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD). All believers do not fully realize God’s complete purpose in salvation. It is a call to service, a call to self denial, a call to holiness. Christianity only begins when one trusts Christ. Belief is only the first step of a long journey.</td>
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“beg” See full note at 1:4-11.

“be reconciled to God” This is a PRESENT PASSIVE IMPERATIVE. Is this a command to lost people or to saved people? The larger context is mandating an appropriate lifestyle on the part of believers. Jesus saved us from sin and strife; we are saved to serve! We are called to Christlike ministry, not personal agendas.

This context has a message to a lost, needy world—Christ died for you (positional righteousness). This context has a message for a factious, unloving church—Christ died for you (progressive righteousness).

The PASSIVE VOICE could be translated “let God reconcile you to Himself”; “allow yourselves to be reconciled” (cf. The Jerome Biblical Commentary, p. 281); or “let God change you from enemies into his friends” (cf. TEV). Believers proclaim the truth, the Spirit convicts the lost, the Son provides the means, and the Father accomplishes His will through covenant response.

5:21 This text has several great truths.

3. The goal is personal righteousness, serving Christlikeness (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; II Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; I Thess. 3:13; 4:3; I Pet. 1:15). However, there is a note of contingency (SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD). All believers do not fully realize God’s complete purpose in salvation. It is a call to service, a call to self denial, a call to holiness. Christianity only begins when one trusts Christ. Belief is only the first step of a long journey.

NASB “to be sin on our behalf”
NKJV “to be sin for us”
NRSV “to be sin”
TEV “share our sin”
NJB “a victor for sin”

How did God make Jesus become sin? This may be an OT allusion to a sin offering (cf. Isa. 53; Rom. 8:3). God offered Jesus as the sinless lamb (cf. John 1:29,36).

I think Jesus’ words from the cross, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me” (cf. Mark 15:34), which is a quote from Ps. 22, reflects the spiritual reality of the Father turning away from the Son (i.e. symbolized by the darkness, cf. Mark 15:33), as He bore the sin of the world. This is theologically parallel to Gal. 3:13, “having become a curse for us”!

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Does this chapter teach a disembodied period between death and resurrection?
2. Does v. 10 imply that believers will also be judged? If so, for what?
3. List Paul’s two motives for evangelism (vv. 11,14).
4. Explain why verses 14-15 are crucial for a proper understanding of the Christian life.
### II CORINTHIANS 6

#### PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UBS⁴</th>
<th>NKJV</th>
<th>NRSV</th>
<th>TEV</th>
<th>NJB</th>
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<td>Marks of the Ministry</td>
<td>Further Defense of His Ministry of Reconciliation</td>
<td>Friendship with God Through Christ</td>
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<td>The Temple of the Living God</td>
<td>A Parenthesis on Relations with Unbelievers</td>
<td>Warning Against Pagan Influences</td>
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#### READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. vii)

*FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL*

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

#### CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

A. Verse 1 of this chapter is the crux to the interpretation of the entire chapter. The context involves the believers of the church at Corinth, and therefore, does not involve apostasy, but failure to live the Christian life effectively.

B. Beginning in verse 4 there is a series of PREPOSITIONS: *en* with the DATIVE, eighteen times, vv. 4-7; *dia* with the GENITIVE, three times, vv. 7-8; *ḥas* with PRESENT PARTICIPLES, seven times, vv. 9-10. These seem to involve a description of Paul’s ministry as far as the problems and the pressures, both internal and external, as well as the commensurate grace of God.

C. The concluding paradoxes of vv. 8-10 seem to describe Paul’s life, both from the critics’ point of view and from God’s point of view.
D. The section 6:14-7:1 seems to be out of context. Verse 7:2 picks up the terminology and discussion of 6:13. This section is very Jewish in nature. It is a warning against identifying oneself too closely with pagan culture. The warnings are from an OT setting (i.e. Jews vs. Gentiles or people of God vs. idolaters). However, Paul is using it in a similar way to I Cor. 10:14-33, where he discusses Christian participation in pagan worship.

This paragraph’s seeming disjunction has caused theories of II Corinthians being a composite letter from several letters of Paul’s sent to Corinth.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:1-10

1And working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain— for He says, “AT THE ACCEPTABLE TIME I LISTENED TO YOU, AND ON THE DAY OF SALVATION I HELPED YOU.” Behold, now is “THE ACCEPTABLE TIME,” behold, now is “THE DAY OF SALVATION”— giving no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited, but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger, in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love, in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left, by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; regarded as deceivers and yet true; as unknown yet well-known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.

6:1 “working together with Him” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE. There is no stated object, but the context implies “with God” (cf. 5:20; I Cor. 3:9). Paul uses this same term to describe his co-workers in the gospel (cf. 1:24; 8:23; I Cor. 16:16; Rom. 16:3,9,21), but here the context strongly implies God. What an awesome thought that believers are co-laborers with God (cf. I Cor. 3:5-9).

“we also urge you” Paul used the same verb in 5:20. See full note at 1:4-11.

“not to receive the grace of God in vain” The INFINITIVE is AORIST, which refers to the Corinthian believers receiving Christ. But the “in vain” refers to the purpose of salvation, which is fruitfulness for the Kingdom, not just personal salvation. Paul often used this term to express this expected Kingdom service (cf. I Cor. 15:10,14,58; Gal. 2:2; Phil. 2:16; II Thess. 2:1; 3:5). This concept is parallel to Paul’s use of “walk” in Ephesians (cf. 4:1,17; 5:2,15).

6:2 “He says” Paul is quoting an OT passage relating to Israel, but by the use of this PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE (i.e. says), he shows that the promise is relevant to all times and all peoples. Paul uses this quote as a direct appeal from God to the Corinthian church. Scripture is current and relevant!

“we also urge you” Paul used this same verb in 5:20.

“AT THE ACCEPTABLE TIME” This is a quote from the Septuagint of Isa. 49:8 (i.e. one of the Servant poem/songs), which deals with God welcoming and equipping (1) the Messiah and (2) a Messianic community. There is often a tension in Isa. 40-53 between corporate, national Israel and the ideal Israelite King (i.e. Messiah).

“The ACCEPTABLE TIME...THE ACCEPTABLE TIME” The first is a quote from the Septuagint of Isa. 49:8, using dektos, but Paul uses a more intensified form (i.e. eurosdektos, cf. Rom. 15:16) when he applies this prophecy to the Corinthian situation (cf. v. 2b). The Messiah has come and now the invitation to be fully accepted by God has come to them. They must seize the moment. They must be the eschatological Messianic community.

The day of one’s salvation is a wondrous, marvelous event, but it is often accompanied by persecution and difficulties (cf. 6:4-10).

NASB, NKJV “behold”
NRSV “see”
TEV “Listen”
NJB “well”

This is the Greek PARTICLE idou, which serves to call attention to a truth statement. Paul used it often in II Corinthians (cf. 5:17; 6:2,9; 7:11; 12:14).
“now is ‘THE DAY OF SALVATION’” This last sentence in v. 2 is Paul’s comment on the quote from Isaiah. This can refer to both an individual’s invitation to respond to the gospel, as well as to the life of service to the Messianic kingdom.

6:3 “giving no cause for offense in anything” This is a strong DOUBLE NEGATIVE in Greek. Paul was determined, both in his personal life and ministry, not to put any barriers between himself and the hearers of the gospel. He is using his life to accomplish two things: (1) giving them a model to follow in their ministry and (2) counteracting the charges of the false teachers (cf. 11:12).

NASB “so that the ministry will not be discredited”
NKJV “that our ministry may not be blamed”
NRSV “so that no fault may be found with our ministry”
TEV “We do not want anyone to find fault with our work”
NJB “so that no blame may attach to our work of service”

The term “our” (cf. NKJV, NRSV, TEV, NJV) is not in the Greek text, which simply has the DEFINITE ARTICLE, “the ministry.” This verse is related theologically to I Tim. 3:2,10, which asserts that ministers must have no handle for criticism. Believers live and serve for the advancement of the Messianic Kingdom, not personal aggrandizement or personal agendas (cf. I Cor. 9:12). See Special Topic: Servant Leadership at I Cor. 4:1.

6:4-7 This is a series of terms introduced by the Greek preposition en. It is repeated eighteen times for emphasis. There are several lists in Paul’s writings of the problems that he faced (cf. I Cor. 4:9-13; II Cor. 7:5; 11:23-29). He mentions them to motivate the faithful and depreciate the false teachers’ claims. See Special Topic: NT Vices and Virtues at I Cor. 5:9-11.

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<tr>
<th>GREEK PHRASES WITH EN</th>
<th>NASB</th>
<th>NKJV</th>
<th>NRSV</th>
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<td>v. 4, hupomonē</td>
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<td>much patience</td>
<td>great endurance</td>
<td>patient enduring</td>
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<td>hunger</td>
<td>fastings</td>
<td>hunger</td>
<td>without food</td>
<td>starving</td>
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<td>v. 6, hagnoteis</td>
<td>purity</td>
<td>purity</td>
<td>purity</td>
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<td>v. 6, gnōsis</td>
<td>knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>v. 6, makrothumia</td>
<td>patience</td>
<td>long suffering</td>
<td>patience</td>
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<td>v. 6, chrēstotēs</td>
<td>kindness</td>
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<tr>
<td>v. 6, pneumatikē hagiō</td>
<td>Holy Spirit</td>
<td>Holy Spirit</td>
<td>holiness of spirit</td>
<td>Holy Spirit</td>
<td>Holy Spirit</td>
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<tr>
<td>v. 6, agatiē anuplkritō</td>
<td>genuine love</td>
<td>sincere love</td>
<td>genuine love</td>
<td>true love</td>
<td>love free of affectation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. 7, logō aletheias</td>
<td>the word of truth</td>
<td>the word of truth</td>
<td>truthful speech</td>
<td>message of truth</td>
<td>the word of truth</td>
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</table>
6:4  “but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God” This is the issue. This is the referent of the phrase “in vain.” Paul affirms the priority of Kingdom service. All believers are gifted (cf. I Cor. 12:7,11) ministers (cf. Eph. 4:12). The gospel has both an individual focus (i.e. personal salvation) and a corporate focus (i.e. gospel proclamation and gospel service, cf. I Cor. 12:7). See Special Topic: Servant Leadership at I Cor. 4:1.

6:6  “in purity” This refers to either (1) the root meaning of this term, singleness of purpose or (2) Paul’s moral, ethical lifestyle.

“in patience” This term is often used to refer to patience with people; however, it is also used in the NT to refer to God’s character (cf. Rom :4; 9:22; II Pet. 3:9,15).

“in kindness” This term is often translated “a sweetness of spirit.” It is the attitude that one would rather be hurt than to hurt others; rather make others feel welcome than to feel welcome themselves.

“in the Holy Spirit” The New English Bible translates this as “gifts of the Holy Spirit.” The Jerome Biblical Commentary has “in a holy spirit” (p. 282). The reason that they change the translation is that it is unusual for Paul to mention the person of the Holy Spirit in the midst of a series of descriptive words. I agree that it is referring to Paul’s personal spirit of holiness; however one cannot be dogmatic of this because of Rom. 9:1; 14:17; 15:16; I Cor. 12:3; I Thess. 1:5.

“in genuine love” This same phrase is used in Rom. 12:9. Paul uses the same adjective to describe faith in I Tim. 1:5 and II Tim. 1:5. Peter uses the same adjective with a synonym of ἀγάπη, φιλανθρωπία in I Pet. 1:22.

6:7  “in the word of truth” It must be remembered that the Hebraic background to this term in not “truth versus falsehood,” but “loyalty and trustworthiness,” as in interpersonal relationships (cf. I John 8:32; 14:6). See Special Topic: “Truth” in Paul’s Writings at II Cor. 13:8.

Greek Phrases Introduced with δια

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<tr>
<th>Greek</th>
<th>NASB</th>
<th>NKJV</th>
<th>NRSV</th>
<th>TEV</th>
<th>NJB</th>
<th>NIV</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v. 7, ἡπλόν τὸς dikaiosunēs</td>
<td>weapons of righteousness</td>
<td>armor of righteousness</td>
<td>weapons of righteousness</td>
<td>righteousness as our weapon</td>
<td>weapons of uprightness</td>
<td>weapons of righteousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. 8, δόξα καὶ atimias</td>
<td>glory and dishonor</td>
<td>honor and dishonor</td>
<td>honor and dishonor</td>
<td>honored and dishonored</td>
<td>times of honor and disgrace</td>
<td>glory and dishonor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. 8, diasphēmias kai euphēmias</td>
<td>full report and good report</td>
<td>evil report and good report</td>
<td>insulted and praised</td>
<td>ill repute and good repute</td>
<td>blame and praise</td>
<td>bad report and good report</td>
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</table>

“the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left” This refers to the provisions of God for our earthly spiritual warfare (cf. Rom. 6:13; Eph. 6:10-18). It is possible that the right hand refers to offensive weapons and the left hand refers to defensive weapons. See Special Topic: Righteousness at I Cor. 1:30.

6:8  “dishonor” This term is used for a resident losing the rights of citizenship.

Greek Phrases Introduced with ἔχον

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<tr>
<th>Greek</th>
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<th>NRSV</th>
<th>TEV</th>
<th>NJB</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v. 8, planoi kai alētheis</td>
<td>as deceivers yet true</td>
<td>as deceivers yet true</td>
<td>as impostors yet true</td>
<td>as liars yet speak the truth</td>
<td>taken for impostors yet genuine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. 9, aγνοουμενοι kai eπιγνονταικομενοι</td>
<td>as unknown yet well known</td>
<td>as unknown yet well known</td>
<td>as unknown yet well known</td>
<td>as unknown yet known by all</td>
<td>as unknown yet acknowledged</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6:8-9 “and yet. . .yet” The Greek text has καί, which usually means “and,” but in some texts it can mean “and yet” (cf. John 20:29). Remember context determines meaning, not a lexicon.

6:10 “sorrowful yet always rejoicing” (cf. Rom. 5:3-5; Phil. 2:17-18; 3:1; 4:4; I Thess. 5:16)

“yet possessing all things” This series of paradoxes seems to contrast the world’s perspective and God’s perspective. Believers are heirs of all things through Christ (cf. Rom. 8:17,32; I Cor. 3:21).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:11-13

11Our mouth has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide. 12You are not restrained by us, but you are restrained in your own affections. 13Now in a like exchange—I speak as to children—open wide to us also.

6:11 The two verbs are both PERFECT tense. Paul has shared the whole, complete gospel truth and its implications with the Corinthian believers in complete openness and honesty.

“O Corinthians” This is one of only three places in Paul’s writings that he personally addresses the particular church he is writing (cf. Gal. 3:1; Phil. 4:15). All of these passages show the intensity of the Apostle’s heart.

6:12

NASB “You are not restrained by us”
NKJV “You are not restricted by us”
NRSV “There is no restriction”
TEV “It is not we who have closed our hearts to you”
NJB “Any distress you feel is not on our side”

The noun form of this verb is used in 6:4 and 12:10 (cf. Rom. 2:9; 8:35). It literally refers to something or someone crowded together into a narrow place, thereby becoming cramped. It was used metaphorically for “strait,” “cramped,” or “anguish” (cf. 4:8; 6:12).

“affections”

This is an OT metaphor from “bowels.” The ancients thought the lower viscera or the major organs (i.e. heart, liver, lungs) were the seat of the emotions (cf. Septuagint Prov. 12:10; 26:22; Jer. 28:13,51; II Macc. 9:5-6; IV Macc. 10:8; Baruch 2:17). Paul uses this metaphor often (cf. II Cor. 6:12; 7:15; Phil. 1:8; 2:1; Col. 3:12; Philemon vv. 7,12,20).
“Now in a like exchange”  
In this phrase the main word is antimisthia, which is the term misthos (i.e. recompense based on what a person deserves, cf. I Cor. 3:8,14; 9:17-18; I Tim. 5:18) plus the PREPOSITION anti. This form is found only here and in Rom. 1:27. This term can be used in a positive or negative sense; the context must determine. In Rom. 1:27; it is negative, but here it seems to be used positively in the sense of Gal. 4:12.

“to children” Paul, like John, addresses his converts as children (cf. I Cor. 4:14,17; Gal. 4:19; I Tim. 1:2,18; II Tim. 1:2; 2:1; Titus 1:4; Phil 10).

“open wide to us also” As Paul stretched his heart to include them, as factious and contentious as they had been, he earnestly desired that they reciprocate. This is AORIST PASSIVE IMPERATIVE. Notice the PASSIVE idea that they cannot do it themselves, but they must allow God to do it.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:14-18

Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, “I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,” says the Lord. “AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,” says the Lord Almighty.

6:14
NASB “Do not be bound together with unbelievers”
NKJV “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers”
NRSV “Do not be mismatched with unbelievers”
TEV “Do not try to work together as equals with unbelievers”
NJB “Do not harness yourselves in an equal team with unbelievers”

Paul often uses OT agricultural quotes to illustrate Christian truths (cf. I Cor. 9:9; I Tim. 5:18) to reflect Deut. 22:10. It is a PRESENT IMPERATIVE with the NEGATIVE PARTICLE, which implies “they were forming” these inappropriate, intimate, interpersonal relationships with unbelievers. The Greek term is a compound of “yoked” (zugeō) and “another of a different kind” (heteros). This verse has been proof-texted in relation to believers marrying unbelievers. However, this text does not seem to be dealing with marriage specifically, although that is surely included in this broader statement. Believers must restrict their most intimate, personal relationships to fellow believers. This helps us fight the pull of fallen culture away from Christ. Faith in Jesus and the indwelling Spirit has caused a sharp and deep cleavage within families, businesses, hobbies, amusements, even churches.

One must take into account passages like I Cor. 5:9-13; 7:12-16; 10:27 to get the theological balance of this truth. We must remember the wickedness of first century pagan culture. This is not an affirmation of monastic living, but an attempt to reduce intimate personal relationship with the world (cf. I John 2:15-17).

“what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness” This same truth is repeated in the cyclical letter of Ephesians (cf. 5:7,11). Paul’s contrast of righteousness with lawlessness shows clearly that in this context righteousness does not refer to imputed righteousness (cf. Rom. 4; Gal. 3), but righteous living (cf. Matt. 6:1). See Special Topic: Righteousness at I Cor. 1:30.

6:15
NASB, NKJV “Belial”
NRSV, NJB “Beliar”
TEV “the Devil”

This is a Hebrew term (i.e. beli and ya’al) whose etymology is somewhat in doubt. Beliar is a variant spelling from some Jewish writings. The possible backgrounds are (1) worthlessness (i.e. a description of evil people, cf. Deut. 13:13; II Sam. 23:6; I Kgs. 21:10,13); (2) lawlessness (cf. II Sam. 22:5); (3) place from where there is no ascent (i.e. Sheol, cf. Ps. 18:4); or (4) another term for Satan (cf. Nahum 1:15; Jubilees 1:20; 15:33; and the Dead Sea Scrolls [ex. IQS 1:18,24; 2:5,19]).
6:16 “or what agreement has the temple of God with idols?” This verse must be compared with I Cor. 3:16, where the local church is called the temple of God. In I Cor. 3:16 there is no ARTICLE with “temple” (i.e. naos, the central shrine itself). The PRONOUN “you” is PLURAL, while “temple” is SINGULAR; therefore, in this context “temple” must refer to the whole church at Corinth (cf. Eph. 2:21-22).

The focus of Jewish faith developed into Temple ritual and liturgy (cf. Jer. 7) instead of personal faith in YHWH. It is not where or when or how one worships, but who one is in relationship with, God. Jesus saw His body as the temple of God (cf. John 2:21). Jesus is greater than the OT Temple (cf. Matt. 12:6). God’s activity has moved from a sacred building into a sacred (i.e. redeemed, holy) believers’ body.

Idols and believers are fully discussed in I Cor 8 and 10:14-22. These must be mutually exclusive! All roads do not lead to heaven!

“The living God” The covenant name for the God of the OT was YHWH, which was a form of the verb “to be.” OT authors often used the adjective “living” to reflect the ever-existing, only-existing God. The OT allusions in vv. 16-18 contain covenant terminology, “I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (cf. Ezek. 37:27).

The phrase “walk among them” seems to come from Lev. 26:12. The OT texts in v. 16 reflect the new age when YHWH will dwell among His people as was intended in Gen. 2 and temporarily and partially occurred during the wilderness wandering period, but will be fully realized in the new heavens and the new earth (cf. Rev. 21-22).

“God said” This is a loose combination of Lev. 26:11-12 and Ezek. 37:27 from the Septuagint. In this context Paul is applying these promises to covenant Israel to the church who is spiritual Israel (cf. Gal. 6:16).

6:17 “COME OUT...BE SEPARATE!” These are both AORIST IMPERATIVES. These are allusions to Isa. 52:11 in the Septuagint. God’s people are to disassociate themselves from sinners and unbelievers lest they be caught up in their judgment (cf. Rev. 18:4).

Often today I hear this verse quoted in connection to which denomination one belongs. Let me quote F. F. Bruce in Answers to Questions, “The use of these words to justify ecclesiastical separation between Christians betokens a grotesque failure to read them in their context” (p. 103).

“And do not touch what is unclean” This is a PRESENT MIDDLE IMPERATIVE. Believers must not participate in the sinful actions of their respective cultures. As the redeemed we must exhibit and proclaim the new heart and new mind of God’s people. Everything has changed in Him!

6:18 This verse reflects the truth of many prophets, but most fully, Hosea (or possibly II Sam. 7:14). Christianity is a family affair.

“Lord, Almighty” This reflects the OT term for God, YHWH (cf. Exod. 3:14), and El Shaddai (cf. Exod. 6:3). In the Septuagint it translates the phrase “Lord of Hosts.”

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:1

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

7:1 “having these promises” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE. Paul quoted the OT prophetic words from God as if they currently applied to the Corinthians (cf. 6:2). The OT is also quoted in 6:16-18, showing YHWH’s continual desire to have a people who reflect His character. Paul is trying to motivate the Corinthian believers to live godly, separated lives. They have experienced “grace” (cf. 6:1), now they must live in it. This verse is a call to Christlike holiness (cf. Eph. 1:4; 2:10).

“beloved” This phrase is used in Matt. 3:17 and 17:5 as a title for Jesus. Paul uses this same term to describe Jesus’ followers (cf. II Cor. 12:19; I Cor. 10:14; 15:58; Rom. 12:19; Phil. 2:12; 4:1). This term speaks of God’s established, loyal covenant love (Hebrew, hesed; Greek, agape) for us in Christ, but here it speaks of Paul’s love for this fractious, arrogant, disruptive church.

“let us cleanse ourselves” This is an AORIST ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE. The AORIST tense is the way Koine Greek relates action. It can have many different implications. Here it is a call for decisive action (i.e. HORTATORY SUBJUNCTIVE used as an IMPERATIVE. The SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD gives an element of contingency. Believers must cooperate with God in salvation and then cooperate in maturity.

“of flesh and spirit” This speaks of our whole human being. Many people have disallowed this verse as being original because of Paul’s technical use of these two terms in other contexts. However, 7:5, when linked with 2:13 (which is the beginning and
“perfecting holiness in the fear of God” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE. It is theologically true that when we are saved, we are both instantaneously justified and sanctified (cf. I Cor. 1:30, also see Special Topic: Sanctification at I Cor. 1:2). This speaks of our position in Christ. However, we are to live in light of our position. Therefore, we are urged to fulfill our calling by progressive sanctification or Christlikeness (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; Eph. 4:1). This is an ongoing struggle (cf. Rom. 7). As salvation is both a free gift and a costly commitment, so too, is sanctification. This same concept is true of believers being called saints (INDICATIVE) and then called to be saintly (IMPERATIVE). I do not believe in the possibility of sinlessness in this life, but I do believe in the appropriateness of believers sinning less and less! This is the theological and practical tension caused by believers being in the Kingdom, but the Kingdom not being consummated (cf. Fee, Stewart, *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 131-134).

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Does v. 1 teach that we can lose our salvation?
2. How can a Christian live so as not to put any stumbling blocks in front of others?
3. Why was Paul’s life so hard?
4. What does it mean to “be ye separate”?
5. Is salvation absolutely free or does it cost us everything?
II CORINTHIANS 7

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

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<tr>
<th>UBS 4</th>
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<td>Paul’s Joy</td>
<td>Paul’s Joy</td>
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<td>7:5-13a</td>
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7:13b-16 | 7:13b-16 | 7:13b-16 | 7:13b-16 |

A Warning
(6:11-7:4)

Paul’s Joy at the Church’s Repentance

The Corinthian’s Response

Paul’s Joy

Paul’s Joy

Paul in Macedonia: He is Joined by Titus

7:2-4 “Make room for us in your hearts” This paragraph picks up the thought of 6:13. It is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE, a decisive command, a continuing emphasis. Paul mentions this same idea in 6:13. He uses an antonym in 6:12 (i.e. restrain). Paul desires that they open themselves up to him as he has opened himself up to them.

READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:2-4

3Make room for us in your hearts; we wronged no one, we corrupted no one, we took advantage of no one. 3I do not speak to condemn you, for I have said before that you are in our hearts to die together and to live together. 4Great is my confidence in you; great is my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort; I am overflowing with joy in all our affliction.
The term “heart” in 6:11 is a way of referring to himself. Paul does the same thing with “flesh” in v. 5 and “spirit” in v. 13b. See fuller note at v. 5.

“we wronged no one, we corrupted no one, we took advantage of no one” These are all AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVES. “No one” is repeated and fronted in each phrase for emphasis. These relate to the actions of the false teachers or the charges made by Paul’s critics against him and his ministry (cf. 12:17-18).

7:3 “to die together and to live together” The Greek has, “I would die with you or continue to live with you.” The first verb is AORIST ACTIVE INFINITIVE and the second is PRESENT ACTIVE INFINITIVE. This may refer to 6:1. Paul desires a mature, functioning church in Corinth. If they follow his leadership and authority they will bear fruit, but if not, they will have come into existence in vain. It is also possible that this is a cultural idiom of devotion to the end.


“boasting” See full word study at I Cor. 5:6 or the note at II Cor. 1:12.

“I am filled with comfort; I am overflowing with joy” This seems to refer to Titus’ report in v. 6-13a. Paul was very emotional about the spiritual status of his churches (cf. Gal. 4:19).

The term overflowing (i.e. huper perisseuomai, cf. Rom. 5:20) is an intensified form of perisseuô. It and its related forms are used often by Paul in his letters to Corinth. See Special Topic: Paul’s Use of Huper Compounds at I Cor. 2:1.

1. perissos/perissoteros
   a. exceedingly (cf. I Cor. 12:23,24; 15:10)
   b. excessive (cf. II Cor. 2:7; 10:8)
   c. superfluous (cf. II Cor. 9:1)
2. perissoterás, more abundantly (cf. II Cor 1:12; 2:4; 7:13;15; 11:23; 12:15)
3. perisseuô
   a. to abound (cf. II Cor. 1:5; 3:9; 9:8,12)
   b. abundantly gifted (cf. I Cor. 14:12; II Cor. 8:7)
   c. to abound in performance (cf. I Cor. 15:58)
   d. abound in food (cf. I Cor. 8:8)
   e. cause to be abundant (cf. II Cor. 4:14; 9:8)
4. perisseuma, superabundance (cf. II Cor. 8:13,14)
5. perisseia, superabundance (cf. II Cor. 8:2; 10:15)

“in all our affliction” See Special Topic: Tribulation at II Cor. 1:4.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:5-13a

3For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within. 4But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus; 5and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced even more. 6For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it—for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while—9I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. 10For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death. 11For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter. 12So although I wrote to you, it was not for the sake of the offender nor for the sake of the one offended, but that your earnestness on our behalf might be made known to you in the sight of God. 13aFor this reason we have been comforted.

7:5 “For even when we came into Macedonia” Paul resumes the account related to Titus’ report which he started in 2:13. There has been a wonderful Pauline digression between 2:13 and 7:5, where he discusses the joys and sorrows of apostolic ministry.

“our flesh had no rest” Paul was worried sick over this church (cf. 2:12-13, both PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVES). It is helpful for me in the midst of my worry and doubts to know the great apostle to the Gentiles was also plagued with his doubts about the abiding results of his ministry (cf. 6:1).
Paul uses the term “flesh” as a synonym for himself. He does the same thing in connection to spirit in v. 13b (see parallel in 2:13, “rest in my spirit”), referring to Titus. The NT does not support a trichotomous view of mankind. Mankind is a unity (cf. Gen. 2:7). Paul expresses this multifaceted unity in several ways.

- **“but we were afflicted on every side”** This is the PRESENT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. This verse is a brief summary of the problems Paul mentions in 1:4-10; 4:7-12; and 6:3-10.

- **“conflicts without, fears within”** Since the time of Chrysostom, this phrase has been interpreted as referring to problems with unbelievers and believers (cf. 11:28). Paul worried about Satan’s schemes (cf. 11:3; I Cor. 7:5).

7:6 **“But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us”** What a wonderful title for God—“the One who continually comforts” (PRESENT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE). See full note on comfort at 1:4-11.

7:7 Paul’s prayers and letters had proven effective. The majority in the church had responded appropriately to his apostolic authority and gospel presentation. They had rejected the immoral and heretical teachers (cf. vv. 8-13a).

7:8

**NASB**

“for though I caused you sorrow”

**NKJV, NRSV**

“for even if I made you sorry”

**TEV**

“for even if. . .made you sad”

**NJB**

“so now, though I did distress you”

This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence, which is assumed to be true.

- **“by my letter”** This seems to refer to the third letter by Paul to Corinth which is called by scholars “the severe letter” (cf. 2:3.4.9). This is one of the two lost letters unless chapters 10-13 are excerpts from it.

7:8-11 **“sorrow. . .regret. . .repentance”** There are three very significant Greek terms used in this passage to describe sorrow and repentance. The first term (i.e. lupe) is the general term for “grief” or “distress.” It is a theologically neutral term found twice in v. 8; three times in v. 9; twice in v. 10; and once in v. 11 (cf. 2:2,4,5; 6:10).

The term regret (i.e. metamelomai), found twice in v. 8 and negated in v. 10, is a term that means “after care.” This seems to mean sorrow over the consequences of past acts: Example: (1) those who did not truly repent in Jesus’ parable, Matt. 21:29,32; (2) Esau, Matt. 27:3; and (3) Judas, Heb. 12:16-17.

The last term (i.e. metanoeia), found in vv. 9 and 10, is extremely significant theologically. Literally, it means “after mind.” It not only involves a change of attitude, but a change of action (cf. Mark 1:15). Examples of this type of repentance can be found in King David and the Apostle Peter.

Paul is referring to his “painful” letter, which he had written to the church in Corinth. He fully and truly expressed himself, but worried that the letter might cause overwhelming sorrow instead of a healthy repentance, which would result in a restored fellowship. They had forced Paul to act as a spiritual surgeon instead of a spiritual father. Paul addressed the inappropriate actions and attitudes and fully expected for them to respond appropriately. But, as a father disciplines his children in sorrow, Paul wrote in sorrow and feared the worst, that they would not respond in true repentance and that fellowship would not be restored and his work there would be in vain (cf. 6:1).

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**SPECIAL TOPIC: REPENTANCE**

Repentance (along with faith) is a covenant requirement of both the Old Covenant (Nacham, I Kgs. 8:47; Shuv, I Kgs. 8:48; Ezek. 14:6; 18:30; Joel 2:12-13; Zech. 1:3-4) and the New Covenant.

1. John the Baptist (Matt. 3:2; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3,8)
4. Paul (Acts 13:24; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20; Rom. 2:4; II Cor. 2:9-10)

But what is repentance? Is it sorrow? Is it a cessation of sin? The best chapter in the NT for understanding the different connotations of this concept is II Corinthians 7:8-11, where three related, but different, Greek terms are used.

1. “sorrow” (lupe, cf. vv. 8 [twice], 9 [thrice], 10 [twice], 11). It means grief or distress and has a theologically neutral connotation.
2. “repentance” (metanoeō, cf. vv. 9,10). It is a compound of “after” and “mind,” which implies a new mind, a new way of thinking, a new attitude toward life and God. This is true repentance.

3. “regret” (metamelomai, cf. vv. 8[twice], 10). It is a compound of “after” and “care.” It is used of Judas in Matt. 27:3 and Esau in Heb. 12:16-17. It implies sorrow over the consequences, not over the acts.

Repentance and faith are required covenant acts (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 2:38,41; 3:16,19; 20:21). There are some texts which imply that God gives repentance (cf. Acts 5:31; 11:18; II Tim. 2:25). But most of the texts see this as a necessary human covenantal response to God’s offer of a free salvation.

The definitions of both the Hebrew and Greek terms are required to grasp the full meaning of repentance. The Hebrew demands “a change of action,” while the Greek demands “a change of mind.” The saved person receives a new mind and heart.

Instead of “What’s in it for me?” the question is now “What is God’s will?” Repentance is not an emotion that fades or a total sinlessness, but a new relationship with the Holy One that transforms the believer progressively into a holy one.

7:9 NASB “for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God”
NKJV “for you were made sorry in a godly manner”
NRSV “for you felt a godly grief”
TEV “that sadness was used by God”
NJB “your distress was the kind that God approves”

Literally this is “for you were grieved according to God.” You can see the different theological perspectives in the different translations. Does God use sorrow, pain, even evil, for His purposes? Some would quote Rom. 8:28 and say “yes.” Others would quote James 1:13,17 and say “no.”

Paul lists the problems and sufferings he faced as an Apostle. He lists the source of these in Eph. 2:2-3 as Satan, the fallen world system, and mankind’s fallen Adamic nature. God is willing to forgive, work with, and welcome sinful people. He uses evil for His purposes, but is not personally involved in it. Suffering and problems often produce a positive effect. In this context it produced repentance (cf. vv. 9-11).

“So that you might not suffer loss in anything through us” This is an AORIST PASSIVE SUBJUNCTIVE. Notice there is an element of contingency. Paul wanted to be a blessing to this church and not a hindrance in any way. However, the church must receive Paul and his ministry.

7:10 “leading to salvation” Repentance is one of the necessary elements of salvation. Repentance was mentioned as a requirement by John the Baptist (cf. Matt. 3:2), Jesus (cf. Matt. 4:17), Peter (cf. Acts 2:38), and Paul (cf. Acts 26:20). Repentance is turning from sin and faith is turning to Christ; both are required (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21). I have come to believe there are several normative requirements for a mature salvation: repentance, faith, baptism, obedience, service, and perseverance. Christianity is a lifestyle relationship, not a set of loops to jump through, yet eternal life does have observable characteristics!

The covenantal tension between a sovereign God and a mandated human response can also be seen in this area of theology because Acts 11:18 asserts that God gives repentance. Salvation can be seen biblically as all of God and also requiring a human response. This is the paradox of a free salvation and a cost-everything Christian life.

The NT concept of salvation is described as an initial act of faith followed by a growing faith relationship and to be culminated at the future coming of Christ. This text seems to imply a future consummation. See Special Topic: Greek Verb Tenses for Salvation at I Cor. 3:15.

“But the sorrow of the world produces death” This sentence has the three key words that must be understood in their NT context.

1. “Sorrow.” This verse contains all three Greek words for sorrow, regret, repentance. In this phrase sorrow is lúpeō, which means grief. Humans are sorry for past actions, but for selfish reasons. “The world.” This is a reference to human society organized and functioning apart from God. This is fallen humanity!

2. “Death”. The use of this term is possibly purposeful ambiguity. It refers to spiritual death (cf. Gen. 3) and physical death (cf. Gen. 5).

7:11 Godly sorrow (i.e. lúpeō) produces spiritual results (i.e. true repentance, metanoeō and its fruit). The godly results listed in verse 10 are six-fold.
“what avenging of wrong” The literal term is “vengeance,” but it is used in the sense of meting out justice. There has been some divergence of opinion among scholars as to exactly what this verse is referring. Some assert that (1) it refers to I Cor. 5:5, while others believe (2) it refers to the factions or false teachers (cf. v. 12).

7:12 Verse 12 seems to be a Hebrew idiom of comparison, not a negative statement (cf. The Jerome Biblical Commentary, p. 283).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:13b-7:16

13b And besides our comfort, we rejoiced even much more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all. 14For if in anything I have boasted to him about you, I was not put to shame; but as we spoke all things to you in truth, so also our boasting before Titus proved to be the truth. 15His affection abounds all the more toward you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling. 16I rejoice that in everything I have confidence in you.

7:13b “we rejoiced even much more for the joy of Titus because his spirit has been refreshed by you all” The church treated Titus well (i.e. he was refreshed, PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE). Apparently Paul was worried about this because of the treatment that Timothy had received earlier.

Notice Paul is using “spirit” as a synonym of the person of Titus, not just an aspect (i.e. body, soul, spirit, cf. Elwell’s Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, pp. 676-680). See full note on “spirit” at 4:13.

7:14 “if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE which is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purpose. Paul had boasted about the Corinthian church to Titus.

“boasted” See Special Topic: Boasting at I Cor. 5:5.


7:15 “affections” This is literally the Greek word, splagchna. See the full note at 6:12.

“as he remembers the obedience of you all” This is a PRESENT MIDDLE PARTICIPLE (i.e. Moulton’s Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised, p. 24) or a PRESENT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE (i.e. Friberg’s Analytical Greek New Testament, p. 562). How churches treat God’s ministers says something about them (cf. I Cor. 16:16; I Thess. 5:12; Heb. 13:17).

7:16 This statement concludes this literary unit (cf. 2:14-7:16) with a note of confident assurance.

“confidence” See note at 5:6.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why was Titus’ report so important to Paul?
2. Define the three different words for “sorrow” found in vs. 8-11 and relate their theological significance.
II CORINTHIANS 8

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

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READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

A. Chapters 8 and 9 form a literary unit related to the Corinthian’s part in the Gentile churches’ contribution for the poor in Jerusalem (cf. I Cor. 16:1-3).

B. Background to Paul’s gift to the Jerusalem church
   1. In Acts 11:27-30 the church at Antioch started the program of relief work for Jerusalem. It was a way of uniting the Jewish and Gentile churches.
   2. In Gal. 2:10 and 6:10 Paul began a similar emphasis in his early mission work.

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3. In I Cor. 16:1-4 it is shown that this contribution had already started at Corinth.
4. In Rom. 15:26 the contributions of both Macedonia and Achaia are mentioned.

C. Paul’s overall argument concerning Christian giving
1. example of others (Macedonians) vv. 1-5
2. giving is an aspect of spiritual growth, vv. 7-8
3. example of Christ, v. 9; 9:15
4. their own start, vv. 6,10
5. encouragement to put desire into action, v. 10
6. motive, not amount, is the key, v. 12
7. giving equals out, v. 14

D. New Testament guidelines for Christian giving based on the model of the churches of Macedonia
1. joyous and genuine, even amidst poverty, v. 2; 9:7
2. gave to utmost of ability, v. 3
3. gave sacrificially beyond ability, vv. 3,12
4. gave freely, v. 3; 9:7
5. gave sincerely, v. 4
6. gave more than money, v. 5

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:1-6
1Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia,
2that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. 3For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability,
they gave of their own accord, 4begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, 5and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God. 6So we urged Titus that as he had previously made a beginning, so he would also complete in you this gracious work as well.

8:1 “the grace of God” This word “grace” (charis) is used over ten times in chapters 8 and 9. It is used in the sense of (1) God’s undeserved, unmerited love in Christ, 8:1; 9:8,14; (2) favor/privilege, 8:4; (3) the offering to Jerusalem, 8:1,6,7,19; or (4) thanks, 8:16; 9:15. Notice that grace is understood as referring to God’s undeserved, unmerited love in Christ or as a way of referring to the contribution from Paul’s Gentile churches to the mother church in Jerusalem. The Greek term has a wide semantical field.

“the churches of Macedonia” This would refer to Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea (cf. Acts 16-17). There was a sense of competition between Achaia and Macedonia.

8:2 “that in a great ordeal of affliction” We see something of this persecution from Acts 17:1-15 and I Thess. 1:6; 2:14. There are two Greek words that are translated “trial,” “test,” or “tempt.” One refers to a test with the view toward destruction, while the other refers to a test with a view toward approval (cf. vv. 2;8,22; 9:13). See Special Topic at I Cor. 3:13.

For “affliction” see Special Topic: Tribulation at II Cor. 1:4.

“their abundance of joy” It is so surprising that this phrase occurs between “great ordeal of affliction” and “their deep poverty.” This joy amidst adverse circumstances is a characteristic of the believer (cf. Matt. 5:10-12; Rom. 5:3; James 1:2). Joy is a fruit of the Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:22) and it is not related to circumstances!

For Paul’s repeated use of “abundance” or “overflow” see note at 1:5.

“their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality” The term, “poverty” (i.e. ptôchos) is a very strong Greek term used of (1) extreme poverty in the Septuagint of Deut. 8:9; Jgs. 6:6; 14:15; (2) beggars (cf. 6:10; Rom. 15:26; Rev. 2:9; 3:17). They did not give out of excess. They trusted God to provide their needs (cf. Mark 12:42; Luke 21:2). In this context “their deep poverty” seems related to their being persecuted for the gospel (cf. vv. 13-18).

“liberality” This term’s root meaning is “single-mindedness,” which can mean “genuine” or “sincere” (cf. Septuagint II Sam. 15:11; I Chr. 29:17). But, it is often used in the NT (i.e. term only in Paul’s writings) in the sense of “liberality” or “generosity” (cf. 9:11,13). The motive for our giving is the key (cf. v. 12). See full note at 1:12.
8:3 Paul had seen their poverty first-hand and witnessed of it.

**NASB** “they gave of their own accord”

**NKJV** “they were freely willing”

**NRSV** “they voluntarily gave”

**TEV** “of their own free will”

**NJB** “it was of their own accord”

This term is from *autos* and *haireomai*, which means self choices. It is used in both II Cor. 8:3 and 17. The root term has the added connotation of choosing with delight or love (cf. Matt. 12:18, which is a quote from the Servant Song of Isa. 42:1-3). It is used in (1) II Maccabees 6:19 and III Maccabees 6:6; 7:10; and (2) the Koine papyri from Egypt of someone acting on their own accord freely.

*A Handbook on Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians* by Roger L. Omanson and John Ellington shows how English translations differ over which clause to attach this phrase.

“These words may be considered a part of the sentence which precedes, that is, the Macedonians gave of their own free will (so RSV, NRSV, NJB, SPCL), or to the sentence which follows in verse 4, that is, of their own free will they begged to take part in the collection (so TEV, NIV, REB, NJB, TNT, FRCL). The latter interpretation follows the punctuation of the UBS Greek New Testament and is probably more likely” (p. 142).

8:4 “with much urging” See full note on this phrase at 1:4-11.

**“for the favor of participation”** For “favor” see note at 8:1. The term “participation” (i.e. *koinônia*) is used often by Paul in his Corinthian letters in several, but related, senses.

1. intimate, close, personal relationships (related term *koinôneō* often used of initiations into the mystery religions)
   - with the Son, I Cor. 1:9
   - with the Spirit, II Cor. 13:14
   - not with evil, II Cor. 6:14
   - Titus and Paul in ministry, II Cor. 8:23
2. generosity (related term *koinônkos* means the liberal sharing of one’s own goods), II Cor. 9:13
3. participation in something
   - I Cor. 10:16 (i.e. in the blood of Christ)
   - II Cor. 8:4 (i.e. in contribution for poor saints in Jerusalem)
   - II Cor. 1:7 (i.e. in suffering)

There is an obvious word play between participation (*koinônia*) and support (or ministry, *diakonia*). This word for ministry or service is used so often in II Corinthians.

1. *diakonos* (servant), 3:6; 6:4; 11:15,23
2. *diakoneō* (serving), 3:3; 8:19,20
3. *diakonia* (service), 3:7,8,9; 4:1; 5:18; 6:3; 8:4; 9:1,12,13; 11:8

Christianity is servanthood. We were saved to serve!

**“saints”** See Special Topic: Saints at I Cor. 1:2.

8:5 “they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God” Stewardship involves everything we are and have. If you give yourself to the Lord there remains nothing to give! Christian stewardship is a thermometer of our spiritual maturity. Believers are owners of nothing and stewards of God in everything. This is sometimes easier for poor people than wealthy people.

8:6 “Titus” In *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, F. F. Bruce comments on the theory that chapters 10-13 are a segment of a previous letter, “but this is rendered improbable by 12:18, which seems clearly to refer back to 8:6,16-19” (p. 274 footnote 51).

**“this gracious work”** This refers to the contribution from Paul’s Gentile churches to the poor of the mother church in Jerusalem (cf. I Cor. 16:1-4; Rom. 15:26). In *Jesus and the Rise of Early Christianity* Paul Barnett makes a good point about the variety of terms Paul used to describe this love offering for the poor believers in Jerusalem.

“The appeal is characterized by its own vocabulary: ‘contribution for the saints’ (I Cor 16:1); ‘gift’ (2 Cor 16:3); ‘grace’ (2 Cor 8:6, 7, 9; 9:14); ‘service’ (2 Cor 9:12; cf. Rom. 15:27) and ‘fellowship’ (2 Cor 8:4; 9:13; Rom 15:26)” (p. 344).
NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:7-15

7But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also. 8I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also. 9For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich. 10I give my opinion in this matter, for this is to your advantage, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do this, but also to desire to do it. 11But now finish doing it also, so that just as there was the readiness to desire it, so there may be also the completion of it by your ability. 12For if the readiness is present, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. 13For this is not for the ease of others and for your affliction, but by way of equality — 14at this present time your abundance being a supply for their need, so that their abundance also may become a supply for your need, that there may be equality; 15as it is written, “HE WHO gathered MUCH DID NOT HAVE TOO MUCH, AND HE WHO gathered LITTLE HAD NO LACK.”

8:7 “just as you abound in everything” Notice that the list (i.e. faith, speech, knowledge, earnestness, love) does not relate to material possessions. We do not give to get more things for ourselves. We abound in Him (cf. I Cor. 1:5). He supplies everything we need (cf. 9:8).

“abound” This term is used twice in this verse. The first is PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE, they were abounding in the blessings of the gospel. The second is PRESENT ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVE, which adds a note of contingency. As they had abounded in the benefits of the New Covenant, they should abound in the responsibilities. Their help for the poor in Jerusalem is one of these “gracious works.”

NASB “in the love we inspired in you”  
NKJV, TEV “in your love for us”  
NRSV “in our love for you”  
NJB “and love for us too”

These translations reveal the Greek variant.
1. “in our love for you” (NRSV) from MSS P*6, B
2. “in your love for us” (NKJV, TEV, NIV) from MSS N, C, D, F, G
3. NASB takes option #1, but slightly changes the focus, “the love we inspired in you”

8:8 “I am not speaking this as a command” Commands are inappropriate and ineffective in the area of Christian stewardship. Proper motives are crucial in this area of the Christian life.

NASB “as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also”  
NKJV “but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others”  
NRSV “but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others”  
TEV “but by showing how eager others are to help, I am trying to find out how real your own love is”  
NJB “but testing the genuineness of your love against the concern of others”

Paul is challenging the Achaian churches to follow the lead of the Macedonian churches (cf. vv. 1-5) through Titus’ visit (cf. vv. 6,16-24).

“proving” See Special Topic at I Cor. 3:13.

8:9 “the grace” See note at 8:1.

“of our Lord Jesus Christ” See note at 1:2.

“though He was rich” This refers to the pre-existent glory of Jesus the Christ (cf. John 1:1; 8:56-59; 16:28; 17:5,24; II Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:6-7; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3; 10:5-8; I John 1:1). The familial terms used to describe God (i.e. Father) and Jesus (i.e. Son) are used to show intimacy and fellowship, not chronology. The Son has always existed. He was the Father’s agent in creation (cf. John 1:3,10; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2).

“yet for your sake He became poor” This is an emphasis on the incarnation of the pre-existent Logos in the manger at Bethlehem. He was born to a young peasant woman, the wife of a village carpenter, but He was God in human form (cf. George Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament, pp. 241-242).

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“so that you through His poverty might become rich” Paul is using Jesus’ incarnation in two ways.

1. He came to die in our place for our sins (cf. Mark 10:45).
2. He came to give us an example to follow (cf. I John 3:16).

This tremendous thought parallels 9:15. This church thought they already were rich (cf. I Cor. 4:8). Now the true definition of wealth is clearly spiritual and service-oriented, not self-seeking or intellectual, materialistic, or acumen.

8:10 “I give my opinion” Although Paul asserts that this is his opinion, because of his comments in I Cor. 7:25,40 it is an authoritative statement.

“the first to begin a year ago” II Corinthians was written between six and eighteen months after I Corinthians (cf. II Cor. 16:1-4).

8:11 “now finish doing it also” This is an AORIST ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. They were one of the first churches to originally desire to help the poor in Jerusalem. Now it is time to do it (cf. TEV).

NASB, NKJV “readiness”
NRSV “eagerness”
TEV “be as eager”
NJB “enthusiasm”

This is the Greek word prothumia, which is also used in v. 12 and v. 19 as well as 9:2. Its basic meaning is “readiness, promptness” (cf. Acts 17:11).

“the completion of it by your ability” Notice Paul returns to this theme again. It is so surprising to me that Paul never discusses regular Christian giving. His only comments relate to this one-time gift for the church in Jerusalem. He admits that a worker is worthy of his hire and that churches should help traveling missionaries, but gives no further guidelines.

New Covenant believers must be careful of proof-texting OT cultic criteria in a NT setting (cf. Hard Sayings of the Bible, p. 539 footnote #1). If we assert tithing is the will of God, what is to keep others from mandating sacrifice or Sabbath worship? Jesus did mention tithing in talking to a Jewish legalist (cf. Matt. 23:23; Luke 11:42), but this cannot be claimed to be the only NT evidence that this OT rite is perpetually valid.

I am not trying to lower what believers should give, but accentuate Paul’s guidelines in II Cor. 8-9 as the only NT information (also see I Cor. 16:2). Believers should never be content with an OT standard! Read Paul again (cf. Frank Stagg, New Testament Theology, pp. 285-293).

8:12 “if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence. Paul assumes they were ready and eager to give.

“it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have” The key to Christian stewardship is our attitude and motive, not the amount or percentage (cf. Mark 12:41-44).

8:13-14 The key word in these two verses is “equality” and the key concept is reciprocity. The family of God should help one another in need. The Jerusalem church has spread the good news of Christ (cf. Rom. 15:27). The Gentile churches can help in providing for the believing poor in Jerusalem. Some may be poor because of their faith in Christ.

“affliction” See Special Topic: Tribulation at II Cor. 1:4.

8:15 “as it is written” This PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE was used to introduce an OT quote. It implies the divine inspiration and eternal relevance of Scripture. The text quoted relates to the miracle of the daily gathering of manna where each Israelite had just enough (cf. Exod. 16:17,18). God will provide believers’ needs as they seek and obey Him (cf. Matt. 6:19-34).

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:16-24**

16But thanks be to God who puts the same earnestness on your behalf in the heart of Titus. 17For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest, he has gone to you of his own accord. 18We have sent along with him the brother whose fame in the things of the gospel has spread through all the churches; 19and not only this, but he has also been appointed by the churches to travel with us in this gracious work, which is being administered by us for the glory of the Lord Himself, and to show our readiness, 20taking precaution so that no one will discredit us in our administration of this generous gift; 21for we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. 22We have sent with them our brother, whom we have often tested and found diligent in many things, but now even more
diligent because of his great confidence in you.  23 As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brethren, they are messengers of the churches, a glory to Christ.  24 Therefore openly before the churches, show them the proof of your love and of our reason for boasting about you.

8:16-17 “But thanks be to God who puts the same earnestness on your behalf in the heart of Titus” Notice Paul’s understanding of God’s equipping (cf. Eph. 4:12) and motivating for ministry. This same understanding of God’s sovereign leadership in the affairs of mankind is also seen in Rev. 17:17. This is the mystery of divine sovereignty and human free will.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ELECTION/PREDESTINATION AND THE NEED FOR A THEOLOGICAL BALANCE

Election is a wonderful doctrine. However, it is not a call to favoritism, but a call to be a channel, a tool or means of others’ redemption! In the Old Testament the term was used primarily for service; in the New Testament it is used primarily for salvation which issues in service. The Bible never reconciles the seeming contradiction between God’s sovereignty and mankind’s free will, but affirms them both! A good example of the biblical tension would be Romans 9 on God’s sovereign choice and Romans 10 on mankind’s necessary response (cf. 10:11,13).

The key to this theological tension may be found in Ephesians 1:4. Jesus is God’s elect man and all are potentially elect in Him (Karl Barth). Jesus is God’s “yes” to fallen mankind’s need (Karl Barth). Ephesians 1:4 also helps clarify the issue by asserting that the goal of predestination is not heaven, but holiness (Christlikeness). We are often attracted to the benefits of the gospel and ignore the responsibilities! God’s call (election) is for time as well as eternity!

Doctrines come in relation to other truths, not as single, unrelated truths. A good analogy would be a constellation versus a single star. God presents truth in eastern, not western, genres. We must not remove the tension caused by dialectical (paradoxical) pairs of doctrinal truths:

1. Predestination vs. human free will
2. Security of the believers vs. the need for perseverance
3. Original sin vs. volitional sin
4. Sinlessness (perfectionism) vs. sinning less
5. Initial instantaneous justification and sanctification vs. progressive sanctification
7. God’s transcendence vs. God’s immanence
8. God as ultimately unknowable vs. God as knowable in Scripture
9. The Kingdom of God as present vs. future consummation
10. Repentance as a gift of God vs. repentance as a necessary human covenantal response
11. Jesus as divine vs. Jesus as human
12. Jesus as equal to the Father vs. Jesus as subservient to the Father

The theological concept of “covenant” unites the sovereignty of God (who always takes the initiative and sets the agenda) with a mandatory initial and continuing repentant, faith response from humans. Be careful of proof-texting one side of the paradox and depreciating the other! Be careful of asserting only your favorite doctrine or system of theology!

8:16-24 Verses 16-24 seem to be a letter of recommendation for Titus. See fuller note at 3:1. A brief biographical sketch of Titus follows.

1. Titus was one of Paul’s most trusted co-workers. This is evidenced by the fact that Paul sent him to the trouble spots of Corinth and Crete.
2. He was a full Gentile (Timothy was only half-Greek), converted under Paul’s preaching. Paul refused to circumcise him (cf. Gal. 2).
3. He is mentioned often in Paul’s letters (cf. II Cor. 2:13; 7:6-15; 8:6-24; 12:18; Gal. 2:1-3; II Tim. 4:10) and it is very surprising that Luke does not mention him in Acts. Some commentators theorize that (1) he may have been a relative of Luke (possibly a brother) and to include his name would have been seen as an act of cultural impropriety on Luke’s part or (2) Titus is Luke’s major source of information about Paul’s life and ministry and, therefore, like Luke, would not be named.
4. He accompanied Paul and Barnabas to the all important Jerusalem Council, recorded in Acts 15.
5. This book focuses on advice Paul gives Titus about his work on Crete. Titus is acting as Paul’s official surrogate.
6. The last information in the NT about Titus is that he was sent to work in Dalmatia (cf. II Tim. 4:10).

8:18 “We have sent along with him the brother whose fame in the things of the gospel has spread through all the churches” Church tradition has asserted that this could be Paul’s co-worker, Luke. Luke is not included in the list of Paul’s traveling companions recorded in Acts 20:4, but the “we” section, which implies Luke’s presence and starts in Acts 20:5-6, occurs at this point in the context (cf. Origen recorded in Eusebius’ Hist. Eccl. 6:25:6; A. T. Robertson’ Word Pictures in the New Testament, p. 245). M. R. Vincent’s Word Studies mentions another theory.

“The person referred to has been variously identified with Titus’ brother, Barnabas, Mark, Luke, and Epaenetus, mentioned in Rom. 16:5. The reference to Epaenetus has been urged on the ground of a supposed play upon the word praise, epainos; Epaenetus meaning praiseworthy; and the parallel is cited in the case of Onesimus profitable of whom Paul says that he will henceforth be useful, Philem. 1:1” (p. 830).


“One explanation of Luke’s silence about one who was such a trusted lieutenant of Paul’s is that Titus was Luke’s brother; cf. W. M. Ramsay, St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen (London, 1895), p. 390; Luke the Physician and Other Studies (London, 1908), pp. 17 f.; A. Souter, ‘A Suggested Relationship between Titus and Luke’, Expository Times 18 (1906-7), p. 285, and “The Relationship between Titus and Luke’, ibid., pp. 335 f. But if this relationship is maintained, then the possibility that Luke is the ‘brother’ of 2 Corinthians 8:18 f. (see. p. 320) is ruled out: Paul’s purpose in sending this ‘brother’ along with Titus was that he should be an independent guarantor of the probity of the administration of the relief fund, and this purpose would have been frustrated if critics had been given an opportunity to draw attention to a blood-relationship between the two. Nothing could have been better calculated to foster already existing suspicions” (p. 339 footnote #5).

8:19 “but he has also been appointed by the churches” The verb is cheirotoneo, which is a compound from “hand” and “to stretch out.” It originally referred to a vote by raising the hand. It cannot mean this in Acts 14:23, but does imply it here in II Cor. 8:19.

Here is another example of congregational polity linked to several different congregations. See fuller note at I Cor. 16:3.

| NASB | “to travel with us in the gracious work” |
| NRSV | “to travel with us with this gift” |
| NKJV | “to travel with us while we are administering this generous undertaking” |
| TEV | “to travel with us as we carry out this service of love” |
| NJB | “to be our traveling companion in this work of generosity” |

Paul was always leery about the accusation of his mishandling of money (cf. v. 20; 11:9,12). Therefore, he wanted to take several representatives from the different churches with him to give the contribution from the Gentile churches to the mother church in Jerusalem.

“for the glory of the Lord himself, and to show our readiness” This monetary gift had several purposes. Two are stated here.

1. to glorify the Lord
2. to show the Gentile churches’ willingness to help the mother church in Palestine

It probably helped Paul show his devotion and loyalty to the believing Jewish part of the universal church. See Special Topic: Glory at I Cor. 2:7.

8:20 “taking precaution” The phrase “taking precaution” (i.e. “avoiding,” a PRESENT MIDDLE PARTICIPLE used only here and in II Thess. 3:6) was a nautical metaphor for the extra care in handling the sails when approaching a dock (cf. Moulton and Milligan, p. 587 from Homer).

| NASB | “discredit” |
| NKJV, NRSV | “blame” |
| TEV | “stir up any complaints” |
| NJB | “be able to make any accusations” |
This is the Greek term μυμος, which basically means blame, ridicule, disgrace, or strain (cf. II Pet. 2:13). The verb here (i.e. AORIST MIDDLE [deponent] SUBJUNCTIVE) implies “to find fault,” “to censure,” or “to blame” (cf. 6:3; 8:20).

**NASB, NRSV, TEV**

“this generous gift”

**NKJV**

“this lavish gift”

**NJB**

“this large sum”

This is not the usual term for gift. It was used in the Septuagint for mature adults (cf. II Sam. 15:18; I Kgs. 1:9) and of leaders (cf. II Sam. 15:18; II Kgs. 10:6,11; Isa. 34:7). From Greek literature it was used of ripened grain or of something thick. It is found only here in the NT.

8:21 “for we have regard for what is honorable” This seems to be a quote from Prov. 3:4 in the Septuagint. Believers need to be above suspicion in all things (cf. Matt. 10:16; Rom. 12:17; I Thess. 5:22).

The term “honorable” (NASB) or “right” (NKJV, NIV) is the Greek term, kalos, which has a variety of nuances.

1. beautiful 7. distinguished
2. good 8. moral excellence
3. useful 9. worthy
4. excellent 10. virtuous
5. just 11. propriety
6. honorable

**“in the sight of the Lord”** This refers to our motives and knowledge of Scripture. If v. 21 is from Prov. 3:4 then Lord refers to YHWH.

**“but also in the sight of men”** This refers to our witness (cf. Rom. 14:18; Phil. 2:15; 4:8; I Tim. 3:7; I Pet. 2:12).

8:22 “We have sent with them our brother” This seems to be a second unknown companion to fulfill the OT requirement for two witnesses (cf. Deut. 17:6; 19:15). This means that Paul is referring in this context to three people: (1) Titus; (2) the brother of v. 18; and (3) the brother of v. 22.

**“we have often tested”** This term dokimazô also occurs in v. 8 and another form of the word in v. 2. See Special Topic: Greek Terms for “Testing” and Their Connotations at I Cor. 3:13.

**“great confidence in you”** See full note at 3:4.

8:23

**NASB, NKJV, NRSV**

“they are messengers of the churches”

**TEV**

“they represent the churches”

**NJB**

“they are emissaries of the churches”

This is the word apostolos, which meant “messenger” or “agent.” Because of the terms’ unique usage in John’s Gospel referring to Jesus as the “Sent One” and His sending His followers, the term took on a specialized sense of official representation (i.e. Apostle). Here it is used in its normal sense of those (i.e. Titus and two unnamed brothers) sent to represent churches in the trip to Jerusalem with the offering.

**“a glory to Christ”** This must refer to v. 19. See Special Topic: Glory at I Cor. 2:7. It is possible that this phrase refers to the churches that sent offerings.

8:24 The exegetical question is to whom does “them” refer? (1) It could refer to the poor in the church in Jerusalem. The Corinthian church demonstrated their love by their gift for the mother church. Their generosity showed the other Gentile churches that they were co-operating and following Paul’s lead. (2) It could refer to the other churches themselves. The best option contextually and grammatically is #2.

**“openly before”** See full note at 1:11.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How does NT giving differ from OT giving?
2. Is the tithe a universal or cultural truth? Why or why not?
3. How does your giving stack up against the Macedonians?
4. Explain the difference between giving and stewardship.
5. Who is the brother mentioned in v. 18?
II CORINTHIANS 9

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

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<tr>
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<th>NKJV</th>
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<tr>
<td>The Offering for the Saints</td>
<td>Administering the Gifts</td>
<td>The Collection for the Relief of the Jerusalem Church</td>
<td>Help for Needy Believers</td>
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READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. vii)
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

A. It must be remembered that chapters 8 and 9 form a literary unity. Also to some extent they are parallel. Possibly Paul has combined two sermons on Christian giving.

B. These two chapters taken together, in my opinion, are the definitive NT discussion of stewardship.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:1-5

¹For it is superfluous for me to write to you about this ministry to the saints; ²for I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the Macedonians, namely, that Achaia has been prepared since last year, and your zeal has stirred up most of them. ³But I have sent the brethren, in order that our boasting about you may not be made empty in this case, so that, as I was saying, you may be prepared; ⁴otherwise if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we—not to speak of you—will be put to shame by this confidence. ⁵So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they would go on ahead to you and arrange beforehand your previously promised bountiful gift, so that the same would be ready as a bountiful gift and not affected by covetousness.
9:1 “it is superfluous” This is the term *perissos*. It is used here in the sense of over and above. It and its related forms are used often in II Corinthians. Paul uses emotional and over-the-top language. See full note at 2:7.

“For me to write to you” It is unusual for Paul to say this when he has just written to them on this subject (i.e. the collection from his Gentile churches to the mother church in Jerusalem, cf. chapter 8). These two chapters are parallel in the spiritual principles related to Christian stewardship. Possibly they are two sermons combined or parts of two catechisms.

“This ministry” This term is often used of Christian stewardship (cf. Acts 6:1; 11:29; Rom. 15:31; II Cor. 8:4; 9:1,12,13). Here it refers to servanthood. Believers’ relationship to a gracious God and a self-giving Messiah demand a life of service to others (cf. John 17:18; 20:21; I John 3:16). See Special Topic: Servant Leadership at I Cor. 4:1.

“To the saints” See Special Topic: Saints at I Cor. 1:2.

9:2 “I know your readiness” Paul has alluded to this in 8:8-12,20.

“which I boast about you to the Macedonians” This is a PRESENT MIDDLE INDICATIVE. Paul continued to boast about the Achaians. In 8:1-5 Paul uses the Macedonians to encourage the Corinthians; now, in chapter 9, Paul states that he has used the Achaians to encourage the Macedonians.

“boast” See Special Topic: Boasting at I Cor. 5:6.

“Achaia” This was the Roman province along the south coast of Greece. This is in agreement with 1:1, where the letter is written for all of God’s people in Achaia. That shows that the letter was read in several churches of the area or that the church in Corinth, which was the capital of the province, had a wide geographical influence.

“has been prepared since last year” There seems to be a contradiction to chapter 8. However, the Corinthians wanted to begin the offering a year earlier, but they had never finished it. The real problem is the translation (the inflected forms are the same) of the VERB: (1) if it is a PERFECT MIDDLE INDICATIVE, it should be translated “have made preparations”; (2) if it is PERFECT PASSIVE INDICATIVE, it should be translated “has been prepared.” I think it should be PERFECT MIDDLE because of the context and the matching PARTICIPLE in v. 3 (i.e. PERFECT MIDDLE).

“your zeal has stirred up most of them” The verb in this sentence can be used in a negative sense (cf. Septuagint of Deut. 20:21; Col. 3:21) or a positive sense (cf. II Cor. 9:2). Only the context can determine the meaning.

9:3 “you may be prepared” This is a PERFECT PASSIVE SUBJUNCTIVE. The tense and voice match v. 2, but the SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD shows there is an element of contingency based on the volition of the believers at Corinth related to the collection (lit. “this matter”).

9:4 “If any Macedonians come with me” This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence which means potential action. These representatives are mentioned in 8:19-24. In Acts 20:4, where the representatives to Jerusalem with this offering are mentioned, none from Corinth are listed. Some have asserted that it was possible that Titus, who went earlier, was their representative, but there is no mention of him in Acts.

There are three AORIST SUBJUNCTIVE verbs in v. 4 which introduce an element of contingency based on the actions of the Achaian churches.

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<th>“by this confidence”</th>
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Why would Paul and the Corinthian church be ashamed? The term *hupostasis* (i.e. NASB, “confidence”), according Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Danker’s *Greek-English Lexicon*, cannot be translated “confidence,” but must be “frame of mind” or possibly “realization” of the collection for the poor in Jerusalem (cf. NRSV) (p. 847 #2 and #3). Paul was worried about the offering, not his boasting. This fits the word’s usage in Heb. 1:3. However, when comparing this same term usage in 11:17, “confident boasting,” then one understands why NASB translated it this way in this verse.
There are three words in this verse which begin with pro (i.e. before).

1. Paul sent the church representatives in advance (proerchomai, cf. Acts 20:5,13)
3. Paul wanted them to fulfill their previous promise (proeppangelomai, cf. Rom. 1:2)

“bountiful gift” This is eulogia (i.e. literally “good word”). This term is also used in v. 6 in the sense of “abundant.” This term has a wide semantic field. Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, list six senses (vol. 2, p. 108).

1. praise (cf. James 3:9)
2. flattery (cf. Rom. 16:18)
3. blessing (cf. I Cor. 10:16; James 3:10)
4. benefit (cf. Rom. 15:29)
5. gift (cf. II Cor. 9:5)
6. large amount (cf. II Cor. 9:6)
The #3 usage follows the Septuagint (cf. Jdgs. 1:15).

NASB “bountiful gift and not affected by covetousness”
NKJV “as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation”
NRSV “as a voluntary gift and not as an extortion”
TEV “you give because you want to, not because you have to”
NJB “as a real gift and not an imposition”

Literally “thus as a blessing and not as greediness.” Paul’s whole discussion about giving in this literary unit (i.e. chapters 8-9) is written in tactful and positive ways, but this phrase shows that there was an element of opposition in the church. Paul wanted the church at Corinth to feel a part of the larger fellowship of his churches and be a part of this corporate benevolent ministry. He knew, however, some would take this opportunity to accuse him of being overbearing in regards to this contribution. So to stop all possible criticism, he said, “Get it done before I get there!”

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:6-15

6Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; 9as it is written, “HE SCATTERED ABROAD, HE GAVE TO THE POOR, HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ENDURES FOREVER.” 10Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply the seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; 11you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God. 12For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God. 13Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all, 14while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you. 15Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

9:6 “he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly” This seems to be an allusion to Prov. 11:24-25 (cf. Prov. 19:17; 22:9). It reflects Jesus’ teaching on giving (cf. Matt. 7:2; Mark 4:24; Luke.6:38). The agricultural metaphor of sowing is often used in the Bible; sometimes in an eschatological, judicial sense (cf. Gal. 6:7), but also as a way of referring to supernatural actions like the resurrection (cf. I Cor. 15:35-37). In this context it speaks of one seed producing many seeds as a way of referring to abundance.

9:7 “each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart” This is a PERFECT MIDDLE INDICATIVE. This is one of the key principles in spiritual giving. It ranks alongside 8:12 in giving believers major guidelines on stewardship.

“heart” See full note at I Cor. 14:25.

“not grudgingly or under compulsion” Spiritual giving must be voluntary and with the proper motive (cf. 8:12). I am personally appalled when I hear OT tithing preached (usually from Malachi or Leviticus) as (1) a mandate for personal wealth or (2) a threat to physical health or well being.

“God loves a cheerful giver” This seems to be from the Prov. 22:9 in the Septuagint. We get the English term, “hilarious,” from this Greek root. The same term is used in connection to mercy in Rom. 12:8. In the Koine Greek papyri (i.e. magical texts)
the term *hilaros* (happy) is synonymous to *hileš* (mercy). Because of this Moulton and Milligan, in *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, think it is used in the sense of gracious (p. 303).

9:8 "God is able" This is a wonderful title of God (i.e. “to Him who is able,” cf. Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:20; Jude 24).

[Box] "to make all grace abound to you" This phrase does not refer to the Corinthians’ giving, it refers to God’s basic nature, which is grace. Because of God’s nature and God’s gift (i.e. Jesus), believers must also give. Believers reflect the family characteristics of God.

[Box] “always having all sufficiency” Notice the number of inclusive “all”s (i.e. *pas*).

1. all grace (*pasan*)
2. always (*pantote*)
3. all sufficiency (*pasan*)
4. in everything (*panti*)
5. every good deed (*pan*)

Christian giving affects all of life! God provides for all needs (cf. Matt. 6:19-34).

The term “sufficiency” comes from two Greek terms, “self” and “contentment” (cf. I Tim. 6:6-10; Phil. 4:11-12,19; Heb. 13:15). A. T. Robertson’s *Word Pictures In The New Testament*, vol. 4, p. 248 and M. R. Vincent’s *Word Studies*, p. 831, both claim that the use of this term shows Paul was familiar with Stoic thought and terms. But he redefines them in light of the gospel.

[Box] “you may have an abundance for every good deed” God will give those who share their resources with Him, more resources.

This abundance, however, is not for the personal use of the individual, but for the causes of Christ. The Christian giver becomes a channel of God’s provisions for the needs of others. This is the truth that is so often lost in our teaching on Christian stewardship. Yes, covenant blessing and abundance will occur, but they are to be passed on for the Kingdom, not retained! Believers are saved to serve and blessed to give!

9:9 “as it is written” This is a quote from Ps. 112:9 from the Septuagint. This quote includes one of the rare uses of the term “righteousness,” to refer to human action (cf. Matt. 6:1). In Judaism it came to refer to the weekly practice of Jewish almsgiving for the poor of the synagogue (cf. Ps. 112:1-6). Usually in the NT, righteousness is a gift of God in Christ apart from human action or merit.

9:10 The first part of this verse seems to be a quote from Isa. 55:10, and the second part seems to be quoted from Hosea 10:12. These verses assert God's ownership and provision of all things and believers’ stewardship. God is the source, but believers receive a blessing when they share.

Gas’s ownership is communicated through the Greek word “supplies” (i.e. *chorëgeō*), which comes into English as chorus. This term in Koine Greek was used of a benefactor lavishly supplying for a local choir. Often modern believers attribute their prosperity to their own creativity, work ethic, accumulated knowledge, or self-effort. However, a biblical world view attributes all resources to God. See Special Topic: Servant Leadership at I Cor. 4:1.

NASB, NRSV “increase the harvest of your righteousness”
NKJV “increase the fruits of your righteousness”
TEV “produce a rich harvest from your generosity”
NJB “make the harvest of your righteousness a bigger one”

In 8:5 the term “grace” is used in several different senses, so too, righteousness. The theological mystery is how do believers receive a blessing or reward for things which God gives and inspires? This is the mystery of a Sovereign God and mandated covenant response! Believers give because:

1. God gives
2. Jesus’ example
3. human need
4. new world view
5. indwelling Spirit.

Giving is the natural result of salvation. A stingy Christian is a contradiction in terms!

9:11 “you will be enriched in everything” This is PRESENT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE of *ploutizo* with “in everything” fronted for emphasis. From 8:7-9, it is obvious that this does not refer to material blessings only, but also spiritual blessings (cf. 6:10; I Cor. 1:5).
“all liberality” Notice two more pas inclusives (cf. v. 8). This Greek term can also mean single-mindedness (i.e. sincerity, purity) and genuineness (cf. 8:2; 9:11,13). See note at 1:12.

“producing thanksgiving to God” The emphasis of this closing section of chapter 9 is on God’s receiving the glory from believers’ sharing (cf. vv. 11-13). This reminds me of Matt. 5:16, where it says, “they will see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” Paul’s major purpose in linking the mother church in Jerusalem with his Gentile churches was that an atmosphere of love and appreciation might develop (cf. v. 14).

9:12 “service” This is the Greek term leitourgia (a compound from public and work) from which we get the English term liturgy. Originally it referred to someone who did public service at their own expense. In this sense it is similar to chor舸ς of v. 10.

“fully supplying the needs of the saints” This is the Greek term prosanapl舸ς (PRESENT ACTIVE PERIPHRASTIC INDICATIVE), which is pros plus anapl舸ς, which means to fill up or complete (cf. I Cor. 14:16; 16:17). Paul uses many intensified, verbal forms with pros (cf. v. 5), however, the exact resulting meaning is uncertain. Paul uses the same intensified form in 11:9.

The term “needs” is literally “the things lacking” (cf. I Cor. 16:17; II Cor. 8:8,13,14; 11:8). The poor believers in Jerusalem had real needs that these Gentile churches could meet. See Special Topic: Saints at I Cor. 1:2.

“overflowing through many thanksgivings to God” The needy in Jerusalem and all believers in Palestine were thanking God for the concern and sacrificial help of the Gentile churches (cf. v. 13).

9:13 “proof” This is the word for “test” (i.e. dokim舸ς) used in 2:9; 8:2; 13:3. See full note at I Cor. 3:13.

“this ministry” This refers to the contribution of Paul’s Gentile churches to the mother church in Jerusalem.

“confession of the gospel of Christ” Confession means “to agree with” (cf. I Tim. 6:12-13; I John 1:9). In this context their metaphorical confession is their liberal contribution, which confirmed their relationship with the other Gentile churches and with Christ. Eternal life has observable characteristics!

NASB, NKJV, NRSV, NJB “obedience”
TEV “loyalty”

This is literally the term “submission” (i.e. hupot舸ς, cf. Gal. 2:5; I Tim. 2:11; 3:4), but used in the sense of obedience because the object is “the gospel,” not a person.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SUBMISSION (HUPOTASSΟ)

The Septuagint uses this term to translate ten different Hebrew words. Its basic OT meaning was “to order” or “the right of command.” This is picked up in the LXX.

1. God commands (cf. Lev. 10:1; Jonah 2:1; 4:6-8)
2. Moses commands (cf. Exod. 36:6; Deut. 27:1)
3. kings command (cf. II Chr. 31:13)

In the NT this sense continues as in Acts 10:48, where an Apostle commands. However, new connotations are developed in the NT.

1. a voluntary aspect develops (often MIDDLE VOICE)
2. this self-limiting action can be seen in Jesus submitting to the Father (cf. Luke 2:51)
3. believers submit to aspects of culture so that the gospel will not be adversely affected
   a. all believers (cf. Eph. 5:21)
   b. believing wives (cf. Col. 3:18; Eph. 5:22-24; Titus 2:5; I Pet. 3:1)
   c. believers to pagan governments (cf. Rom. 13:1-7; I Pet. 2:13)

Believers act out of motives of love, for God, for Christ, for the Kingdom, for the good of others.
Like agape the church filled this term with new meaning based on the needs of the Kingdom and the needs of others. This term takes on a new nobility of selflessness, not based on a command, but on a new relationship to a self-giving God and Messiah. Believers obey and submit for the good of the whole and the blessing of the family of God.

“contribution” This is the term koinonia (cf. Rom. 15:26), which means “joint participation with.” Here it refers to money given for the poor of the church in Jerusalem.

“and to all” This is a difficult phrase to interpret. It must somehow refer to the Corinthian influence in encouraging other Gentile churches to participate in the collection (cf. v. 2).

9:14 This verse refers to those who receive the collection (i.e. the poor of the Jerusalem church and all its members). Paul wanted these two wings of the early church to be inseparably united.

“surpassing” Huperballó. See Special Topic: Paul’s Use of Huper Compounds at I Cor. 2:1.

9:15 “Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift” Some take this context to refer to the Corinthian gift, but because of (1) Jesus’ great sacrifice mentioned in 8:9; (2) the gospel of Christ mentioned in 9:13, it must refer to the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah.

The self-giving ministry of the Son (cf. 8:9) was meant to inspire these believers to give thanks (i.e. eucharistia, vv. 11,12; charis, v. 13) to God and money to needy believers.

NASB, NKJV, NRSV “indescribable”
TEV “priceless”
NJB “beyond all telling”

This is the term ekdiügeomai, which means to explain completely or mention all the details, plus the ALPHA PRIVATIVE, which negates it. In some ways the love of God is too wonderful for humans to grasp all its facets (cf. Deut. 30:11; Job 11:7; Ps. 139:6; Prov. 30:18; Isa. 55:8-9; Rom. 11:33).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Outline in your own words the principles of stewardship mentioned in chapters 8 and 9.
2. Define in your own words what the quote from v. 6 and v. 10 mean in your life.
II CORINTHIANS 10

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

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READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. vii)
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

A. Chapters 10 through 13 form a literary unit where Paul defends himself against the accusations of the false teachers. The false teachers had made Paul himself the crux of the argument. Therefore, reluctantly, he defends himself on human grounds, using their catch words and rhetorical style. His purpose ultimately was to defend the gospel.

B. Some examples of the charges levied against Paul.
   1. He was condescending when face to face, but courageous in his letters, 10:1,9,11.
   2. He was acting from the lowest human motives, 10:2.
   3. His personal appearance was not pleasant and his rhetorical delivery was poor; 10:2.
   4. He preached simply for money, 11:8,12; 12:16.

C. Paul’s enemies
   1. There seem to be three groups involved.
      a. a native Corinthian contingent (the factions of I Corinthians 1-4)
b. a Jewish contingent from Palestine (similar to Judaizers, II Cor. 10-13).

c. possibly a hybrid of both

2. From I Corinthians there seem to be groups attacking him for and from opposition positions

a. a legalistic group (asceticism)

b. an antinomian group (libertines)

D. Because Paul mentions several letters that he had written to the church at Corinth, which apparently have not been preserved, there has been scholarly speculation about II Corinthians being a composite of these lost letters. It is certainly true that Paul’s use of the EPISTOLARY AORIST in referring to his different letters has caused confusion as well as the obvious different literary units which make up II Corinthians, which often seem to be out of chronological and rational arrangement.

It is surely possible that the disjunctions were caused by Paul writing this letter over a period of time and that new information continued to arrive after he had written a literary unit. The letter begins in a positive affirmation, but then turns negative.

Personally, the possibility that some of Paul’s letters were lost does not bother me (possibly they contained information that the Spirit did not want to become Scripture), but the proposed composite nature of II Corinthians, which has no evidence in the Greek manuscript tradition nor church tradition, but is simply the speculation of modern western scholars does bother me! We must not force ancient eastern thinkers and writers into modern western literary categories.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:1-6**

1Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent! 2I ask that when I am present I need not be bold with the confidence with which I propose to be courageous against some, who regard us as if we walked according to the flesh. 3For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, 4for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. 5We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, 6and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.

10:1 “Now I, Paul, myself urge you” Paul does not use the “we” of previous chapters because he is defending himself personally before the accusations of the false teachers. Paul used autos and ego (cf. 12:13; Rom. 7:25; 9:3; 15:24; and in Gal. 5:2 egô and Paulos) to emphasize that this was his personal plea.

For “urge” see full note at 1:4-11.

“by the meekness and gentleness of Christ” Paul used the appropriate attitude and methodologies even with these false teachers (cf. Matt. 11:29). Meekness was not seen as a virtue by Greek thinkers (i.e. Socrates, Aristotle, Stoics). This reflects one of their criticisms of Paul. M. R. Vincent’s *Word Studies*, vol. 2, asserts that in the Septuagint that “meekness” (prouas, v. 1), “meek” (tameinos, v. 1), and “poor” (penês, v 9:9) are used to translate the same Hebrew words. They contrast the rich and powerful vs. the lowly and down-trodden (p. 832).

“who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent” This evaluation may refer to Paul’s severe letter that was lost (cf. 1:9-11). Notice his play on the concept of “meekness.” He calls Christ meek (i.e. praus used of the Messiah in Matt. 21:5 and of believers in Matt. 5:5; I Pet. 3:4,15). In this phrase he uses the synonym tapeinos (cf. Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, p. 748), which is also used of Jesus (cf. Matt. 11:29) and of Paul (cf. 11:7; 12:21).

“bold” See note at 5:6.

10:2 “I ask” This is the Greek term deomai, which means to ask with urgency or to plead. It is synonymous to the term (i.e. parakaleô, cf. Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, p. 408) Paul used in v. 1 (cf. 2:8; 5:20; 6:1; 8:6; 9:5; 12:8,18; 13:11). He is urgently pleading with these believers to reevaluate what they have heard from the false teachers.

“that when I am present” Paul did not want to return to Corinth until things had changed. He did not want to be bold, but gentle.

“I need not be bold with the confidence with which I propose to be courageous against some” There is a play on the Greek word for “flesh.” The false teachers were accusing Paul of acting from the lowest, base human motives (i.e. in the flesh). While
Paul admits that he is in the flesh (i.e. physical body, cf. v. 3), he strongly asserts that he is not acting from fleshly motives (cf. 1:17; 2:17; 4:3; 7:2; 10:3-4).

For “confidence” see note at 3:4.

“propose...regard” This is a play on the Greek word logizomai. Paul uses the VERB (PRESENT MIDDLE [deponent] INDICATIVE) to describe his thoughts and the PARTICIPLE (PRESENT MIDDLE [deponent]) to describe the false teachers’ false accusations. This may even have been a technical term for the Sophists. See fuller note of the term at 3:5.

“walking” This is a Hebrew idiom for lifestyle behavior (ex. Eph. 4:1,17; 5:2,1).

“according to the flesh” They were judging Paul in light of their society’s norms (cf. I Cor. 9:8; 15:32; Rom. 3:5; Gal. 1:11; 3:15). Believers have a different standard—the revealed word of God: (1) Old Testament; (2) Christ; and (3) New Testament.

10:3-6 Paul uses a series of military metaphors to describe the daily struggle between the Christian and spiritual wickedness (cf. Rom. 7; 8:3-11). This spiritual wickedness is defined in v. 5 as human logic, wisdom, and argumentation against the gospel (cf. Eph. 6:10-18).

10:3 “war” This is the term strateuo, from which we get the English term strategy. It was used of a soldier (cf. I Cor. 9:7; II Tim. 2:4) or metaphorically of a spiritual battle (cf. here and I Tim. 1:18). There is an ongoing conflict in the spiritual realm.

10:4-5 There is a series of things mentioned in vv. 4-5 which Paul attacks.
1. destruction of fortresses (ochurama)
2. destruction of speculation (logizomai)
3. destruction of high things (huphama)
4. taking captive every thought (noema)

These things possibly refer to the Sophists’ rhetoric, which Paul had depreciated in I Cor. 1-4 (cf. Bruce W. Winter, Philo and Paul Among the Sophists, pp. 180-202).

10:4 “the weapons of our warfare” Paul has alluded to this spiritual warfare earlier in 6:7. Romans was written from Corinth about this same time. He also mentions this warfare in Rom. 6:13 and 13:12. Peter uses the verb form in I Pet. 4:1, where he encourages believers to arm themselves in their fleshly struggles.

A good resource book in this area is Crucial Questions About Spiritual Warfare by Clinton E. Arnold, published by Baker.

“for the destruction of fortresses” This may be an allusion to Proverbs 21:22 (larger context vv. 13-31). There has been much discussion about the meaning of this phrase among commentators, but it is obvious that v. 5 is a description of what spiritual fortresses Paul is referring to. It appears he is addressing the false theology of the false teachers.

10:5
NASB “destroying speculations”
NKJV “casting down arguments”
NRSV “destroy arguments”
TEV “pull down”
NJB “It is ideas that we demolish”

See note at 3:5.

“and every lofty thing”
“and every high thing”
“and every proud obstacle”
“every proud obstacle”
“every presumptuous notion”

This is the word for “height” used in the sense of lofty, human thinking. This reflects the false teachers’ over-emphasis on (1) knowledge and human reasoning (cf. I Cor. 1:18-25; Col. 2:8) and (2) legalism (cf. Col. 2:16-23).

“taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” The VERB is a compound of “spear” and “to capture in battle.” These false teachers were capturing the thought and minds of the Corinthian believers. Paul would have us “renew our minds” (cf. Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23); protect our minds (cf. Phil. 4:7). Salvation is free, but the Christian life is characterized by obedience, service, worship, and perseverance. These are covenant responsibilities.
Paul warns the false teachers and their followers that their day of reckoning is coming. They accused him of being weak, but they simply misunderstood his patience with them for Christ’s sake and the corporate health of this church. Paul is warning this church to deal with its problems before he arrives or else he will deal with them (cf. I Cor. 5:3-5).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:7-11

7You are looking at things as they are outwardly. If anyone is confident in himself that he is Christ’s, let him consider this again within himself, that just as he is Christ’s, so also are we. 8For even if I boast somewhat further about our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you, I will not be put to shame, 9for I do not wish to seem as if I would terrify you by my letters. 10For they say, “His letters are weighty and strong, but his personal presence is unimpressive and his speech contemptible.” 11Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letters when absent, such persons we are also in deed when present.

10:7 “You are looking” Form-wise this could be an IMPERATIVE (cf. NASB, NRSV, NJB) or an INDICATIVE (cf. TEV, NIV). The NKJV and ASV translate it as a question.

The church at Corinth was analyzing and criticizing on a fleshly/worldly/physical level instead of a gospel focus.

“if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence. There were some in the church at Corinth who had deceived themselves (cf. I Cor. 14:37) as to their spiritual condition and standing (i.e. “is confident,” PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE).

“himself” Paul uses this term, eautou, twice in this verse. These false teachers had deceived themselves. This is the hardest spiritual condition to reason with or to affect.

“that just as he is Christ’s so also are we” The false teachers were claiming spiritual authority and standing, but were denying Paul’s.

10:8 “if” This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence which implies potential action (cf. 11:1-12:13).

“boast” This term (i.e. kauchaomai and its other forms) is used so often in Paul’s Corinthian letters.

1. kauchaomai (glory, boast, cf. I Cor. 1:29,31; 3:21; 4:7; 13:3; II Cor. 5:12; 7:14; 9:2; 10:8,13,15,16,17; 11:12,16,18,30; 12:1,5,6,9)
2. kauchëma (cf. I Cor. 5:6; 9:15,16; II Cor. 1:14; 5:12; 9:3)
3. kauchësis (cf. I Cor. 15:31; II Cor. 1:12; 7:4,14; 8:24; 11:10,17)
See fuller note on use of the word at 1:12.

“about our authority, which the Lord gave” This refers to Paul’s Damascus Road experience (cf. Acts 9:15,16; Rom. 1:5; Gal. 2:9).

“for building you up and not for destroying you” Paul repeats this phrase in 13:10. This is similar to the call of Isaiah (cf. Isa. 6) and Jeremiah (cf. Jer. 1), except they were called to do both! Paul uses the same VERB (i.e. kathairesis), which he used in v. 4 (twice) for destroying strongholds of human reasoning. Paul is called to destroy some things and ideas, but not the church itself. He is called to defend and protect the church (cf. v. 9). See Special Topic: Edify at I Cor. 8:1.

“I will not be put to shame” Paul is going to defend himself because the false teachers had made him the issue. He defends himself to defend (1) the authority he had been given and (2) the gospel he preached.

This may reflect the OT promises of God (cf. Rom. 9:33 and 10:11, quoting Isa. 28:16), where those who trust in God will not be ashamed or disappointed. Paul knew in Whom he trusted!

Even if Paul had boasted too much (cf. NRSV, TEV) in his call and appointment, it was still true and God would defend him! Those who reject Paul’s authority are condemned (cf. I Cor. 14:37-38).

10:9 Paul’s letters were to promote their repentance, not to bring condemnation (cf. 7:5-13a). But for the false teachers it was a different story (cf. vv. 8,11; 13:10).

10:10 “For they say” “They say” follows MSS B, called Vaticanus, the Latin Vulgate and the Peshitta (Syriac translation of the fifth century). Most other Greek manuscripts have “he,” which may refer to a ring leader of the false teachers (cf. vv. 7,11; 11:4).

“his personal presence is unimpressive” A second century tradition of Paul’s physical description comes from Thessalonica in a book called Paul and Thekla. It says that he was bald, bow-legged, had bushy eyebrows and protruding eyes. Paul was not
a physically attractive man (cf. Gal. 4:14). Some of these physical characteristics may be related to his thorn in the flesh (cf. 12:7), which I think was eye problems.

It is possible that this phrase, like the next one, refers to Paul’s public speaking skills, which were a major item of contention (cf. I Cor. 1:17). This phrase often was used of a “stage presence” (cf. Bruce W. Winter, After Paul Left Corinth, p. 35).

“and his speech contemptible” This is a PERFECT PASSIVE PARTICIPLE. This is a strong Greek term (cf. I Cor. 1:28; 6:4; 16:11; Rom. 14:3,10). Paul was not a polished public speaker (i.e. Greek rhetorical style, cf. I Cor. 1:17; II Cor. 11:6). Apollos was the eloquent, rhetorically trained preacher from Alexandria. However, Paul claims that though unskilled in rhetorical style (cf. 11:6), his message and authority were from Christ.

10:11 The false teacher(s) have accused Paul of having strong letters, but weak presentation. Paul affirms that the strength which they affirmed in his letters would be equaled by the strength of his personal presence if he had to come personally and set things straight himself!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:12-18

12For we are not bold to class or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves; but when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding. 13But we will not boast beyond our measure, but within the measure of the sphere which God apportioned to us as a measure, to reach even as far as you. 14For we are not overextending ourselves, as if we did not reach to you, for we were the first to come even as far as you in the gospel of Christ; 15not boasting beyond our measure, that is, in other men's labors, but with the hope that as your faith grows, we will be, within our sphere, enlarged even more by you, 16so as to preach the gospel even to the regions beyond you, and not to boast in what has been accomplished in the sphere of another. 17But he who boasts is to boast in the Lord. 18For it is not he who commends himself that is approved, but he whom the Lord commends.

10:12 “but when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves” Paul has alluded to human commendations in 3:1 (cf. 10:18); now he expands this to human comparisons. Obviously these false teachers were comparing themselves to Paul in such a way as to accentuate their position and depreciate his.

Paul knew from his study of the OT (cf. I Sam. 16:7; Prov. 21:2) how fruitless this was. He was probably also familiar with Jesus’ teaching about people who justify themselves (cf. Luke 10:29; 16:15; 18:9,14).

There is a note of sarcasm in this verse as there is in v. 1. Paul used this literary method often in I Corinthians.

There is an obvious word play between the two AORIST ACTIVE INFINITIVES.

1. 

2. sugkrinai (sun and krinō), judge by comparing

“they are without understanding” This was quite a shocking statement:

1. to Greek philosophers it would depreciate their claim to superior spiritual knowledge
2. to Hebrew thinkers it would be an allusion to the animals.

10:13 Paul is alluding to his divine call and mandate (cf. Acts 9; 22:3-16; 26:9-18) to be an Apostle to the Gentiles. He was not comparing or commending, but stating God’s call.

God’s call on him as special representative to the Gentiles even included the church at Corinth (cf. vv. 14-15).

10:14 “For we are not overextending” Huperefkeinō. See Special Topic: Paul’s Use of Huper Compounds at I Cor. 2:1.

“we were the first to come even as far as you in the gospel of Christ” Paul was the founder of the Corinthian church, yet the false teachers were trying to take credit (cf. v. 17b).

10:15 “not boasting beyond our measure. . . in other men's labors” The false teachers were taking credit for the Corinthian church, which Paul established.

10:16 “so as to preach the gospel even to the regions beyond you” This seems to refer to Paul’s desire to go to Rome and/or Spain (cf. Acts 19:21; Rom. 15:22ff). He wanted to establish churches to help him both with a contribution for Jerusalem and to enable him to travel to the western Mediterranean and establish more churches.

For “beyond” (huperefkeinō), see Special Topic: Paul’s Use of Huper Compounds at I Cor. 2:1.
10:17 “HE WHO BOASTS IS TO BOAST IN THE LORD” This is a quote from the Septuagint of Jer. 9:23,24. It is also quoted in I Cor. 1:31. All human boasting is folly. See full note on “boast” at 1:12.

10:18 The real question is which faction, teacher, or theology does Jesus approve (cf. I Cor. 4:1-5).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Explain the obvious break between chapters 9 and 10.
2. What were some of the charges of the false teachers against Paul?
3. Why does Paul use military terms to describe his struggle against the false teachers?
4. Were these false teachers sincere Christians who were just wrong on minor points of theology or were they cult leaders who were trying to pervert men from the truth of the Gospel?
II CORINTHIANS 11

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

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4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

A. Chapters 10-13 form a literary unit. In this section that is so different from the previous chapters in II Corinthians, Paul defends himself against the attacks of false teachers. They had made Paul himself the object of ridicule in their attempt to discredit his gospel.

B. Paul answers the charges of his critics in chapter 11:4,8,12-15,18-20.
C. Paul uses irony and sarcasm to jog the memory of the Corinthian Christians concerning his ministry (cf. vv. 5, 7, 19, 20, 21).

**WORD AND PHRASE STUDY**

### NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:1-6

1 I wish that you would bear with me in a little foolishness; but indeed you are bearing with me. 2 For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. 3 But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. 4 For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully. 5 For I consider myself not in the least inferior to the most eminent apostles. 6 But even if I am unskilled in speech, yet I am not so in knowledge; in fact, in every way we have made this evident to you in all things.

### Notes:

11:1 “I wish that you would bear with me” This is an IMPERFECT MIDDLE INDICATIVE. The MIDDLE VOICE matches the emphatic personal introduction to chapter 10. The IMPERFECT TENSE can mean (1) repeated action in past time or (2) the beginning of an action. Number two fits this context best. See fuller note on “bear” at v. 4.

“in a little foolishness” Paul has previously stated that physical comparison is foolishness, but the false teachers had used him as the object of ridicule. Therefore, he uses the Sophist’s rhetorical style (i.e. boasting) against them (i.e. a sarcastic parody). He had to defend himself before this church for their own good. He felt silly in having to do this as verses 17 and 21 affirm.

“indeed you are bearing with me” This is either a PRESENT MIDDLE INDICATIVE (NASB, NKJV, NJB) or a PRESENT MIDDLE IMPERATIVE (NRSV, TEV). There are three reasons stated in vv. 2, 4, 5 why they should listen. Each of these reasons is introduced in English by the word “for” (gar).

11:2 “I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ” Paul, as the founder of this church, is acting like a parent to betroth them to Christ (cf. Eph. 5:22-33; Rev. 19:9; 21:2,9; 22:17). The OT idea of God as husband is found is Isa. 54:5; 62:5; and Hosea 1-3.

“as a pure virgin” This is the OT terminology for marriage. Paul repeats this same theme in Eph. 5:25-27. Paul is subtly rebuking the Corinthian Christians for even listening to the itinerant false teachers. In a sense those who supported them had become spiritually unfaithful (i.e. OT spiritual adultery).

11:3 “as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness” This refers to the temptation account found in Gen. 3 (cf. I Tim. 2:14). Remember the serpent led Eve away from YHWH in small steps leading to self-assertive independence!

The term deceived (exapataō) is used only by Paul in the NT (cf. Rom. 7:11; 16:18; I Cor. 3:18; II Cor. 11:3; II Thess. 2:3; I Tim. 2:14). The intensified form, apataō, is used in the Septuagint of Gen. 3:13 by Eve. Paul used it in Eph. 5:6 and I Tim. 2:14 (twice). Deception comes both from without and within. Believers must be constantly on guard.

The term craftiness (panourgia) is a compound from “all” (pan) and “work” (ergon). Paul has used it twice before in his Corinthian letters (cf. I Cor. 3:19; II Cor. 4:2). Paul understood the spiritual warfare which believers had to face (cf. Eph. 4:14). He states the results of evil on mankind clearly in Rom. 1-3 and on believers in Rom. 7; Eph. 6:10-19. Paul’s theology begins with angelic and human rebellion.

See Special Topic: Schemes at 2:11.

“your minds will be led astray” The verb phtheirō is an AORIST PASSIVE SUBJUNCTIVE. In a further allusion to Gen. 3 Paul used this term for “ruin” or “spoil” in a moral sense several times (cf. 7:2; 11:3; I Cor. 3:17; 15:33; Eph. 4:22). Believers can be tricked, manipulated, and defeated by evil!

“from the simplicity” See note at 1:12.

“and purity” There is a Greek manuscript variant which adds “and purity.” It is found in MSS P, P, B, and G. It is absent in MSS 46, D, H, K, and P. The MS D has the longer reading also, but the terms are in reverse order. Textual scholars are split on which is original. The inclusion of “purity” picks up on v. 2 and is included in some very good and ancient manuscripts.
NASB  “of devotion to Christ”
NKJV  “that is in Christ”
NRSV, TEV, NJB, NIV  “devotion to Christ”

The ABLATIVE PREPOSITION, *apo*, introduces three objects.
1. from simplicity
2. from purity
3. from “in Christ”

What is the referent in v. 3? Several English translations supply “devotion,” but it could refer to “in Christ,” which is Paul’s famous phrase of personal faith in Christ.

**11:4 “For if one comes”** The “if” makes this a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence, which is assumed to be true from the author’s perspective or for his literary purpose. “One” seems to refer to the chief false teacher alluded to in 10:7,10.

**“another Jesus whom we have not preached”** These false teachers were not disagreeing over some peripheral, minor matter, but over the person and work of Jesus Christ (cf. I Cor. 3:11). It is obvious in putting all the evidence together that these false teachers were a mixture of both the Judaizers as in the book of Galatians and the Hellenists (i.e. *Sophists*). These surrogates from Jerusalem had dropped the circumcision emphasis, probably because of the Jerusalem Council’s findings in Acts 15, but they continued their Jewish legalism somehow combined with or refined by Hellenistic (i.e. *Sophists*) thinking.

**“or you receive a different spirit which you have not received”** Some see this as a reference to the Holy Spirit (cf. TEV), but it seems preferable to relate this to either (1) the “spirit of fear and slavery” (cf. Rom. 8:15; II Tim. 1:7) or (2) “the spirit of peace and freedom” (cf. Rom. 14:17). For a fuller note on “spirit” see I Cor. 2:11.

The term “different” is *heteros*, which means another of a different kind. Paul is contrasting the messages of the false teachers and himself (cf. Gal. 1:6). There is much similarity between the problems mentioned in Gal.1:6-9 and here.

**“received...accepted”** The Greek verbs *lambanó* and *dechomai* are synonymous. Both basic meanings are to take hold of something. The two notes in Louw and Nida’s *Greek-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, are helpful.

1. “to receive or accept an object or benefit for which the initiative rests with the giver, but the focus of attention in the transfer is upon the receiver” (p. 572).
2. footnote 31, “There may be some subtle distinction in meaning between *dechomai* and *lambanó* with the latter implying more active participation on the part of the one who receives the gift, but this cannot be determined from existing contexts” (p. 572).

For me as an evangelical Christian, these terms are crucial in an appropriate response to the gospel (cf. John 1:12). The promises of God, the works of Christ, and the wooing of the Spirit must be responded to both initially and continually. This forms the basis of the covenant concept (i.e. God initiates, but humans must respond).

*Lambanó* is recurrent in this context (cf. 11:4,8,20,24; 12:16).

**11:5 “For I consider”** In this literary unit Paul uses this verb, *logizomai*, often (cf. 10:2,7,11; 11:5; 12:6). It may have been a catch-word or often-used term of the Sophist’s false teachers.

**“not in the least inferior”** The verb in this phrase is a PERFECT ACTIVE INFINITIVE. At no time, past or present, did Paul think of himself as less than these supposed authoritative representatives from Jerusalem (cf. 12:11). This perspective is also discussed in Gal. 1:11-2:14, where Paul also defends his apostleship.
NASB, NKJV “to the most eminent apostles”
NRSV “to these super-apostles”
TEV “to these very special so-called apostles of yours”
NJB “to the super-apostles”

This sarcastic description is a combination of two Greek terms, huper (i.e. over and above) and lian (i.e. great or exceedingly). This descriptive phrase is rare and Paul uses it only here and in 12:11. Verse 5 is contextually and grammatically linked to v. 4, which obviously refers to the false teachers (cf. vv. 13-15). Paul is using the term “apostles” sarcastically in its two senses: (1) the Twelve and (2) messengers sent from churches (cf. v. 13). Apparently these false teachers had some connection with the church in Jerusalem (cf. v. 22 shows by inference that they claimed a Jewish background; 12:1 shows that they claimed charismatic experiences).

“most eminent” (huperlian) See Special Topic: Paul’s Use of Huper Compounds at I Cor. 2:1.

11:6 “But even if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence. Paul admitted to them that Greek rhetoric was not his strength. His strength was the inspired content of his messages.

“I am unskilled in speech” This term is used in the sense of “untrained” or “amateurish” (cf. Acts 4:13, where it is used of Peter and John or I Cor. 14, where it is used of those who are unlearned in spiritual gifts). It seems to be related to Paul’s confession that he was not skilled in rhetoric (cf. 10:10; I Cor. 1:17).

This comment, apparently from the false teachers, shows that they honored rhetorical speaking. This implies a Hellenistic (i.e. Sophists) background.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:7-11

7 Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you without charge? 8 I robbed other churches by taking wages from them to serve you; 9 and when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so. 10 As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be stopped in the regions of Achaia. 11 Why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do!

11:7 “did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted” Verse 7 is a question which expects a “no” answer. This is another example of Paul’s sarcasm related to the continuing controversy of his not accepting monetary remuneration from the Corinthian church (cf. I Cor. 9:3-18).

“the gospel of God” Notice the gospel of Christ (cf. 2:12; 9:13; 10:14) is also the gospel of God!

11:8 “I robbed other churches” The Greeks and Romans were used to paying their itinerant teachers, but Paul knew that this would be the source of criticism by the false teachers and he refused to accept monetary help from this church (or any other church while he worked among them, cf. I Thess. 2:5-9; II Thess. 3:7-9). Paul did accept help from both Philippi and Thessalonica after he had left (cf. Phil. 4:15-18 and possibly I Thess. 3:6). Apparently it hurt this church’s feelings (cf. v. 11; 12:13,14; I Cor. 9:12,15,18).

“to serve you” See Special Topic: Servant Leadership at I Cor. 4:1.

11:10 “As the truth of Christ is in me” This is an idiomatic way of asserting truthfulness or Paul’s sense of inspiration (cf. Rom. 9:1). See Special Topic: “Truth” in Paul’s Writings at 13:8.

“this boasting of mine will not be stopped in the regions of Achaia” This is a strong Greek term which is used in the Septuagint for the damming of a river. Paul refused to take money from the Corinthian church and apparently he made this known publicly and often.

For “boasting” see full note at 1:12.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:12-15

12 But what I am doing I will continue to do, so that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting. 13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. 14 No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.
11:12 Paul knew his opponents. He tried to remove every opportunity for their attacks. He limited his freedom and rights to protect and expand the gospel (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13).

11:13 “For such men are false apostles” These out-of-town religious leaders, possibly from Jerusalem, claimed authority. Paul calls them pseudo-apostles and pseudo-brothers (cf. v. 26).

- "deceitful workers" This word is from the noun which meant “fishing bait.” They tried to catch the Corinthian believers for their own purposes and to further their reputations.

- “disguising themselves as apostles of Christ” These were not sincere Christians who were misled. These were spiritually lost men (cf. v. 14) attempting to divide the church of God (cf. I Cor. 2:10-15). They were wolves in sheep’s clothing (cf. Matt. 7; Acts 20:29).
  
  The term “disguising” (i.e. metaschēmatizō) is used in vv. 13, 14, 15. It speaks of the outward changing form of something or someone (cf. Phil. 3:21). These (i.e. false teachers and Satan) appear to be what they are not!

11:14 “for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light” This is an obvious truth, but is nowhere else in the Bible stated in these terms. This may be from rabbinical traditions about Gen. 3 (cf. DSS cave 1, Manual of Discipline 3:20,24). Satan’s major trick is masquerading as truth (cf. Gen. 3). Evil always tries to mimic or counterfeit the good. False teachers always come from inside the church (cf. II Pet. 2; I John 2:18-19). See Special Topic: Personal Evil at I Cor. 7:5.

11:15 “if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence. There were Satanically inspired false teachers within the church at Corinth.

- “ministers of righteousness” Paul does not use “righteousness” often in the sense he uses it here. Here it has the connotation of “goodness” or “rightness” (cf. Matt. 6:1), but not in the theological sense of justification by faith (cf. Rom. 4). See Special Topic: Righteousness at I Cor. 1:30. See Special Topic: Servant Leadership at I Cor. 4:1.

- “whose end will be according to their deeds” This seems to be an allusion to Prov. 24:12. It is also the basic truth of the Bible. See full note at 5:10.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:16-21a

16 Again I say, let no one think me foolish; but if you do, receive me even as foolish, so that I also may boast a little. 17 What I am saying, I am not saying as the Lord would, but as in foolishness, in this confidence of boasting. 18 Since many boast according to the flesh, I will boast also. 19 For you, being so wise, tolerate the foolish gladly. 20 For you tolerate it if anyone enslaves you, anyone devours you, anyone takes advantage of you, anyone exalts himself, anyone hits you in the face. 21 To my shame I must say that we have been weak by comparison.

11:16 “let no one think me foolish...so that I also may boast a little” Paul was not comfortable with personal boasting (cf. vv. 1, 17). The false teachers had forced him to use their methods (i.e. the style of chapters 10-13 reflects the characteristics of Hellenistic rhetorical forms).

  For “foolish” see note at I Cor. 15:36. For “boast” see Special Topic: Boasting at I Cor. 5:6.

- “if” This is an incomplete FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence (i.e. no verb). These Corinthian believers were surprised at Paul’s letter.

11:17 Paul alluded to Jesus’ life and attitude in 10:1 (i.e. by the meekness and gentleness of Christ), but when it came to boasting or human comparisons, Paul must admit there is no precedent in Him.

11:18 “Since many boast according to the flesh, I will boast also” This is the major focus of chapters 10-13. The false teachers had attacked Paul and his gospel by comparing his heritage and spiritual giftedness with theirs (cf. v. 8). Paul was distressed that the church had listened to them and had been swayed by their arguments. Therefore, he decided to get down on their level for the purpose of winning this church back to confidence in his leadership and his gospel.
11:19-20 This is biting sarcasm directed to the Corinthian church. Everything the false teachers accused Paul of, they practiced and the church positively responded to them!

“tolerate” See note at v. 4.

11:20 “if anyone enslaves you” This starts a series of five FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentences. This verb (i.e. katadouló) is only used here and in Gal. 2:4 where it refers to the Judaizers. The Judaizers asserted that one had to become a full Jew before one could become a Christian. How these false teachers relate to the Judaizers is uncertain. The exact rules or rituals which the false teachers at Corinth put forth as necessary for salvation are also uncertain.

“if anyone devours you” Paul used this verb only twice, here and in Gal. 5:15, which also describes a church in conflict with false teachers.

11:20
NASB, NRSV, TEV  “takes advantage of you”
NKJV  “takes from you”
NJB  “keep you under his orders”

This is the common verb lambanó, but with a metaphorical extension of the literal sense of “to take hold of.” Here it is to manipulate for personal advantage.

“exalts himself”
NRSV  “puts on airs”
TEV  “look down on you”
NJB  “sets himself above you”

Paul used this same term in 10:5 to describe the arrogance of the false teachers’ arguments and speculations. This term is simply the word “to lift up” (cf. I Tim. 2:8). But, in I Corinthians it has negative connotations of human pride and arrogance.

“hits you in the face” Paul’s words drip with sarcasm (cf. v. 21). He was so gentle and meek (cf. 10:1) with them, but they reject him; the false teachers were so selfish and manipulative, but they love them.

11:21 “to my shame” This is literally “according to dishonor.” Paul felt that his meekness and gentleness had been misunderstood and taken advantage of by the false teachers. This may be another example of sarcasm.


NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:21b-29

21bBut in whatever respect anyone else is bold—I speak in foolishness—I am just as bold myself. 22Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. 23Are they servants of Christ?—I speak as if insane—I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. 24Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. 25Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. 26I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; 27I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. 28Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. 29Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?

11:21b Paul is ready to fight fire with fire. They want to compare credentials, so be it!

11:22 “Are they Hebrews? So am I” This is the first of four rhetorical questions. “Hebrews” idiomatically referred to the ability to speak Aramaic (cf. Acts 6:1), but with the implication of true racial Jews. This is another evidence that this group of false teachers had a Palestinian/Judaistic origin.

This “so am I” (i.e. kagó) is repeated four times in v. 22.
“Are they Israelites? So am I” Apparently they were bragging that they were part of the OT covenant people of God (cf. Phil. 3:5).

11:23 “Are they servants of Christ?” Paul is not asserting here that they are Christians. He is simply asserting, for the sake of argument, that he has the same spiritual credentials that they are bragging about. They even claimed a spiritual superiority to Paul.

“I more so” Paul had a series of comparisons with en.
1. in far more labors, v. 23
2. in far more imprisonments, v. 23
3. in stripes above measure, v. 23
4. in danger of death often, v. 23
   a. beaten with thirty nine lashes (5 times)
   b. beaten with rods (3 times)
   c. stoned (once)
   d. shipwrecked (3 times)
Some of these are recorded in Acts, but not all of them. In reality we know so little of the first century church. Paul had paid the price to speak the gospel!

11:24 “I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes” This refers to punishment administered by Synagogue courts (cf. Deut. 25:1-3). The strokes were probably given with a rod (cf. Exod. 21:20; Prov. 10:13; 19:29; 26:3) and given in public. This type of punishment was known and practiced in Assyria and Egypt. It was practiced in Israel (cf. Isa. 50:6; Jer. 20:2; 37:15). The rabbis later codified that it had to be one less the forty strokes (i.e. the maximum number, cf Josephus, Antiq. 4:8:21,23). They specified that so many hits be done on the back and on the front, left and right shoulders (cf. Maccoth 3:10ff).

11:25 “beaten with rods” This refers to a type of Roman judicial punishment (i.e. verberatio), probably administered by a city court (cf. Acts 16:22-40; I Cor. 4:21) publicly.

“once I was stoned” In Acts 14:19 his attackers thought he was dead! This may be the incident.

“three times I was shipwrecked” This shows how limited the history of Acts truly is. Paul’s shipwreck recorded in Acts happened after this point in history. Acts is not a complete history, but a theological account of the gospel moving from Palestine to Rome, from Jews to Gentiles.

11:26
NASB “I have been on frequent journeys”
NKJV “in journeys often”
NRSV “on frequent journeys”
TEV “in many travels”
NJB “continually traveling”
This starts another list DATIVE PLURALS or in an eight case system like A. T. Robertson’s, this is labeled LOCATIVE. There is no VERB, PARTICIPLE, or INFINITIVE in vv. 26,27,28) of what has happened to Paul in his service for Christ.
1. dangers from rivers
2. dangers from robbers
3. dangers from my countrymen (as he was in Corinth)
4. dangers from Gentiles
5. dangers in the city
6. dangers in the wilderness
7. dangers at sea
8. dangers among false brethren (as he was in Corinth)

11:27 “I have been” Paul starts another list using the DATIVE/LOCATIVE.
1. in labor
2. in hardship
3. in sleepless nights
4. in hunger
5. in thirst
6. in fastings many times
7. in cold
8. in nakedness
All of us who claim to be servants of the gospel should quit whining!

11:28 Another thing which caused daily pain for Paul was the psychological/spiritual worry for the health and effectiveness of the churches—possibly this was the worst pain of all!

11:29 “Who is weak without my being weak” Verse 29 has two rhetorical questions. When Paul sees churches and believers hurting, it hurts him and makes him furious at those who would cause little ones to stumble (cf. Matt. 18).

NASB “intense concern”
NKJV “burn with indignation”
NRSV “indignation”
TEV “filled with distress”
NJB “burn in agony”

Paul uses this term, burn, in a specialized sense in his Corinthian letters. It is not negative or destructive (cf. Eph. 6:16), but a metaphor for intense desire (cf. I Cor. 7:9).

NASB, TEV “to lead into sin”
NKJV, NRSV “made to stumble”
NJB “made to fall”

This is the Greek term skandalon, which literally referred to a baited trap-stick (cf. Rom. 11:9). It is used in the sense of moral failure (here and I Cor. 8:13) or possibly to be seduced by the false theology of the “super apostles” (cf. I Cor. 1:23; Gal. 5:11).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:30-33

30If I have to boast, I will boast of what pertains to my weakness. 31The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, He who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. 32In Damascus the ethnarch under Aretas the king was guarding the city of the Damascenes in order to seize me, and so escaped his hands.

11:30 “if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence.

“what pertains to my weakness” Paul’s trials and criticisms had caused him to realize that his strengths were from God and his weaknesses were an opportunity for God to receive the glory (cf. 12:1-10).

11:31 “God and Father of the Lord Jesus” This verse is an oath. Paul uses God’s name to assert the truthfulness of his statements quite often (cf. Rom. 1:9; II Cor. 1:18; 11:10,11; Gal. 1:20; I Tim. 2:7)

“forever” This is literally “unto the ages” (cf. Rom. 1:25; 9:5; 11:36; 16:27). The same phrase, but singular, is found in I Cor. 8:13 and II Cor. 9:9. See Special Topic: This Age and the Age to Come at I Cor. 1:20.

11:32-33 “In Damascus the ethnarch under Aretas” Some say this is anticlimactic, but this was apparently the most embarrassing (i.e. weakest) moment of Paul’s life. It could refer to another charge of the false teachers. King Aretas (i.e. Harethath) was king of the Nabatean empire from 9 B.C. to A.D. 40. He was the father-in-law of Herod Antipas. The term “Aretas” is like the term “Pharaoh,” a title for all of the Nabatean kings who ruled in Petra. The “ethnarch” would have been Aretus’ official representative in Damascus. The account in Acts 9:23-25 is somewhat different; possibly the false teachers used this incident to attack Paul’s character.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why does Paul defend himself against these false teachers?
2. Does v. 3 refer to falling from grace or seduction away from apostolic authority?
3. Why would Paul not accept money from the Corinthian Church?
4. Who were these false apostles?
5. Describe the theology of these false teachers?
6. Why was Paul’s life of such brutal treatment a sign of his apostolic authority? (cf. I Cor. 4:9-13; II Cor. 4:8-12; 6:4)
II CORINTHIANS 12

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READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. vii)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S INTENT AT THE PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.
**CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS**

A. Paul’s special vision and his physical problems are both dealt with in the same context, possibly both occurred 14 years previously in Tarsus (A.D. 42 or 43). This cannot refer to his conversion experience which happened some 20 years earlier, although I think his “thorn” was eye problems, which may have started with the encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus (cf. Acts 9:22,26).

B. Paul continues his biting sarcasm in vv. 11,13 and 15 as he did in 11:4-5,7,19-21. I believe chapters 10-13 are written in a Hellenistic rhetoric style for the purpose of showing the arrogant Hellenistic-trained Jewish false teachers that he, too, knew and could use their preferred literary style.

**WORD AND PHRASE STUDY**

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:1-10**

1 Boasting is necessary, though it is not profitable; but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. 2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven. 3 And I know how such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows—was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak. 4 On behalf of such a man I will boast; but on my own behalf I will not boast, except in regard to my weaknesses. 5 For I do wish to boast I will not be foolish, for I will be speaking the truth; but I refrain from this, so that no one will credit me with more than he sees in me or hears from me. 6 Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! 7 Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. 8 And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 9 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

12:1 “Boasting is necessary” The Greek term dei means moral necessity. The false teachers were attacking Paul. He defended himself to protect his message. “Boasting,” used so often in chapters 10-13 (cf. 10:8,13,15,16,17; 11:12,16,18,30; 12:1,5,6,9, see full note at 1:12), characterized a type of rhetorical style popular in the first century. Paul showed the arrogant false teachers that he could play their game.

This sentence was confusing to the ancient scribes, who modified it in several ways.

1. some add “if” (MS H)
2. some changed die (must) to de (but), (MSS N and D)
3. the form in UBS4 is supported by MSS P46, B, D2

Numbers 2 and 3 do show how early the original Greek texts were modified by well-intentioned scribes.

**“visions and revelations”** There is probably no distinction between these two terms; both describe a type of direct revelation (cf. 1 Cor. 2:10; 11:23; Gal. 1:12; 2:2; Eph. 3:3). The false teachers were probably claiming special direct revelation. The term “revelation” is apocalypse, which means “an unveiling.”

**“of the Lord”** It may be a SUBJECTIVE GENITIVE, “a revelation from the Lord” or an OBJECTIVE GENITIVE, “about the Lord.” The following context implies “from the Lord” (PASSIVE VOICES, vv. 2,4,7).

12:2 “I know a man” This is a rabbinical way of speaking of oneself. Paul seems to be reluctant even to mention the incident, but he does so because of his love for this church and the false teachers’ claims of spiritual visions.
“in Christ” This was Paul’s favorite designation of being a Christian. Believers are identified with His life/death/resurrection (cf. Rom. 6). The believer’s goal is to be like Him (cf. Rom. 8:29; II Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; I Thess. 3:13; 4:3; I Pet. 1:15).

George Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, makes the interesting statement that

“the man in Christ is also in the Spirit. If the opposite of ‘in Christ’ is to be in Adam, the opposite of ‘in the Spirit’ is to be ‘in the flesh.’

Life in the Spirit means eschatological existence—life in the new age” (p. 483).

“fourteen years ago” This was probably during Paul’s unrecorded early ministry in Tarsus, just before Barnabas came to get him to help at Antioch (cf. Acts 11:25-26). Notice that special visions were not an everyday occurrence for Paul, but he had several of them (cf. Acts 9:4; 18:9; 23:11; 27:23).

“whether in the body, I do not know, or out of the body I do not know” Paul himself was not even sure exactly what happened (the phrase is repeated twice in vv. 2 and 3). It was possibly like Ezekiel’s experience in Ezek. 8 or like John’s experience in the book of Revelation (cf. 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10). Notice that the body is not excluded from heaven in Christianity as it was in Greek philosophy.

“caught up” This same term is used of Philip in Acts 8:30 and of “the rapture” in I Thess. 4:17. Its basic meaning is to seize as a carnivore does its prey. Paul was unexpectedly and quickly moved in body or mind to God’s presence (cf. v. 4).

“the third heaven” See Special Topic following.

**SPECIAL TOPIC: HEAVENS**

In the OT the term “heaven” is usually PLURAL (i.e. *shamayim*). The Hebrew term means “height.” God dwells on high. This concept reflects the holiness and transcendence of God.

In Gen. 1:1 the PLURAL “heavens and earth” has been viewed as God creating (1) the atmosphere above this planet or (2) a way of referring to all of reality (i.e. spiritual and physical). From this basic understanding other texts were cited as referring to levels of heaven: “heaven of heavens” (cf. Ps. 68:33) or “heaven and the heaven of heavens” (cf. Deut. 10:14; I Kgs. 8:27; Neh. 9:6; Ps. 148:4). The rabbis surmised that there might be (1) two heavens (i.e. R. Judah, Hagigah 12b); (2) three heavens (Test. Levi 2-3; Ascend. of Isa. 6-7; Midrash Tehillim on Ps. 114:1); (3) five heavens (III Baruch); (4) seven heavens (R. Simonb. Lakish; II Enoch 8; Ascend. of Isa. 9:7); even (5) ten heavens (II Enoch 20:3b; 22:1). All of these were meant to show God’s separation from physical creation and/or His transcendence. The most common number of heavens in rabbinical Judaism was seven. A. Cohen, *Everyman’s Talmud* (p. 30), says this was connected to the astronomical spheres, but I think it refers to seven being the perfect number (i.e. days of creation with seven representing God’s rest in Gen. 1).

Paul, in II Cor. 12:2, mentions the “third” heaven (Greek *ouranos*) as a way of identifying God’s personal, majestic presence. Paul had a personal encounter with God!

12:4 “Paradise” This is a Persian loan word in the Hebrew OT for “a nobleman’s walled garden.” The Greek word is used in the Septuagint for “the Garden of Eden” (cf. Gen. 2:8; 3:1; Ezek. 28:13; 31:18). The term is used in Luke 23:43 for the righteous part of Hades or Sheol. In the extra-canonical book *The Secrets of Enoch*, or II Enoch chapter 8, it is used for the third heaven or God’s presence. The third heaven and Paradise are both ways of referring to intimacy with God.

“heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak” Humanity’s curiosity is not to be eased in all areas of truth. As Lazarus did not speak of the grave, Paul would not, could not, share this experience. There is an obvious word play on “unspeakable”: *arrátw*, “speech,“ and *hrátw* or possibly this was a technical idiom of the mystery religion’s initiation rites. Possibly there simply was not human vocabulary adequate to express what he saw (cf. I Cor. 2:9).

12:5 Paul is not boasting in personal accomplishments (see full note at 1:12), but in God’s revelation of Himself through both personal experiences and the truth of the gospel. It is Paul’s inadequacies that allow God to be glorified in him (compare John 15:5 with Phil. 4:13).

“weakness” See Special Topic at II Cor. 12:9.

12:6 “if” This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence, which means potential action.
“so that no one will credit me with more than he sees in me or hears from me” This is dripping with sarcasm. These false teachers flaunted many past experiences and credentials, which the Corinthians only heard about. Paul says, “do not credit me with what I have not shown you, but with what I have done while among you. Look at my record!”

12:7 “Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations” This phrase can be grammatically related to “no one will credit me” of v. 6 or “to keep me from exalting myself” of v. 7. If *dio* is in the original text of v. 7 (cf. MSS Π, A, B, F, G) then it probably goes with v. 6, but *dio* is left out of several ancient Greek manuscripts (cf. MSS Πℏ, D, and the Vulgate, Armenian, and Peshitta translations).

For “surpassing greatness” (*huperbole*) see Special Topic: Paul’s Use of *Huper* Compounds at I Cor. 2:1.

“to keep me from exalting myself” This same word is used in II Thess. 2:4 to describe the prideful boasting of the “Man of Sin” or Antichrist. Paul is again contrasting himself with the false teachers. They did flaunt themselves by means of their Sophistic rhetorical style (which Paul is mimicking in chapters 10-13).

Paul believed that God (i.e. PASSIVE VOICE of “given”) had given this for a purpose (i.e. *hina* clause). This may be the sense of Rom. 8:28 (i.e. some Greek manuscripts read “God causes all things”), but the good is Christlikeness so clearly expressed in Rom. 8:29 (i.e. conformed to the image of His Son). Satan is a servant!

“thorn in the flesh” The term “thorn” can mean “stake” (i.e. literally “to be pointed”). In Classical Greek it is used in the sense of a sharpened stake while in the Septuagint it is used for thorn (cf. Num. 33:55; Ezek. 28:24; Hos. 2:6). Some theories regarding Paul’s thorn in the flesh are: (1) early Church Fathers, Luther and Calvin, say it was spiritual problems with his fallen nature (i.e. “in the flesh”); (2) Chrysostom says it was a problem with persons (cf. Num. 33:55; Jdg. 2:3); (3) some say it was epilepsy; (4) Sir William Ramsay says it was malaria; or (5) I think it was ophthalmia, a common eye problem (compare Gal. 4:13-15 and 6:11) exacerbated or caused by the blindness on the Damascus road (cf. Acts 9, possibly an OT allusion in Josh. 23:13).

“a messenger of Satan” God allows and uses the evil one (cf. Job 2:6; I Cor. 5:5; I Tim. 1:20). The term “messenger” seems to refer to a demonic agent. The term “messenger” in both Hebrew and Greek can be translated “angel.” If so, we see that believers can be hurt by the demonic, but notice it is for God’s purposes. God uses evil for His righteous purposes.

“to torment me” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE SUBJUNCTIVES. The word literally means “to strike with fists.” This problem was painful and recurrent.

“to keep me from exalting myself” This is a purpose (i.e. *hina*) clause. The spiritual claims of the false teachers accentuated their egotism. Paul’s humbled him.

12:8 “I implored the Lord” Contextually this refers to Jesus. Paul normally prays to the Father. Christians can pray to any one of the Divine Persons of the Trinity, although normally we pray to the Father, in the name of the Son, through the Spirit.

“this” It is possible that “this” refers to (1) this situation; (2) this persecution; (3) this angelic messenger of Satan; or (4) this physical ailment.

“three times” Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane was repeated three times (cf. Matt. 26:42; Mark 14:39,41). Three-fold repetition denotes emphasis. This was not lack of trust, but shows that we can pray about whatever concerns us as often as we feel the need. This recurrent, painful problem taught Paul a great spiritual lesson (cf. v. 9). I must say here that this account sheds light on the over-emphasis in our day on faith healing being conditioned on the amount of faith of the person needing healing. Obviously Paul had tremendous faith. Also, the unfortunate teaching that God wants every believer healed and delivered from every problem is addressed in this passage. The requests of both Jesus and Paul were not answered in the way they wanted. God uses problems and sickness in our lives for His purposes (cf. Rom. 8:17; II Cor. 1:5,7; Phil. 3:10; I Pet. 4:12-17). Our needs are God’s opportunity to reveal Himself and His will to us!

12:9 “He has said” This is PERFECT TENSE, idiomatic for “He said finally.”

“My grace is sufficient for you” The character and presence of God is all Paul needs. I think Paul may have been thinking of I Kgs. 8:27. This is one of the places in the OT where the phrase “heaven and the heaven of heavens” is used, which may be the source of Paul’s “third heaven” in v. 2. Solomon’s prayer speaks of both the transcendence of God’s “highest heaven” and His immanence in the Temple. Paul was not to dwell on the majesty of the third heaven, but on God’s gracious nature and personal presence with him daily.
"power is perfected" This is a PRESENT PASSIVE. God’s power operates by different criteria than mankind’s. God receives the glory when the human vessel is weak and incapable of meeting his/her needs. God’s power is His unchanging character!

This phrase may have reminded Paul of I Cor. 2:5; II Cor. 4:7 and is simply unrelated to the false teachers’ emphasis on human performance or merit.

"boast about my weakness” See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: WEAKNESS

Here is the contrast. The false teachers boast in their credentials and rhetorical style, but Paul knows the value of “weakness” (asthenēo). Notice how often these terms (or their various forms) are used in I and II Corinthians.

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Paul uses the concept of weakness in several different ways.
1. weakness of God, I Cor. 1:25
2. weak in the world, I Cor. 1:27
3. Paul’s weakness and fear, I Cor. 2:3; 9:22; II Cor. 11:29,30; 12:5
4. Paul and his mission team, I Cor. 4:10; II Cor. 11:21
5. weak believer (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13), I Cor. 8:7,9,10,11,12; 9:22
6. physical illness, I Cor. 11:30
7. parts of the human body, I Cor. 12:22
8. physical body, I Cor. 15:43
9. Paul’s physical presence or his rhetorical skills, II Cor. 10:10
10. Paul’s weakness amplified God’s strength, II Cor. 12:9,10; 13:4,9
11. Christ’s message through Paul, II Cor. 13:3
12. Christ’s physical body, II Cor. 13:4

"that the power of Christ” Notice it is God’s power! It is Christ’s power! Christ is God!

NASB, NRSV “may dwell in me”
NKJV, NJB “may rest upon me”
TEV “feel the protection . . .over me”

This is the Greek term episkanō, which is epi plus skanē(tent), therefore metaphorical for overshadow or abide upon. This same root is used of the virgin birth of Jesus (cf. Luke 1:35) the transfiguration of Jesus (cf. Matt. 17:5), and of the Apostles’ shadows falling on people and their being healed (cf. Acts 5:15).

Paul knew that the cloud during the wilderness wandering period (cf. Exod. 40:35) was called by the rabbis “the shekinah cloud of glory.” Shekinah means “to dwell with permanently.” Paul wanted God’s personal presence, fully and completely
revealed and embodied in Christ, with him. This is the goal of Christianity, not personal power, personal prestige, a special knowledge or experience (i.e. “To know Him came through weakness and suffering,” cf. Phil. 3:10).

12:10 “Therefore, I am well content with weakness” Paul knows from personal experience (i.e. Damascus road) that good intentions and personal effort are not enough. We need grace (cf. v. 9), not power. No human being will usurp the glory of God (cf. I Cor. 1:29; Eph. 2:9). God’s grace, power, and glory are accentuated in yielded, inadequate, human vessels.

“I am well content with weakness” In the remainder of the verse Paul gives a brief summary of his ministry trials, which he has mentioned before in 4:7-11; 6:3-10; 11:24-28. Paul knew fully the meaning of Jesus’ words in Matt. 5:10-12!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:11-13

11I have become foolish; you yourselves compelled me. Actually I should have been commended by you, for in no respect was I inferior to the most eminent apostles, even though I am a nobody. 12The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles. 13For in what respect were you treated as inferior to the rest of the churches, except that I myself did not become a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong!

12:11 “I have become foolish” This is a PERFECT ACTIVE INDICATIVE. Some faction (i.e. I Cor. 1-4) or some group of itinerant false teachers (i.e. 10-13) have attacked Paul, his leadership, his authority, his style of speaking, and the gospel. So, Paul had to defend himself. He did this in several ways.

1. compared his life with theirs
2. used their style of rhetoric, but with humility
3. used sarcasm to make his points

“I” The emphatic “I” (i.e. ego) is used in vv. 11,13,15, and 16.

“commended” See full note at 3:1.

“in no respect was I inferior to the most eminent apostles” See full note at 11:5.

“if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE used for literary purposes to make his point, not reality. Paul was not inferior to them in any sense.

“I am a nobody” Paul knew and understood his position in grace alone (cf. I Cor. 15:9; Eph. 3:8; I Tim. 1:15). He also knew his position as a called, gifted Apostle (cf. Acts 8,22,26)!

12:12 “by signs and wonders and miracles” Paul’s ministry was evidenced by the power of God (cf. I Cor. 2:4; 4:20; Rom. 15:19). However, it was not just in miracles, but in his attitude and actions toward this church which proved he was from God.

12:13 “I myself did not become a burden to you” Paul would not allow this factious church to help him. He did let the churches at Philippi (Phil. 4:15) and Thessalonica (I Thess. 3:6), but only after he had left the cities. It hurt the church at Corinth’s feelings (cf. v. 13a), but Paul would not budge because of the accusations of the false teachers (cf. 11:8-20). However, Paul did support the church’s financial assistance for ministers (cf. I Cor. 9:3-18).

“Forgive me this wrong” This is biting sarcasm.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:14-18

14Here for this third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be a burden to you; for I do not seek what is yours, but you; for children are not responsible to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. 15I will most gladly spend and be expended for your souls. If I love you more, am I to be loved less? 16But be that as it may, I did not burden you myself; nevertheless, crafty fellow that I am, I took you in by deceit. 17Certainly I have not taken advantage of you through any of those whom I have sent to you, have I? 18I urged Titus to go, and I sent the brother with him. Titus did not take any advantage of you, did he? Did we not conduct ourselves in the same spirit and walk in the same steps?
12:14
NASB, NRSV, NJB “here”
NKJV “now for”
TEV —omitted—

This is the Greek emphatic PARTICLE idou, used so often in the Gospels, usually translated “behold.” It serves to call attention to the following statement. Paul uses it rarely (cf. Rom. 9:23 [OT quote]; I Cor. 15:51; II Cor. 5:17; 6:2 [OT quote]; 7:11; 12:14; Gal. 1:20).

“this third time” The book of Acts only records two visits to Corinth (cf. Acts 18:1; 20:2-3; II Cor. 1:15; 13:1,2). However, Acts is not a complete or detailed history, but a theological document showing the spread of Christianity from racial group to racial group, from Palestine to Rome.

“I will not be a burden” This refers to financial compensation (cf. 11:9; 12:13; I Cor. 9:12,18). Paul affirmed the right of ministers to receive compensation, but personally rejected it because (1) he was attacked over this issue by the false teachers (cf. v. 14b) or (2) his own background as a rabbi excluded this.

“but you” Paul does not want their money, but their loyalty and good will.

“children. . .parents” Paul is using a family analogy. He considered himself their spiritual father (cf. I Cor. 4:14-15; Gal. 4:19).

12:15 “spend” This Greek word can be understood in two ways: (1) literally “to pay out money” (cf. Acts 21:24) or (2) figuratively “to spend entirely” or “pay everything or anything” (cf. Mark 5:26). Paul was ready to give all his assets and/or himself for the cause of Christ among the Corinthian believers.

Obviously Paul is using word plays on money. He did not want them spending money on him, but he would spend himself for them.

“for your souls” “Souls” (i.e. psyche) is used in the sense of persons in Paul’s writings as is “spirit” (cf. pneuma, cf. Phil. 1:27).

This is not an ontological dichotomy in mankind, but a dual relationship to both this planet and to God. The Hebrew word nephesh is used of both mankind and the animals in Genesis, while “spirit” (ruah) is used uniquely of mankind. This is not a proof-text on the nature of mankind as a three-part (trichotomous) being. Mankind is primarily represented in the Bible as a unity (cf. Gen. 2:7). For a good summary of the theories of mankind as trichotomous, dichotomous, or a unity, see Millard J. Erickson’s Christian Theology (second edition) pp. 538-557 and Frank Stagg’s Polarities of Man’s Existence in Biblical Perspective.

“if” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence which is assumed to be true from the writer’s perspective or for his literary purposes.

“more” This family of terms characterizes Paul’s emotional and extravagant literary style in II Corinthians. See full note at 2:7.

“am I to be loved less” The more Paul gave to them, the more they treated him with less respect and love. This was an intolerable situation.

12:16 “nevertheless, crafty fellow that I am, I took you in by deceit” This may relate to the contribution for the Jerusalem church in chapters 8-9. The false teachers possibly accused him of sending others to collect money for himself (cf. vv. 17-18). Paul’s comment here is biting sarcasm!

12:18 “Titus” It is surprising that Titus is never mentioned in the book of Acts. He was one of Paul’s most trusted and faithful helpers. (See Special Topic at 2:13). Apparently Titus also did not receive any money from this church, following Paul’s example.

“the brother with him” This is probably the same one as in 8:18. Some think it was Luke (i.e. Origen). This taking along the representatives from the churches was Paul’s way to de-arm the accusations related to this contribution to the Jerusalem Church.

Verses 17 and 18 have a series of four questions. The grammatical form of the first two expect a “No” answer, while the last two expect a “Yes” answer. The purpose of the questions is to show that neither Paul nor Titus had taken advantage of them in any way, as they had charged.
“in the same spirit” This refers to the redeemed human spirit of Titus (i.e. LOCATIVE CASE), not the Holy Spirit (INSTRUMENTAL CASE). Paul uses “spirit” to refer to himself often (cf. 2:13; 7:13; I Cor. 2:11; 5:4; 16:18; Rom. 1:9; 8:16; Phil. 4:23). See note at 7:13b.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:19-21**

19 All this time you have been thinking that we are defending ourselves to you. Actually, it is in the sight of God that we have been speaking in Christ; and all for your upbuilding, beloved. 20 For I am afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you to be not what I wish and may be found by you to be not what you wish; that perhaps there will be strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances; 21 I am afraid that when I come again my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned in the past and not repented of the impurity, immorality and sensuality which they have practiced.

12:19 “All this time” Paul is referring to his current letter (i.e. II Corinthians).

“you have been thinking that we are defending ourselves to you” This is a sarcastic remark. Paul knew this church well. They had an inflated estimation of their own worth and freedom.

“it is in the sight of God” Paul used this very phrase in 2:17, where he takes an oath of truthfulness before God.

“all for your upbuilding” Paul mentions his authority using this very term in 10:8. He defended himself to defend and protect this misguided church. His actions were for them, not for himself. See Special Topic: Edify at I Cor. 8:1.

“beloved” Paul addresses this church with forthrightness, yet great love. This was a term of endearment (cf. I Cor. 10:14; 15:58; II Cor. 7:1; 12:19).

12:20 This accurately reflects the I Corinthian description of this church toward each other and towards Paul.

“strife” See full note at I Cor. 2:11.

This term and the next are SINGULAR (cf. MSS P46, ℂ, A), but the other terms in the list are PLURAL.

“jealousy” In this context it refers to a party or factious spirit (cf. I Cor. 3:3). See note at 9:2.

“angry tempers” This refers to an outburst of rage (cf. Gal. 5:20; Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8).

“disputes” This term (i.e. eritheia) originally meant “to spin for hire.” It came to be used for an aristocratic arrogance against those who had to work for a living. This attitude fits the factional rivalry of I Corinthians, especially chapter 11. This term is used often by Paul (cf. Rom. 2:8; Gal. 5:20; Phil. 1:17; 2:3; and also see James’ use in James 3:14,16).

“slanders” This refers to speaking evil of another person, to defame them (cf. Rom. 1:30; II Cor. 12:20; James 4:11; I Pet. 2:1,12; 3:16). This activity is used to describe the activity of Satan.

“gossip” This is the term “whisper,” which refers to tale-bearing behind someone’s back in private.

“arrogance” The Greek term phusioʊ originally meant to inflate or puff up something (i.e. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, p. 105 and Vincent, *Word Studies*, p. 766, from phusa - bellows). It came to be used in Christian literature (possibly coined by Paul) metaphorically for pride or arrogance. This was a major spiritual problem for the church at Corinth. Paul uses this word in I Cor. 4:6,18,19; 5:2;; 8:1; 13:4; and in a list of sins in II Cor. 12:20. It is only used outside the Corinthian letters in the NT in Col. 2:18, where it refers to gnostic visions of special knowledge.

**NASB**

| “disturbances” |
| **NKJV** | “tumults” |
| **NRSV, TEV** | “disorder” |
| **NJB** | “disorders” |

See note at I Cor. 14:33. This was a factious church. This term is also used in James 3:16.
There are several lists of vices in Paul's writings (cf. Rom. 1:29-31; I Cor. 5:11; 6:9; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 4:31; 5:34; Col. 3:5-9). In many ways they parallel the vice lists of the Stoics. Christianity demands an ethical response. Eternal life has observable, moral characteristics.

12:21 Paul worried that if this church did not repent he would be forced to exercise his Apostolic authority when he came back (cf. 13:2). These factions (i.e. I Cor.) and false teachers (i.e. II Cor.) were apparently leading godless lives of self indulgence.

- **NASB, TEV,**
- **NJB** “humiliate”
- **NKJV, NRSV**
- **NIV** “humble”

Paul uses this root term in several senses in his Corinthian letters (taken from Harold K Moulton, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, p. 397.

1. tapeinos
   a. low in situation, depressed (II Cor. 7:6)
   b. to love meekly or without excess (II Cor. 10:1)
2. tapeinoô
   a. (MIDDLE VOICE) to live in humble condition (II Cor. 11:7)
   b. to be humble with respect to hopes and expectations; to be depressed with disappointment (II Cor. 12:21)

- **“mourn”** See note at I Cor. 5:2.

- **“those who have sinned in the past”** This whole phrase translates one ARTICLE and PARTICIPLE used only here and in 13:2. It is a PERFECT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE of the Greek PREPOSITION pro (i.e. before) and *hamartanô* (i.e. to sin). The combined sense is those who have sinned and continue to sin. The concept of “past” is not included, but an addition of the translators. Time is only included in the INDICATIVE MOOD.

- **“repented”** This verse obviously refers to Christians who continue to sin. Repentance is crucial, not only initially (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 2:38,41; 3:16,19; 20:21), but continuously (cf. I John 1:9). Repentance for a believer restores the fellowship, not the salvation! Repentance is an attitude toward God and self more than a specific set of spiritual acts or steps. See full note at 7:8-11

- **“the impurity, immorality and sensuality”** We must remember the godless, lustful culture out of which these new believers from Corinth came. They had grown up with sexual excess and debauchery in the name of the gods. However, notice that this verse also mentions the means by which Christians deal with sin in their lives—repentance (cf. I John 1:9; Ps. 19:12-14). Faith and repentance are both initial and ongoing spiritual experiences in the Christian’s life.

  This list may reflect the actions of the false teachers who emphasized Greek rhetorical style, which may imply that they had also been exposed to Gnosticism, which emphasized knowledge, but depreciated ethical standards. All of these terms are listed in Paul’s sins of the flesh in Gal. 5:19.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Why does Paul mention his special revelation and then not tell us about it?
2. Why is weakness a key to usability?
3. Does God use evil to accomplish His purpose?
4. Why was Paul so touch about receiving money from this church? (cf. vv. 20-21).
II CORINTHIANS 13

READING CYCLE THREE (from “A Guide to Good Bible Reading” p. vii)

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects. Compare your subject divisions with the five modern translations. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author’s intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one main subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:1-4

1This is the third time I am coming to you. EVERY FACT IS TO BE CONFIRMED BY THE TESTIMONY OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES. 2I have previously said when present the second time, and though now absent I say in advance to those who have sinned in the past and to all the rest as well, that if I come again I will not spare anyone, 3since you are seeking for proof of the Christ who speaks in me, and who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you. 4For indeed He was crucified because of weakness, yet He lives because of the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, yet we will live with Him because of the power of God directed toward you.
13:1 “This is the third time I am coming to you” This gives textual evidence to the theory of Paul’s painful visit to Corinth between the writing of I and II Corinthians (cf. 12:14). This visit is not recorded in the book of Acts.

“EVERY FACT” This begins a quote from Deut. 19:15 (cf. Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; Matt. 18:16; I Tim. 5:19), which deals with court procedures. To what does it refer in this chapter? There are two possibilities.

1. It refers to the church’s evaluation of Paul. He had been there twice and shared with them. They were responsible and would be held accountable as hearers of the truth.
2. It refers to church discipline related to a group within the church.
   a. the factious groups of I Cor. 1-4 (cf. 12:20)
   b. an immoral group (cf. 12:21)
   c. the “super apostles” or false teachers with connections to Jerusalem and Judaism (chapters 10-13, especially 11:13-15)

NASB “is to be confirmed”
NKJV “shall be established”
NRSV “must be sustained”
TEV “must be upheld”
NJB “is required”

The form of this verb is a FUTURE PASSIVE INDICATIVE (cf. NKJV), but Barbara and Timothy Friberg, Analytical Greek New Testament, p. 573, say it is functioning as an AORIST PASSIVE IMPERATIVE (cf. NRSV, NJB). See Special Topic: Stand (Histēmi) at I Cor. 15:1.

13:2 “those who have sinned in the past and all the rest as well” This seems to relate to two groups. The first “who have sinned in the past” (PERFECT ACTIVE PARTICIPLE), must refer to those believers at Corinth who heard Paul twice, but still rebelled against his leadership. This would be the factious groups of I Cor. 1-4 or an immoral group (cf. 12:20-21; I Cor. 5).

The phrase “and all the rest” seems to relate to those who were not present both times, possibly the false apostles from Jerusalem and their supporters, which are the focus of chapters 10-13. However, both groups/all groups are put on notice that Paul wants them to deal with the problems, but if they do not, he will!

“if” This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence, but it is used in the sense of “when” (cf. John 16:7 and I John 3:2).

“I will not spare anyone” Paul uses this term in a positive sense in I Cor. 7:23 and II Cor. 1:23, but in a judicial sense both here and in 12:6 (cf. 10:11).

13:3 “proof” This concept of testing is recurrent in this context. There is a sustained word play between the connotations of two Greek terms, dokimazo and peirazo.

1. v. 3, proof - dokimē (cf. 2:9; 8:2; 9:13; 13:3)
2. v. 5, test - peirazo (cf. 13:5)
3. v. 5, examine - dokimazo (cf. 8:8,22; 13:5)
4. v. 5, fail the test - adokimos
5. v. 6, do not fail the test - adokimos
6. v. 7, approve - dokimos (cf. 10:18)
7. v. 7, unapprove - adokimos

For the full word study see Special Topic at I Cor. 3:13.

“of the Christ who speaks in me” Some at Corinth were challenging Paul’s authority. They were “testing” Paul! In v. 5 Paul will “test” them! Christ’s presence in Paul had been confirmed (cf. 12:12).

“is not weak” Weakness is God’s way to victory as illustrated in Jesus’ life (cf. v. 4) and Paul’s life (cf. 10:1,11; 12:9; 13:9). No human being will glory before God for spiritual accomplishments that are a direct result of who God is and not who we are. It is God’s resources which accomplish spiritual results! Believers must allow His power to flow through their need and helplessness. See Special Topic: Weakness at II Cor. 12:9.

Verses 3-4 are the summary antithesis of the rhetorically arrogant false teachers. They claimed a superiority from (1) racial lineage; (2) personal charismatic experience; (3) superior Sophistic, rhetorical training; and (4) personal comparisons.

“toward you. . .in you” This PLURAL “you” shows that Paul is referring to a congregational experience, not personal experience (cf. v. 5). Possibly the TEV translation, “among you,” catches the flavor.
13:4 “crucified” Paul uses several terms to describe Jesus’ death: (1) death (cf. Rom. 5:6ff; 8:34; 14:15; I Cor. 8:11; 15:3; II Cor. 5:15; Gal. 2:21; I Thess. 4:14; 5:10); (2) blood (cf. Rom. 3:25; 5:9; Eph. 1:7; 2:13; Col. 1:20); (3) cross (cf. I Cor.1:17-18; Gal. 5:11; 6:12,14; Eph. 2:16; Phil. 2:8; Col. 1:20; 2:14); and (4) crucifixion (cf. I Cor. 1:23; 2:2; II Cor. 13:14; Gal. 3:1).

“yet He lives because of the power of God” It is phrases like this that caused so many Christological controversies in the early church. Is not Jesus God also? Does the human Jesus live by the power of a separate deity (i.e. YHWH)? One cannot build a systematic understanding on one verse or selected verses, but must try to unify all of the theological concepts into an integrated whole.

Usually the terminology of this verse is used to affirm that God the Father, as an act of approval, raised the Son (cf. Acts 2:24; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30,33,34,37; 17:31; Rom. 1:4; 6:4,9; 8:11; 10:9; I Cor. 6:14; II Cor. 4:14; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:20; Col. 2:12; I Thess. 1:10). However, there are other inspired texts that affirm that (1) the Spirit raised the Son (cf. Rom. 8:11) or (2) the Son raised Himself (cf. John 2:19-22; 10:17-18).

“we also are weak in Him, yet we will live with Him” Paul’s understanding of Christianity was an identification of the believers in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. As He lived a humble, gentle, and misunderstood life, so will we; as He died in service to others, so should we; as He was raised, so are we (i.e. new life now) and will be (i.e. resurrection body at the Second Coming).

This identification theology is so evident in Rom. 6. Paul wrote Romans while he was dealing with Corinth. Paul’s systematic understanding of Christianity (i.e. Romans) was fleshed out while he was working with this dysfunctional church.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:5-10

5 Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test? 4 But I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test. Now we pray to God that you do no wrong; not that we ourselves may appear approved, but that you may do what is right, even though we may appear unapproved. 5 For we can do nothing against the truth, but only for the truth. 6 For we rejoice when we ourselves are weak but you are strong; this we also pray for, that you be made complete. 7 For this reason I am writing these things while absent, so that when present I need not use severity, in accordance with the authority which the Lord gave me for building up and not for tearing down.

13:5 “Test yourselves” This is a PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE. This is the word peirazō, which means “to test with a view toward destruction.” See full note at I Cor. 3:13. They had tested Paul; now they must be tested themselves!

“All” This is a FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence which is assumed to be true. Paul is not doubting their faith, but challenging them to wake up!

“The faith” The Greek term “faith” (pistis) is translated into English by three terms: faith, believe, or trust. Faith is used in three senses in the NT: (1) as personal acceptance of Jesus as the Christ of God; (2) as faithfully living for Him; and (3) as a body of truths about Him (cf. v. 3; Gal. 1:23; 3:23-25). Mature Christianity involves all three senses.

“examine yourselves” Paul repeats his command (i.e. another PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE), but uses the other term (i.e. dokimazō) for testing, which implies to test with a view toward approval.

“recognize” This is the Greek term epigniōskō (i.e. PRESENT ACTIVE INDICATIVE), which usually denotes experiential full knowledge.

“Jesus Christ is in you” As v. 4 focused on the corporate aspect, this phrase (using the same PREPOSITION and PLURAL PRONOUN) may refer to a more individual aspect. Christ is surely among His people, but also in each of His people! The ministries of Jesus and the Spirit are so closely linked that often the Spirit is called the Spirit of Christ (cf. Rom. 8:9; I Pet. 1:11). Jesus is even said to indwell believers (cf. John 14:23; Rom. 8:10; Col. 1:27. Also notice Matt. 28:20).

See Special Topic at II Cor. 3:17.

“unless indeed you fail the test” This phrase is parallel to “if you are in the faith” in v. 5. Paul has asserted in several ways (i.e. FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL sentence in v. 5 and the use of dokimazō) that he believes his readers are believers, but not all of them. There is a contingent of false teachers who do not know Christ. This clause relates to them.

This clause does not relate to sinful believers because Paul addresses them in 12:20-21. They need to repent, but the false teachers need Christ.
Paul used this very same term in I Cor. 9:27 as the reason why he struggled to keep himself under God’s control. Paul did not want to be “disqualified” or rejected. Believers are challenged to check up on themselves (cf. Phil. 2:12).

13:6 Paul is asserting that he and his helpers have passed the test (i.e. not counterfeits, adokimos, cf. v. 7), especially in relation to the church at Corinth. If they have the indwelling Christ, then Paul’s ministry was effective.

13:7 In a sense a strong, orthodox Corinthian church would affirm Paul’s leadership and Apostolic credentials. He is more concerned that they do what is right and appropriate because of God and the gospel, not just to show Paul’s credentials or affirm his leadership (cf. v. 9).

“approved . . . unapproved” Paul continues this word play on dokimos and adokimos.

13:8 The truth in this context refers to the gospel as a person (i.e. Jesus the Messiah), as a message (i.e. the gospel about Jesus), and as a lifestyle (i.e. emulation of Jesus’ life).

**SPECIAL TOPIC: “TRUTH” IN PAUL’S WRITINGS**

Paul’s usage of this term and its related forms comes from its OT equivalent, emet, which means trustworthy or faithful. In interbiblical Jewish writings it was used of truth in contrast to falsehood. Maybe the closest parallel would be the Dead Sea Scrolls’ “Thanksgiving Hymns,” where it is used of revealed doctrines. The members of the Essene Community became “witnesses of truth.”

Paul uses the term as a way of referring to the gospel of Jesus Christ.
1. Romans 1:18,25; 2:8,20; 3:7; 15:8
2. I Corinthians 13:6
3. II Corinthians 4:2; 6:7; 11:10; 13:8
4. Galatians 2:5,14; 5:7
5. Ephesians 1:13; 6:14
6. Colossians 1:5,6
7. II Thessalonians 2:10,12,13
8. I Timothy 2:4; 3:15; 4:3; 6:5
9. II Timothy 2:15, 18, 25; 3:7, 8; 4:4
10. Titus 1:1,14

Paul also uses the term as a way of expressing his speaking accurately
1. Acts 26:25
2. Romans 9:1
3. II Corinthians 7:14; 12:6
4. Ephesians 4:25
5. Philippians 1:18
6. I Timothy 2:7

He also uses it to describe his motives in I Cor. 5:8 and lifestyle (also for all Christians) in Eph. 4:24; 5:9; Phil. 4:8. He sometimes uses it for people:
2. Jesus, Eph. 4:21 (similar to John 14:6)
3. Apostolic witnesses, Titus 1:13
4. Paul, II Cor. 6:8

Only Paul uses the verb form (i.e. alēheuō) in Gal. 4:16 and Eph. 4:15, where it refers to the gospel. For further study consult Colin Brown (ed), *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 3, pp. 784-902.

13:9 “we rejoice when we ourselves are weak but you are strong” This is Paul’s paradox. He knows that spiritual power is released through human weakness (cf. 12:10; 13:4). Therefore, he wants to remain weak. However, for the Corinthian church to be strong she, too, must become weak. This is so opposite of the way people evaluate life. The false teachers have asserted strength through education, lineage, experience, but Paul asserts strength through Christ’s example (cf. v. 4).
“that you be made complete” The NOUN form of this term is found only here in the NT. The VERB means “to knit together.” Paul used the VERB form in I Cor. 1:10, which calls on the Corinthian church to end its factious divisions. Now at the end of II Corinthians he returns to this mandate (i.e. unity which will result in spiritual adequacies).

Louw and Nida, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, vol. 1, p. 680, asserts that artios (i.e. complete, adequate, fully equipped for the assigned task), with all its different prepositional compounds (i.e. epi and kata), are all synonyms (cf. Luke 6:40; II Cor. 13:9,11; Eph. 4:12; II Tim. 3:17).

Paul wants a functioning, unified, loving church in Corinth (cf. v. 11). For this to occur there must be forgiveness, reconciliation, and church discipline (cf. Gal. 6:1).

13:10 Paul did not want to make another painful visit to Corinth (cf. 2:3-4). He did not want to come wrapped in his apostolic authority, but in parental love. However, the response of the church determined how he must act.

“with the authority which the Lord gave me” This exact phrase appears in 10:8. This apostolic authority, whether in personal presence or from afar (cf. I Cor. 5:4), has Christ’s authority (cf. 12:19; 13:3). This authority was given to Paul in the Damascus road encounter (cf. Acts 9,22,26).

“building up” See Special Topic: Edify at I Cor. 8:1.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:11-13

11Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. 12Greet one another with a holy kiss. 13All the saints greet you.

13:11 “Finally” Literally this is “for the rest” (cf. Gal. 6:17). This is a characteristic concluding phrase for Paul (cf. Eph. 6:10; Phil. 3:1; 4:8; II Thess. 3:1). It usually marks a transition to a closing point.

“brethren” What a beautiful and comforting way to close this difficult letter to a problem church. It also functions as a literary device to signal the transition to a new subject.

There is a series of five PRESENT IMPERATIVES.

1. "rejoice" (PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE). Paul often uses this term in II Corinthians (cf. 2:3; 6:10; 7:7,9,13,16; 13:9,11). This term can mean “good bye” (cf. Phil. 3:1; 4:4), but this does not fit a series of IMPERATIVES.

2. “be made complete” (PRESENT PASSIVE IMPERATIVE). This speaks of unity and service (cf. v 9).


4. “be like-minded” (PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE). This Greek term has many connotations (cf. Louw and Nida, vol. 2, p. 259), but in this context it is parallel to “be made complete.” This refers to unity for the sake of the gospel. This is not asserting that believers must agree about every issue, but that they must disagree in love and that the gospel should always have priority over personal opinions or preferences!

5. “live in peace” (PRESENT ACTIVE IMPERATIVE). This surely reflects I Cor. 1-4 and II Cor. 10-13. It is uncertain how these problems relate, but both caused disunity and contention. Paul commands peace, not by compromise, but by Christlikeness. The God of peace (cf. v. 11) will help us in our weakness!

13:12 “Greet” This can be translated “bid farewell” (cf. Acts 20:1; 21:6). It conveys an attitude of acceptance and cooperation. The opposite attitude is expressed in Matt. 5:47.

Just a comment about the numbering of these last two verses. Some English translations combine vv. 12-13 (TEV, NJB, RSV, NRSV), while others break it into two verses (KJV, NKJV, NASB, NIV).

“holy kiss” This custom (i.e. between family members and friends) was later stopped because of pagan misunderstanding (i.e. erotic kissing). In the early church the men kissed the men and the women kissed the women (i.e. following the custom of the synagogue, cf. Rom. 16:16; I Cor. 16:20; I Thess. 5:26).

This is an IMPERATIVE. Does this mean that Christians must greet each other in this specific manner? Here is a good example of how culture and future situations must affect interpretation. The form is not the issue, but the attitude. Believers are a family.

13:13 “All the saints” This phrase refers not only to Paul and his missionary team, but “all the saints” (i.e. all of Paul’s other churches). There was a tension between Corinth and these other churches. There was an air of superiority about this church. Paul
addressed this issue by mentioning several times the standards he taught in all the churches (cf. I Cor. 4:17; 7:17; 11:16,34; 14:33). Corinth must be a part of the family, not a privileged, elite member. See Special Topic: Saints at I Cor. 1:2.

In their current crisis, all of the congregations started by Paul sent their greetings, which implies fellowship, concern, cooperation, prayer, and acceptance.

**NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:14**

13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

13:14 Paul always closes his letters in a prayer or benediction, but this one is unique. It combines three aspects of God’s character with the three persons of the Trinity. It is also unusual that Jesus is mentioned first. For the full notes on “Trinity” see the Special Topic at I Cor. 2:10.

The three aspects of God: grace, love, and fellowship, are for “all” believers at Corinth. This is a crucial part of the prayer. Paul wants to restore unity among believers and recognize and reject false believers.

Paul used a scribe to write his letters, but probably took the pen himself to write the last prayer personally (cf. II Thess. 3:17). Paul loved this church!

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. How do believers test themselves?
2. Why does Paul speak so often in chapters 11-13 of his weakness?
3. How is assurance related to perseverance?
4. How can God be one and three at the same time?
APPENDIX ONE

BRIEF DEFINITIONS OF GREEK GRAMMATICAL TERMS

Koine Greek, often called Hellenistic Greek, was the common language of the Mediterranean world beginning with Alexander the Great's (336-323 B.C.) conquest and lasting about eight hundred years (300 B.C.-A.D. 500). It was not just a simplified, classical Greek, but in many ways a newer form of Greek that became the second language of the ancient near east and Mediterranean world.

The Greek of the New Testament was unique in some ways because its users, except Luke and the author of Hebrews, probably used Aramaic as their primary language. Therefore, their writing was influenced by the idioms and structural forms of Aramaic. Also, they read and quoted the Septuagint (Greek translation of the OT) which was also written in Koine Greek. But the Septuagint was also written by Jewish scholars whose mother tongue was not Greek.

This serves as a reminder that we cannot push the New Testament into a tight grammatical structure. It is unique and yet has much in common with (1) the Septuagint; (2) Jewish writings such as those of Josephus; and (3) the papyri found in Egypt. How then do we approach a grammatical analysis of the New Testament?

The grammatical features of Koine Greek and New Testament Koine Greek are fluid. In many ways it was a time of simplification of grammar. Context will be our major guide. Words only have meaning in a larger context, therefore, grammatical structure can only be understood in light of (1) a particular author's style; and (2) a particular context. No conclusive definitions of Greek forms and structures are possible.

Koine Greek was primarily a verbal language. Often the key to interpretation is the type and form of the verbals. In most main clauses the verb will occur first, showing its preeminence. In analyzing the Greek verb three pieces of information must be noted: (1) the basic emphasis of the tense, voice and mood (accidence or morphology); (2) the basic meaning of the particular verb (lexicography); and (3) the flow of the context (syntax).

I. TENSE

A. Tense or aspect involves the relationship of the verbs to completed action or incomplete action. This is often called “perfective” and “imperfective.”
   1. Perfective tenses focus on the occurrence of an action. No further information is given except that something happened! Its start, continuation or culmination is not addressed.
   2. Imperfective tenses focus on the continuing process of an action. It can be described in terms of linear action, durative action, progressive action, etc.

B. Tenses can be categorized by how the author sees the action as progressing
   1. It occurred = AORIST
   2. It occurred and the results abide = PERFECT
   3. It was occurring in the past and the results were abiding, but not now = PLUPERFECT
   4. It is occurring = PRESENT
   5. It was occurring = IMPERFECT
   6. It will occur = FUTURE

A concrete example of how these tenses help in interpretation would be the term “save.” It was used in several different tenses to show both its process and culmination:
   1. AORIST - “saved” (cf. Rom. 8:24)
   2. PERFECT - “have been saved and the result continues” (cf. Eph. 2:5,8)
   3. PRESENT - “being saved” (cf. I Cor. 1:18; 15:2)
   4. FUTURE - “shall be saved” (cf. Rom. 5:9, 10; 10:9)

C. In focusing on verb tenses, interpreters look for the reason the original author chose to express himself in a certain tense. The standard “no frills” tense was the AORIST. It was the regular “unspecific,” “unmarked,” or “unflagged” verb form. It can be used in a wide variety of ways which the context must specify. It simply was stating that something occurred.
The past time aspect is only intended in the INDICATIVE MOOD. If any other tense was used, something more specific was being emphasized. But what?

1. PERFECT TENSE. This speaks of a completed action with abiding results. In some ways it was a combination of the AORIST and PRESENT TENSES. Usually the focus is on the abiding results or the completion of an act. Example: Eph. 2:5 & 8, “you have been and continue to be saved.”

2. PLUPERFECT TENSE. This was like the PERFECT except the abiding results have ceased. Example: “Peter was standing at the door outside” (John 18:16).

3. PRESENT TENSE. This speaks of an incomplete or imperfect action. The focus is usually on the continuation of the event. Example: “Everyone abiding in Him does not continue sinning,” “everyone having been begotten of God does not continue to commit sin” (I John 3:6 & 9).

4. IMPERFECT TENSE. In this tense the relationship to the PRESENT TENSE is analogous to the relationship between the PERFECT and the PLUPERFECT. The IMPERFECT speaks of incomplete action that was occurring but has now ceased or the beginning of an action in the past. Example: “Then all Jerusalem were continuing to go out to him” or “then all Jerusalem began to go out to him” (Matt. 3:5).

5. FUTURE TENSE. This speaks of an action that was usually projected into a future time frame. It focused on the potential for an occurrence rather than an actual occurrence. It often speaks of the certainty of the event. Example: “Blessed are . . . they will. . .” (Matt. 5:4-9).

II. VOICE

A. Voice describes the relationship between the action of the verb and its subject.

B. ACTIVE VOICE was the normal, expected, unemphasized way to assert that the subject was performing the action of the verb.

C. The PASSIVE VOICE means that the subject was receiving the action of the verb produced by an outside agent. The outside agent producing the action was indicated in the Greek NT by the following prepositions and cases:
   1. a personal direct agent by _hupo_ with the ABLATIVE CASE (cf. Matt.1:22; Acts 22:30).
   2. a personal intermediate agent by _dia_ with the ABLATIVE CASE (cf. Matt. 1:22).
   3. an impersonal agent usually by _en_ with the INSTRUMENTAL CASE.
   4. sometimes either a personal or impersonal agent by the INSTRUMENTAL CASE alone.

D. The MIDDLE VOICE means that the subject produces the action of the verb and is also directly involved in the action of the verb. It is often called the voice of heightened personal interest. This construction emphasized the subject of the clause or sentence in some way. This construction is not found in English. It has a wide possibility of meanings and translations in Greek. Some examples of the form are:
   1. REFLEXIVE - the direct action of the subject on itself. Example: “Hanged himself” (Matt. 27:5).
   2. INTENSIVE - the subject produces the action for itself. Example: “Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light” (II Cor. 11:14).
   3. RECIPROCAL - the interplay of two subjects. Example: “They counseled with one another” (Matt. 26:4).

III. MOOD (or “MODE”)

A. There are four moods in Koine Greek. They indicate the relation of the verb to reality, at least within the author’s own mind. The moods are divided into two broad categories: that which indicated reality (INDICATIVE) and that which indicated potentiality (SUBJUNCTIVE, IMPERATIVE and OPTATIVE).

B. The INDICATIVE MOOD was the normal mood for expressing action that had occurred or was occurring, at least in the author's mind. It was the only Greek mood that expressed a definite time, and even here this aspect was secondary.

C. The SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD expressed probable future action. Something had not yet happened but the chances were likely that it would. It had much in common with the FUTURE INDICATIVE. The difference was that the SUBJUNCTIVE expresses some degree of doubt. In English this is often expressed by the terms “could,” “would,” “may,” or “might.”

D. The OPTATIVE MOOD expressed a wish which was theoretically possible. It was considered one step further from reality than the SUBJUNCTIVE. The OPTATIVE expressed possibility under certain conditions. The OPTATIVE was rare in the New Testament. Its most frequent usage is Paul’s famous phrase, “May it never be” (KJV, “God forbid”).

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E. The IMPERATIVE MOOD emphasized a command which was possible, but the emphasis was on the intent of the speaker. It asserted only volitional possibility and was conditioned on the choices of another. There was a special use of the IMPERATIVE in prayers and 3rd person requests. These commands were found only in the PRESENT and AORIST tenses in the NT.

F. Some grammars categorize PARTICIPLES as another type of mood. They are very common in the Greek NT, usually defined as a verbal adjective. They are translated in conjunction with the main verb to which they relate. A wide variety was possible in translating participles. It is best to consult several English translations. The Bible in Twenty Six Translations published by Baker is a great help here.

G. The AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE was the normal or “unmarked” way to record an occurrence. Any other tense, voice or mood had some specific interpretive significance that the original author wanted to communicate.

IV. For the person not familiar with Greek the following study aids will provide the needed information:


E. Academically accredited Koine Greek correspondence courses are available through Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, IL.

V. NOUNS

A. Syntactically, nouns are classified by case. Case was that inflected form of a noun that showed its relationship to the verb and other parts of the sentence. In Koine Greek many of the case functions were indicated by prepositions. Since the case form was able to identify several different relationships, the prepositions developed to give clearer separation to these possible functions.

B. Greek cases are categorized in the following eight ways:

1. The NOMINATIVE CASE was used for naming and it usually was the subject of the sentence or clause. It was also used for predicate nouns and adjectives with the linking verbs “to be” or “become.”

2. The GENITIVE CASE was used for description and usually assigned an attribute or quality to the word to which it was related. It answered the question, “What kind?” It was often expressed by the use of the English preposition “of.”

3. The ABLATIVE CASE used the same inflected form as the GENITIVE, but it was used to describe separation. It usually denoted separation from a point in time, space, source, origin or degree. It was often expressed by the use of the English preposition “from.”

4. The DATIVE CASE was used to describe personal interest. This could denote a positive or negative aspect. Often this was the indirect object. It was often expressed by the English preposition “to.”

5. The LOCATIVE CASE was the same inflected form as the DATIVE, but it described position or location in space, time or logical limits. It was often expressed by the English prepositions “in, on, at, among, during, by, upon, and beside.”

6. The INSTRUMENTAL CASE was the same inflected form as the DATIVE and LOCATIVE cases. It expressed means or association. It was often expressed by the English prepositions, “by” or “with.”

7. The ACCUSATIVE CASE was used to describe the conclusion of an action. It expressed limitation. Its main use was the direct object. It answered the question, “How far?” or “To what extent?”

8. The VOCATIVE CASE was used for direct address.
VI. CONJUNCTIONS AND CONNECTORS

A. Greek is a very precise language because it has so many connectives. They connect thoughts (clauses, sentences, and paragraphs). They are so common that their absence (asyndeton) is often exegetically significant. As a matter of fact, these conjunctions and connectors show the direction of the author's thought. They often are crucial in determining what exactly he is trying to communicate.

B. Here is a list of some of the conjunctions and connectors and their meanings (this information has been gleaned mostly from H. E. Dana and Julius K. Mantey’s *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*).

1. Time connectors
   a. *epei, epeid, hopote, hōs, hote, hotan* (subj.) - “when”
   b. *hōs* - “while”
   c. *hotan, epan* (subj.) - “whenever”
   d. *hēs, achrī, mechrī* (subj.) - “until”
   e. *priv* (infin.) - “before”
   f. *hōs* - “since,” “when,” “as”

2. Logical connectors
   a. Purpose
      (1) *hina* (subj.), *hopōs* (subj.), *hōs* - “in order that,” “that”
      (2) *hōste* (articular accusative infinitive) - “that”
      (3) *pros* (articular accusative infinitive) or *eis* (articular accusative infinitive) - “that”
   b. Result (there is a close association between the grammatical forms of purpose and result)
      (1) *hōste* (infinitive, this is the most common) - “in order that,” “thus”
      (2) *hiva* (subj.) - “so that”
      (3) *ara* - “so”
   c. Causal or reason
      (1) *gar* (cause/effect or reason/conclusion) - “for,” “because”
      (2) *dioti, hoti* - “because”
      (3) *epēi, epeidē, hōs* - “since”
      (4) *dia* (with accusative) and (with articular infin.) - “because”
   d. Inferential
      (1) *ara, poīnun, hōste* - “therefore”
      (2) *diō* (strongest inferential conjunction) - “on which account,” “wherefore,” “therefore”
      (3) *oun* - “therefore,” “so,” “then,” “consequently”
      (4) *toinoun* - “accordingly”
   e. Adversative or contrast
      (1) *alla* (strong adversative) - “but,” “except”
      (2) *de* - “but,” “however,” “yet,” “on the other hand”
      (3) *kai* - “but”
      (4) *mentoi, oun* - “however”
      (5) *plēn* - “never-the-less” (mostly in Luke)
      (6) *oun* - “however”
   f. Comparison
      (1) *hōs, kathōs* (introduce comparative clauses)
      (2) *kata* (in compounds, *katho, kathotι, kathōsper, kathaper*)
      (3) *hosos* (in Hebrews)
      (4) *ē* - “than”
   g. Continuative or series
      (1) *de* - “and,” “now”
      (2) *kai* - “and”
      (3) *tei* - “and”
      (4) *hina, oun* - “that”
      (5) *oun* - “then” (in John)

3. Emphatic usages
   a. *alla* - “certainty,” “yea,” “in fact”
   b. *ara* - “indeed,” “certainly,” “really”
VII. CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

A. A CONDITIONAL SENTENCE is one that contains one or more conditional clauses. This grammatical structure aids interpretation because it provides the conditions, reasons or causes why the action of the main verb does or does not occur. There were four types of conditional sentences. They move from that which was assumed to be true from the author's perspective or for his purpose to that which was only a wish.

B. The FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE expressed action or being which was assumed to be true from the writer's perspective or for his purposes even though it was expressed with an “if.” In several contexts it could be translated “since” (cf. Matt. 4:3; Rom. 8:31). However, this does not mean to imply that all FIRST CLASSES are true to reality. Often they were used to make a point in an argument or to highlight a fallacy (cf. Matt. 12:27).

C. The SECOND CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE is often called “contrary to fact.” It states something that was untrue to reality to make a point. Examples:
1. “If He were really a prophet, which He is not, He would know who and of what character the woman is who is clinging to Him, but He does not” (Thess. 7:39).
2. “If you really believed Moses, which you do not, you would believe me, which you do not” (John 5:46).
3. “If I were still trying to be pleasing to men, which I am not, I would not be a slave of Christ at all, which I am” (Gal. 1:10).

D. The THIRD CLASS speaks of possible future action. It usually assumes the probability of that action. The action of the main verb is contingent on the action in the “it” clause. Examples from I John: 1:6-10; 2:4,6,9,15,20,21,24,29; 3:21; 4:20; 5:14,16.

E. The FOURTH CLASS is the farthest removed from possibility. It is rare in the NT. As a matter of fact, there is no complete FOURTH CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE in which both parts of the condition fit the definition. An example of a partial FOURTH CLASS is the opening clause in I Pet. 3:14. An example of a partial FOURTH CLASS in the concluding clause is Acts 8:31.

VIII. PROHIBITIONS

A. The PRESENT IMPERATIVE with МĒ PARTICLE often (but not exclusively) has the emphasis of stopping an act already in process. Some examples: “stop storing up your riches on earth…” (Matt. 6:19); “stop worrying about your life…” (Matt. 6:25); “stop offering to sin the parts of your bodies as instruments of wrongdoing…” (Rom. 6:13); “you must stop offending the Holy Spirit of God…” (Eph. 4:30); and “stop getting drunk on wine…” (5:18).

B. The AORIST SUBJUNCTIVE with МĒ PARTICLE has the emphasis of “do not even begin or start an act.” Some examples: “Do not even begin to suppose that…” (Matt. 5:17); “never start to worry…” (Matt. 6:31); “you must never be ashamed…” (II Tim. 1:8).

C. The DOUBLE NEGATIVE with the SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD is a very emphatic negation. “Never, no never” or “not under any circumstance.” Some examples: “he will never, no never experience death” (John 8:51); “I will never, no, never…” (I Cor. 8:13).

IX. THE ARTICLE

A. In Koine Greek the definite article “the” had a use similar to English. Its basic function was that of “a pointer,” a way to draw attention to a word, name or phrase. The use varies from author to author in the New Testament. The definite article could also function
1. as a contrasting device like a demonstrative pronoun;
2. as a sign to refer to a previously introduced subject or person;
3. as a way to identify the subject in a sentence with a linking verb. Examples: “God is Spirit” John 4:24; “God is light” I John 1:5; “God is love” 4:8,16.

B. Koine Greek did not have an indefinite article like the English “a” or “an.” The absence of the definite article could mean
1. a focus on the characteristics or quality of something
2. a focus on the category of something

C. The NT authors varied widely as to how the article was employed.

X. WAYS OF SHOWING EMPHASIS IN THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

A. The techniques for showing emphasis vary from author to author in the New Testament. The most consistent and formal writers were Luke and the author of Hebrews.

B. We have stated earlier that the AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE was standard and unmarked for emphasis, but any other tense, voice or mood had interpretive significance. This is not to imply that the AORIST ACTIVE INDICATIVE was not often used in a significant grammatical sense. Example: Rom. 6:10 (twice).

C. Word order in Koine Greek
1. Koine Greek was an inflected language which was not dependent, like English, on word order. Therefore, the author could vary the normal expected order to show
   a. what the author wanted to emphasize to the reader;
   b. what the author thought would be surprising to the reader;
   c. what the author felt deeply about.
2. The normal word order in Greek is still an unsettled issue. However, the supposed normal order is:
   a. for linking verbs
      (1) verb
      (2) subject
      (3) complement
   b. for transitive verbs
      (1) verb
      (2) subject
      (3) object
      (4) indirect object
      (5) prepositional phrase
   c. for noun phrases
      (1) noun
      (2) modifier
      (3) prepositional phrase
3. Word order can be an extremely important exegetical point. Examples:
   a. “right hand they gave to me and Barnabas of fellowship” (Gal. 2:9). The phrase “right hand of fellowship” is split and fronted to show its significance.
   b. “with Christ” (Gal. 2:20), was placed first. His death was central.
   c. “It was bit by bit and in many different ways” (Heb. 1:1), was placed first. It was how God revealed Himself that was being contrasted, not the fact of revelation.

D. Usually some degree of emphasis was shown by
1. The repetition of the pronoun which was already present in the verb's inflected form. Example: “I, myself, will surely be with you...” (Matt. 28:20).
2. The absence of an expected conjunction, or other connecting device between words, phrases, clauses or sentences. This is called an asyndeton (“not bound”). The connecting device was expected, so its absence would draw attention. Examples:
   a. The Beatitudes, Matt. 5:3ff (emphasized the list)
   b. John 14:1 (new topic)
   c. Romans 9:1 (new section)
   d. II Cor. 12:20 (emphasize the list)
3. The repetition of words or phrases present in a given context. Examples: “to the praise of His glory” (Eph. 1:6, 12 & 14). This phrase was used to show the work of each person of the Trinity.

4. The use of an idiom or word (sound) play between terms
   a. euphemisms - substitute words for taboo subjects like “sleep” for death (John 11:11-14) or “feet” for male genitalia (Ruth 3:7-8; I Sam. 24:3).
   b. circumlocutions - substitute words for God’s name, like “Kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 3:21) or “a voice from heaven” (Matt. 3:17).
   c. figures of speech
      (1) impossible exaggerations (Matt. 3:9; 5:29-30; 19:24).
      (2) mild over statements (Matt. 3:5; Acts 2:36).
      (3) personifications (I Cor. 15:55).
      (4) irony (Gal. 5:12)
      (5) poetic passages (Phil. 2:6-11).
      (6) sound plays between words
         (a) “church”
            (i) “church” (Eph. 3:21)
            (ii) “calling” (Eph. 4:1,4)
            (iii) “called” (Eph. 4:1,4)
         (b) “free”
            (i) “free woman” (Gal. 4:31)
            (ii) “freedom” (Gal. 5:1)
            (iii) “free” (Gal. 5:1)
   d. idiomatic language - language which is usually cultural and language specific:
      (1) This was the figurative use of “food” (John 4:31-34).
      (2) This was the figurative use of “Temple” (John 2:19; Matt. 26:61).
      (3) This was a Hebrew idiom of compassion, “hate” (Gen. 29:31; Deut. 21:15; I Thess. 14:36; John 12:25; Rom. 9:13).
      (4) “All” versus “many.” Compare Isa. 53:6 (“all”) with 53:11 & 12 (“many”). The terms are synonymous as Rom. 5:18 and 19 show.

5. The use of a full linguistic phrase instead of a single word. Example: “The Lord Jesus Christ.”

6. The special use of autos
   a. when with the article (attributive position) it was translated “same.”
   b. when without the article (predicate position) it was translated as an intensive reflexive pronoun—“himself,” “herself,” or “itself.”

E. The non-Greek reading Bible student can identify emphasis in several ways:
   1. The use of an analytical lexicon and interlinear Greek/English text.
   2. The comparison of English translations, particularly from the differing theories of translations. Example: comparing a “word-for-word” translation (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, RSV, NRSV) with a “dynamic equivalent” (Williams, NIV, NEB, REB, JB, NJB, TEV). A good help here would be The Bible in Twenty-Six Translations published by Baker.
   3. The use of The Emphasized Bible by Joseph Bryant Rotherham (Kregel, 1994).
   4. The use of a very literal translation
      a. The American Standard Version of 1901

The study of grammar is tedious but necessary for proper interpretation. These brief definitions, comments and examples are meant to encourage and equip non-Greek reading persons to use the grammatical notes provided in this volume. Surely these definitions are oversimplified. They should not be used in a dogmatic, inflexible manner, but as stepping stones toward a greater understanding of New Testament syntax. Hopefully these definitions will also enable readers to understand the comments of other study aids such as technical commentaries on the New Testament.

We must be able to verify our interpretation based on items of information found in the texts of the Bible. Grammar is one of the most helpful of these items; other items would include historical setting, literary context, contemporary word usage, and parallel passages.
This subject will be dealt with in such a way as to explain the textual notes found in this commentary. The following outline will be utilized

I. The textual sources of our English Bible
   A. Old Testament
   B. New Testament

II. Brief explanation of the problems and theories of “lower criticism” also called “textual criticism.”

III. Suggested sources for further reading

I. The textual sources of our English Bible
   A. Old Testament
      1. Masoretic text (MT) - The Hebrew consonantal text was set by Rabbi Aquiba in A.D. 100. The vowel points, accents, marginal notes, punctuation and apparatus points started being added in the sixth century A.D. and were finished in the ninth century A.D. It was done by a family of Jewish scholars known as the Masoretes. The textual form they used was the same as the one in the Mishnah, Talmud, Targums, Peshitta, and Vulgate.
      2. Septuagint (LXX) - Tradition says the Septuagint was produced by 70 Jewish scholars in 70 days for the Alexandria library under the sponsorship of King Ptolemy II (285-246 B.C.) The translation was supposedly requested by a Jewish leader living in Alexandria. This tradition comes from “Letter of Aristeas.” The LXX frequently was based on a differing Hebrew textual tradition from the text of Rabbi Aquiba (MT).
      3. Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS) - The Dead Sea Scrolls were written in the Roman B.C. period (200 B.C. to A.D. 70) by a sect of Jewish separatists called the “Essenes.” The Hebrew manuscripts, found in several sites around the Dead Sea, show a somewhat different Hebrew textual family behind both the MT and the LXX.
      4. Some specific examples of how the comparison of these texts have helped interpreters understand the Old Testament
         a. The LXX has helped translators and scholars understand the MT
            (1) the LXX of Isa. 52:14, “As many shall be amazed at him.”
            (2) the MT of Isa. 52:14, “Just as many were astonished over you.”
            (3) in Isa. 52:15 the pronoun distinction of the LXX is confirmed
               (a) LXX, “so will many nations marvel at him”
               (b) MT, “so he sprinkles many nations”
         b. The DSS have helped translators and scholars understand the MT
            (1) the DSS of Isa. 21:8, “then the seer cried, Upon a watchtower I stand. . .”
            (2) the MT of Isa. 21:8, “and I cried a lion! My Lord, I always stand on the watch tower by day. . .”
         c. Both the LXX and DSS have helped clarify Isa. 53:11
            (1) LXX & DSS, “after the travail of his soul he will see light, he will be satisfied”
            (2) MT, “he shall see. . .of the travail of his soul, He shall be satisfied”

   B. New Testament
      1. Over 5,300 manuscripts of all or parts of the Greek New Testament are extant. About 85 are written on papyri and 268 are manuscripts written in all capital letters (uncials). Later, about the ninth century A.D., a running script (minuscule) was developed. The Greek manuscripts in written form number about 2,700. We also have about 2,100 copies of lists of Scripture texts used in worship that we call lectionaries.
      2. About 85 Greek manuscripts containing parts of the New Testament written on papyrus are housed in museums. Some are dated from the second century A.D., but most are from the third and fourth centuries A.D. None of these MSS contain the whole New Testament. Just because these are the oldest copies of the New Testament does not automatically mean they have fewer variants. Many of these were copied rapidly for a local use. Care was not exercised in the process. Therefore, they contain many variants.
      3. Codex Sinaiticus, known by the Hebrew letter א (aleph) or (01), found at St. Catherine's monastery on Mt. Sinai by Tischendorf. It dates from the fourth century A.D. and contains both the LXX of the OT and the Greek NT. It is of “the Alexandrian Text” type.
      4. Codex Alexandrinus, known as “A” or (02), a fifth century Greek manuscript which was found in Alexandria, Egypt.
5. Codex Vaticanus, known as “B” or (03), found in the Vatican's library in Rome and dates from the middle of the fourth century A.D. It contains both LXX of the Old Testament and Greek New Testament. It is of “the Alexandrian Text” type.

6. Codex Ephraemi, known as “C” or (04), a fifth century Greek manuscript which was partially destroyed.

7. Codex Bezae, known as “D” or (05), a fifth or sixth century Greek manuscript. It is the chief representative of what is called “The Western Text.” It contains many additions and was the main Greek witness for the King James translation.

8. The NT MSS can be grouped into three, possibly four, families that share certain characteristics.
   a. Alexandrian text from Egypt
      (1) P75, P66 (about A.D. 200), which record the Gospels
      (2) P46 (about A.D. 225), which records Paul's letters
      (3) P27 (about A.D. 225-250), which records Peter and Jude
      (4) Codex B, called Vaticanus (about A.D. 325), which includes the whole OT and NT
      (5) Origen quotes from this text type
      (6) other MSS which show this text type are Π, C, L, W, 33
   b. Western text from North Africa
      (1) quotes from North African church fathers, Tertullian, Cyprian, and the Old Latin translation
      (2) quotes from Irenaeus
      (3) quotes from Tatian and Old Syriac translation
      (4) Codex D “Bezae” follow this text type
   c. Eastern Byzantine text from Constantinople
      (1) this text type is reflected in over 80% of the 5,300 MSS
      (2) quoted by Antioch of Syria’s church fathers, Cappadoceans, Chrysostom, and Therodoret
      (3) Codex A, in the Gospels only
      (4) Codex E (eighth century) for full NT
   d. the fourth possible type is “Caesarean” from Palestine
      (1) it is primarily seen only in Mark
      (2) some witnesses to it are P45 and W

II. The problems and theories of “lower criticism” or “textual criticism.”
   A. How the variants occurred
      1. inadvertent or accidental (vast majority of occurrences)
         a. slip of the eye in hand copying which reads the second instance of two similar words and thereby omits all of the words in between (homoioteleuton)
            (1) slip of the eye in omitting a double letter word or phrase (haplography)
            (2) slip of the mind in repeating a phrase or line of a Greek text (dittography)
         b. slip of the ear in copying by oral dictation where a misspelling occurs (itacism). Often the misspelling implies or spells a similar-sounding Greek word.
         c. the earliest Greek texts had no chapter or verse divisions, little or no punctuation and no division between words. It is possible to divide the letters in different places forming different words.
      2. intentional
         a. changes were made to improve the grammatical form of the text copied
         b. changes were made to bring the text into conformity with other biblical texts (harmonization of parallels)
         c. changes were made by combining two or more variant readings into one long combined text (conflation)
         d. changes were made to correct a perceived problem in the text (cf. I Cor. 11:27 and I John 5:7-8)
         e. some additional information as to the historical setting or proper interpretation of the text was placed in the margin by one scribe but placed into the text by a second scribe (cf. John 5:4)
   B. The basic tenets of textual criticism (logical guidelines for determining the original reading of a text when variants exist)
      1. the most awkward or grammatically unusual text is probably the original
      2. the shortest text is probably the original
      3. the older text is given more weight because of its historical proximity to the original, everything else being equal
      4. MSS that are geographically diverse usually have the original reading
      5. doctrinally weaker texts, especially those relating to major theological discussions of the period of manuscript changes, like the Trinity in I John 5:7-8, are to be preferred.
      6. the text that can best explain the origin of the other variants
two quotes that help show the balance in these troubling variants

   “No Christian doctrine hangs upon a debatable text; and the student of the NT must beware of wanting his text to be more orthodox or doctrinally stronger than is the inspired original” (p. 68).

b. W. A. Criswell told Greg Garrison of *The Birmingham News* that he (Criswell) doesn't believe every word in the Bible is inspired, “at least not every word that has been given to the modern public by centuries of translators.” Criswell said: “I very much am a believer in the textual criticism. As such, I think, the last half of the 16th chapter of Mark is heresy: it's not inspired, it's just concocted...When you compare those manuscripts way back yonder, there was no such thing as that conclusion of the Book of Mark. Somebody added it...”

The patriarch of the SBC inerrantists also claimed that “interpolation” is also evident in John 5, the account of Jesus at the pool of Bethesda. And he discusses the two different accounts of the suicide of Judas (cf. Matt. 27 and Acts 1): “It's just a different view of the suicide,” Criswell said. “If it is in the Bible, there is an explanation for it. And the two accounts of the suicide of Judas are in the Bible.” Criswell added, “Textual criticism is a wonderful science in itself. It is not ephemeral, it's not impertinent. It's dynamic and central...”

III. Manuscript problems (textual criticism)

A. Suggested sources for further reading

1. *Biblical Criticism: Historical, Literary and Textual*, by R.H. Harrison


3. *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, by J. H Greenlee
APPENDIX THREE

GLOSSARY

Adoptionism. This was one of the early views of Jesus’ relation to deity. It basically asserted that Jesus was a normal human in every way and was adopted in a special sense by God at his baptism (cf. Matt. 3:17; Mark 1:11) or at His resurrection (cf. Rom. 1:4). Jesus lived such an exemplary life that God, at some point, (baptism, resurrection) adopted Him as His “son” (cf. Rom. 1:4; Phi. 2:9). This was an early church and eighth century minority view. Instead of God becoming a man (the Incarnation) it reverses this and now man becomes God!

It is difficult to verbalize how Jesus, God the Son, pre-existent deity, was rewarded or extolled for an exemplary life. If He was already God, how could He be rewarded? If He had pre-existent divine glory how could He be honored more? Although it is hard for us to comprehend, the Father somehow honored Jesus in a special sense for His perfect fulfillment of the Father’s will.

Alexandrian School. This method of biblical interpretation was developed in Alexandria, Egypt in the second century A.D. It uses the basic interpretive principles of Philo, who was a follower of Plato. It is often called the allegorical method. It held sway in the church until the time of the Reformation. Its most able proponents were Origen and Augustine. See Moises Silva, Has The Church Misread The Bible? (Academic, 1987)

Alexandrinus. This fifth-century Greek manuscript from Alexandria, Egypt includes the Old Testament, Apocrypha, and most of the New Testament. It is one of our major witnesses to the entire Greek New Testament (except parts of Matthew, John, and II Corinthians). When this manuscript, which is designated “A,” and the manuscript designated “B” (Vaticanus) agree on a reading, it is considered to be original by most scholars in most instances.

Allegory. This is a type of biblical interpretation which originally developed within Alexandrian Judaism. It was popularized by Philo of Alexandria. Its basic thrust is the desire to make the Scripture relevant to one’s culture or philosophical system by ignoring the Bible’s historical setting and/or literary context. It seeks a hidden or spiritual meaning behind every text of Scripture. It must be admitted that Jesus, in Matthew 13, and Paul, in Galatians 4, used allegory to communicate truth. This, however, was in the form of typology, not strictly allegory.

Analytical lexicon. This is a type of research tool which allows one to identify every Greek form in the New Testament. It is a compilation, in Greek alphabetical order, of forms and basic definitions. In combination with an interlinear translation, it allows non-Greek reading believers to analyze New Testament Greek grammatical and syntactic forms.

Analogy of Scripture. This is the phrase used to describe the view that all of the Bible is inspired by God and is, therefore, not contradictory but complementary. This presuppositional affirmation is the basis for the use of parallel passages in interpreting a biblical text.

Ambiguity. This refers to the uncertainty that results in a written document when there are two or more possible meanings or when two or more things are being referred to at the same time. It is possible that John uses purposeful ambiguity (double entendres).

Anthropomorphic. Meaning “having characteristics associated with human beings,” this term is used to describe our religious language about God. It comes from the Greek term for mankind. It means that we speak about God as if He were a man. God is described in physical, sociological, and psychological terms which relate to human beings (cf. Gen. 3:8; I Kgs. 22:19-23). This, of course, is only an analogy. However, there are no categories or terms other than human ones for us to use. Therefore, our knowledge of God, though true, is limited.

Antiochian School. This method of biblical interpretation was developed in Antioch, Syria, in the third century A.D. as a reaction to the allegorical method of Alexandria, Egypt. Its basic thrust was to focus on the historical meaning of the Bible. It interpreted the Bible as normal, human literature. This school became involved in the controversy over whether Christ had two natures (Nestorianism) or one nature (fully God and fully man). It was labeled heretical by the Roman Catholic Church and relocated to Persia but the school had little significance. Its basic hermeneutical principles later became interpretive principles of the Classical Protestant Reformers (Luther and Calvin).

Antithetical. This is one of three descriptive terms used to denote the relationship between lines of Hebrew poetry. It relates to lines of poetry which are opposite in meaning (cf. Prov. 10:1, 15:1).
Apocalyptic literature. This was predominantly, possibly even uniquely, a Jewish genre. It was a cryptic type of writing used in times of invasion and occupation of the Jews by foreign world powers. It assumes that a personal, redemptive God created and controls world events, and that Israel is of special interest and care to Him. This literature promises ultimate victory through God’s special effort.

It is highly symbolic and fanciful with many cryptic terms. It often expressed truth in colors, numbers, visions, dreams, angelic mediation, secret code words and often a sharp dualism between good and evil.

Some examples of this genre are (1) in the OT, Ezekiel (chapters 36-48), Daniel (chapters 7-12), Zechariah; and (2) in the NT, Matt.24; Mark 13; II Thess. 2 and Revelation.

Apologist (Apologetics). This is from the Greek root for “legal defense.” This is a specific discipline within theology which seeks to give evidence and rational arguments for the Christian faith.

A priori. This is basically synonymous with the term “presupposition.” It involves reasoning from previously accepted definitions, principles or positions which are assumed to be true. It is that which is accepted without examination or analysis.

Arianism. Arius was a presbyter in the church at Alexandria, Egypt, in the third and early fourth century. He affirmed that Jesus was pre-existent, but not divine (not of the same essence as the Father), possibly following Proverbs 8:22-31. He was challenged by the bishop of Alexandria, who started (A.D. 318) a controversy which lasted many years. Arianism became the official creed of the Eastern Church. The Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325 condemned Arius and asserted the full equality and deity of the Son.

Aristotle. He was one of the philosophers of ancient Greece, a pupil of Plato and teacher of Alexander the Great. His influence, even today, reaches into many areas of modern studies. This is because he emphasized knowledge through observation and classification. This is one of the tenets of the scientific method.

Autographs. This is the name given to the original writings of the Bible. These original, handwritten manuscripts have all been lost. Only copies of copies remain. This is the source of many of the textual variants in the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts and ancient versions.

Bezae. This is a Greek and Latin manuscript of the sixth century A.D. It is designated by “D.” It contains the Gospels and Acts and some of the General Epistles. It is characterized by numerous scribal additions. It forms the basis for the “Textus Receptus,” the major Greek manuscript tradition behind the King James Version.

Bias. This is the term used to describe a strong predisposition toward an object or point of view. It is the mindset in which impartiality is impossible regarding a particular object or point of view. It is a prejudiced position.

Biblical Authority. This term is used in a very specialized sense. It is defined as understanding what the original author said to his day and applying this truth to our day. Biblical authority is usually defined as viewing the Bible itself as our only authoritative guide. However, in light of current, improper interpretations, I have limited the concept to the Bible as interpreted by the tenets of the historical-grammatical method.

Canon. This is a term used to describe writings which are believed to be uniquely inspired. It is used regarding both the Old and New Testament Scriptures.

Christocentric. This is a term used to describe the centrality of Jesus. I use it in connection with the concept that Jesus is Lord of all the Bible. The Old Testament points toward Him and He is its fulfillment and goal (cf. Matt. 5:17-48).

Commentary. This is a specialized type of research book. It gives the general background of a biblical book. It then tries to explain the meaning of each section of the book. Some focus on application, while others deal with the text in a more technical way. These books are helpful, but should be used after one has done his own preliminary study. The commentator's interpretations should never be accepted uncritically. Comparing several commentaries from different theological perspectives is usually helpful.

Concordance. This is a type of research tool for Bible study. It lists every occurrence of every word in the Old and New Testaments. It helps in several ways: (1) determining the Hebrew or Greek word which lies behind any particular English word; (2) comparing passages where the same Hebrew or Greek word was used; (3) showing where two different Hebrew or Greek terms are translated by the same English word; (4) showing the frequency of the use of certain words in certain books or authors; (5) helping one find a passage in the Bible (cf. Walter Clark’s How to Use New Testament Greek Study Aids, pp. 54-55).
Dead Sea Scrolls. This refers to a series of ancient texts written in Hebrew and Aramaic which were found near the Dead Sea in 1947. They were the religious libraries of sectarian Judaism of the first century. The pressure of Roman occupation and the zealot wars of the 60's caused them to conceal the scrolls in hermetically sealed pottery jars in caves or holes. They have helped us understand the historical setting of first century Palestine and have confirmed the Masoretic Text as being very accurate, at least as far back as the early B.C. era. They are designated by the abbreviation “DSS.”

Deductive. This method of logic or reasoning moves from general principles to specific applications by means of reason. It is opposite from inductive reasoning, which reflects the scientific method by moving from observed specifics to general conclusions (theories).

Dialectical. This is the method of reasoning whereby that which seems contradictory or paradoxical is held together in a tension, seeking a unified answer which includes both sides of the paradox. Many biblical doctrines have dialectical pairs, predestination—free will; security—perseverance; faith—works; decision—discipleship; Christian freedom—Christian responsibility.

Diaspora. This is the technical Greek term used by Palestinian Jews to describe other Jews who live outside the geographical boundaries of the Promised Land.

Dynamic equivalent. This is a theory of Bible translation. Bible translation can be viewed as a continuum from “word to word” correspondence, where an English word must be supplied for every Hebrew or Greek word, to a “paraphrase” where only the thought is translated with less regard to the original wording or phrasing. In between these two theories is “the dynamic equivalent” which attempts to take the original text seriously, but translates it in modern grammatical forms and idioms. A really good discussion of these various theories of translations is found in Fee and Stuart’s How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth, p. 35 and in Robert Bratcher’s Introduction to the TEV.

Eclectic. This term is used in connection with textual criticism. It refers to the practice of choosing readings from different Greek manuscripts in order to arrive at a text which is supposed to be close to the original autographs. It rejects the view that any one family of Greek manuscripts captures the originals.

Eisegesis. This is the opposite of exegesis. If exegesis is a “leading out” of the original author's intent, this term implies a “leading in” of a foreign idea or opinion.

Etymology. This is an aspect of word study that tries to ascertain the original meaning of a word. From this root meaning, specialized usages are more easily identified. In interpretation, etymology is not the main focus, rather the contemporary meaning and usage of a word.

Exegesis. This is the technical term for the practice of interpreting a specific passage. It means “to lead out” (of the text) implying that our purpose is to understand the original author's intent in light of historical setting, literary context, syntax and contemporary word meaning.

Genre. This is a French term that denotes different types of literature. The thrust of the term is the division of literary forms into categories which share common characteristics: historical narrative, poetry, proverb, apocalyptic and legislation.

Gnosticism. Most of our knowledge of this heresy comes from the gnostic writings of the second century. However, the incipient ideas were present in the first century (and before).

Some stated tenets of Valentinian and Cerinthian Gnosticism of the second century are: (1) matter and spirit were co-eternal (an ontological dualism). Matter is evil, spirit is good. God, who is spirit, cannot be directly involved with molding evil matter; (2) there are emanations (eons or angelic levels) between God and matter. The last or lowest one was YHWH of the OT, who formed the universe (kosmos); (3) Jesus was an emanation like YHWH but higher on the scale, closer to the true God. Some put Him as the highest but still less than God and certainly not incarnate Deity (cf. John 1:14). Since matter is evil, Jesus could not have a human body and still be Divine. He was a spiritual phantom (cf. I John 1:1-3; 4:1-6); and (4) salvation was obtained through faith in Jesus plus special knowledge, which is only known by special persons. Knowledge (passwords) was needed to pass through heavenly spheres. Jewish legalism was also required to reach God.

The gnostic false teachers advocated two opposite ethical systems: (1) for some, lifestyle was totally unrelated to salvation. For them, salvation and spirituality were encapsulated into secret knowledge (passwords) through the angelic spheres (eons); or (2) for others, lifestyle was crucial to salvation. They emphasized an ascetic lifestyle as evidence of true spirituality.
Hermeneutics. This is the technical term for the principles which guide exegesis. It is both a set of specific guidelines and an art/gift. Biblical, or sacred, hermeneutics is usually divided into two categories: general principles and special principles. These relate to the different types of literature found in the Bible. Each different type (genre) has its own unique guidelines but also shares some common assumptions and procedures of interpretation.

Higher Criticism. This is the procedure of biblical interpretation which focuses on the historical setting and literary structure of a particular biblical book.

Idiom. This word is used for the phrases found in different cultures which have specialized meaning not connected to the usual meaning of the individual terms. Some modern examples are: “that was awfully good,” or “you just kill me.” The Bible also contains these types of phrases.

Illumination. This is the name given to the concept that God has spoken to mankind. The full concept is usually expressed by three terms: (1) revelation—God has acted in human history; (2) inspiration—He has given the proper interpretation of His acts and their meaning to certain chosen men to record for mankind; and (3) illumination—He has given His Spirit to help mankind understand His self-disclosure.

Inductive. This is a method of logic or reasoning which moves from the particulars to the whole. It is the empirical method of modern science. This is basically the approach of Aristotle.

Interlinear. This is a type of research tool which allows those who do not read a biblical language to be able to analyze its meaning and structure. It places the English translation on a word for word level immediately under the original biblical language. This tool, combined with an “analytical lexicon,” will give the forms and basic definitions of Hebrew and Greek.

Inspiration. This is the concept that God has spoken to mankind by guiding the biblical authors to accurately and clearly record His revelation. The full concept is usually expressed by three terms: (1) revelation—God has acted in human history; (2) inspiration—He has given the proper interpretation of His acts and their meaning to certain chosen men to record for mankind; and (3) illumination—He has given His Spirit to help mankind understand His self-disclosure.

Language of description. This is used in connection with the idioms in which the Old Testament is written. It speaks of our world in terms of the way things appear to the five senses. It is not a scientific description, nor was it meant to be.

Legalism. This attitude is characterized by an over-emphasis on rules or ritual. It tends to rely on the human performance of regulations as a means of acceptance by God. It tends to depreciate relationship and elevates performance, both of which are important aspects of the covenantal relationship between a holy God and sinful humanity.

Literal. This is another name for the textually-focused and historical method of hermeneutics from Antioch. It means that interpretation involves the normal and obvious meaning of human language, although it still recognizes the presence of figurative language.

Literary genre. This refers to the distinct forms that human communication can take, such as poetry or historical narrative. Each type of literature has its own special hermeneutical procedures in addition to the general principles for all written literature.

Literary unit. This refers to the major thought divisions of a biblical book. It can be made up of a few verses, paragraphs or chapters. It is a self-contained unit with a central subject.

Lower criticism. See “textual criticism.”

Manuscript. This term relates to the different copies of the Greek New Testament. Usually they are divided into the different types by (1) material on which they are written (papyrus, leather), or (2) the form of the writing itself (all capitals or running script). It is abbreviated by “MS” (singular) or “MSS” (plural).

Masoretic Text. This refers to the ninth century A.D. Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament produced by generations of Jewish scholars which contain vowel points and other textual notes. It forms the basic text for our English Old Testament. Its text has been historically confirmed by the Hebrew MSS, especially Isaiah, known from the Dead Sea Scrolls. It is abbreviated by “MT.”

Metonymy. This is a figure of speech in which the name of one thing is used to represent something else associated with it. As an example, “the kettle is boiling” actually means “the water within the kettle is boiling.”
**Muratorian Fragments.** This is a list of the canonical books of the New Testament. It was written in Rome before A.D. 200. It gives the same twenty-seven books as the Protestant NT. This clearly shows the local churches in different parts of the Roman Empire had “practically” set the canon before the major church councils of the fourth century.

**Natural revelation.** This is one category of God's self-disclosure to man. It involves the natural order (Rom. 1:19-20) and the moral consciousness (Rom. 2:14-15). It is spoken of in Ps. 19:1-6 and Rom. 1-2. It is distinct from special revelation, which is God's specific self-disclosure in the Bible and supremely in Jesus of Nazareth.

This theological category is being re-emphasized by the “old earth” movement among Christian scientists (e.g. the writings of Hugh Ross). They use this category to assert that all truth is God’s truth. Nature is an open door to knowledge about God; it is different from special revelation (the Bible). It allows modern science the freedom to research the natural order. In my opinion it is a wonderful new opportunity to witness to the modern scientific western world.

**Nestorianism.** Nestorius was the patriarch of Constantinople in the fifth century. He was trained in Antioch of Syria and affirmed that Jesus had two natures, one fully human and one fully divine. This view deviated from the orthodox one nature view of Alexandria. Nestorius’ main concern was the title “mother of God,” given to Mary. Nestorius was opposed by Cyril of Alexandria and, by implication, his own Antiochian training. Antioch was the headquarters of the historical-grammatical-textual approach to biblical interpretation, while Alexandria was the headquarters of the four-fold (allegorical) school of interpretation. Nestorius was ultimately removed from office and exiled.

**Original author.** This refers to the actual authors/writers of Scripture.

**Papyri.** This is a type of writing material from Egypt. It is made from river reeds. It is the material upon which our oldest copies of the Greek New Testament are written.

**Parallel passages.** They are part of the concept that all of the Bible is God-given and, therefore, is its own best interpreter and balancer of paradoxical truths. This is also helpful when one is attempting to interpret an unclear or ambiguous passage. They also help one find the clearest passage on a given subject as well as all other Scriptural aspects of a given subject.

**Paraphrase.** This is the name of a theory of Bible translation. Bible translation can be viewed as a continuum from “word to word” correspondence, where an English word must be supplied for every Hebrew or Greek word to a “paraphrase” where only the thought is translated with less regard to the original wording or phrasing. In between these two theories is “the dynamic equivalent” which attempts to take serious the original text but translates it in modern grammatical forms and idioms. A really good discussion of these various theories of translations is found in Fee and Stuart’s *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, p. 35.

**Paragraph.** This is the basic interpretive literary unit in prose. It contains one central thought and its development. If we stay with its major thrust we will not major on minors or miss the original author's intent.

**Parochialism.** This relates to biases which are locked into a local theological/cultural setting. It does not recognize the transcultural nature of biblical truth or its application.

**Paradox.** This refers to those truths which seem to be contradictory, yet both are true, although in tension with each other. They frame truth by presenting if from opposite sides. Much biblical truth is presented in paradoxical (or dialectical) pairs. Biblical truths are not isolated stars, but are constellations made up of the pattern of stars.

**Plato.** He was one of the philosophers of ancient Greece. His philosophy greatly influenced the early church through the scholars of Alexandria, Egypt, and later, Augustine. He posited that everything on earth was illusionary and a mere copy of a spiritual archetype. Theologians later equated Plato’s “forms/ideas” with the spiritual realm.

**Presupposition.** This refers to our preconceived understanding of a matter. Often we form opinions or judgments about issues before we approach the Scriptures themselves. This predisposition is also known as a bias, an *a priori* position, an assumption or a preunderstanding.

**Proof-texting.** This is the practice of interpreting Scripture by quoting a verse without regard for its immediate context or larger context in its literary unit. This removes the verses from the original author's intent and usually involves the attempt to prove a personal opinion while asserting biblical authority.

**Rabbinical Judaism.** This stage of the life of the Jewish people began in Babylonian Exile (586-538 B.C.). As the influence of the Priests and the Temple was removed, local synagogues became the focus of Jewish life. These local centers of Jewish culture, fellowship, worship and Bible study became the focus of the national religious life. In Jesus' day this “religion of the scribes” was parallel to that of the priests. At the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. the scribal form, dominated by the
Pharisees, controlled the direction of Jewish religious life. It is characterized by a practical, legalistic interpretation of the Torah as explained in the oral tradition (Talmud).

**Revelation.** This is the name given to the concept that God has spoken to mankind. The full concept is usually expressed by three terms: (1) revelation—God has acted in human history; (2) inspiration—He has given the proper interpretation of His acts and their meaning to certain chosen men to record for mankind; and (3) illumination—He has given His Spirit to help mankind understand His self-disclosure.

**Semantic field.** This refers to the total range of meanings associated with a word. It is basically the different connotations a word has in different contexts.

**Septuagint.** This is the name given to the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. Tradition says that it was written in seventy days by seventy Jewish scholars for the library of Alexandria, Egypt. The traditional date is around 250 B.C. (in reality it possibly took over one hundred years to complete). This translation is significant because (1) it gives us an ancient text to compare with the Masoretic Hebrew text; (2) it shows us the state of Jewish interpretation in the third and second century B.C.; (3) it gives us the Jewish Messianic understanding before the rejection of Jesus. Its abbreviation is “LXX.”

**Sinaiticus.** This is a Greek manuscript of the fourth century A.D. It was found by the German scholar, Tischendorf, at St. Catherine's monastery on Jebel Musa, the traditional site of Mt. Sinai. This manuscript is designated by the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet called “aleph” [א]. It contains both the Old and the entire New Testaments. It is one of our most ancient uncial MSS.

**Spiritualizing.** This term is synonymous with allegorizing in the sense that it removes the historical and literary context of a passage and interprets it on the basis of other criteria.

**Synonymous.** This refers to terms with exact or very similar meanings (although in reality no two words have a complete semantic overlap). They are so closely related that they can replace each other in a sentence without loss of meaning. It is also used to designate one of the three forms of Hebrew poetic parallelism. In this sense it refers to two lines of poetry that express the same truth (cf. Ps. 103:3).

**Syntax.** This is a Greek term which refers to the structure of a sentence. It relates to the ways parts of a sentence are put together to make a complete thought.

**Synthetical.** This is one of the three terms that relates to types of Hebrew poetry. This term speaks of lines of poetry which build on one another in a cumulative sense, sometimes called “climatic” (cf. Ps. 19:7-9).

**Systematic theology.** This is a stage of interpretation which tries to relate the truths of the Bible in a unified and rational manner. It is a logical, rather than mere historical, presentation of Christian theology by categories (God, man, sin, salvation, etc.).

**Talmud.** This is the title for the codification of the Jewish Oral Tradition. The Jews believe it was given orally by God to Moses on Mt. Sinai. In reality it appears to be the collective wisdom of the Jewish teachers through the years. There are two different written versions of the Talmud: the Babylonian and the shorter, unfinished Palestinian.

**Textual criticism.** This is the study of the manuscripts of the Bible. Textual criticism is necessary because no originals exist and the copies differ from each other. It attempts to explain the variations and arrive (as close as possible) to the original wording of the autographs of the Old and New Testaments. It is often called “lower criticism.”

**Textus Receptus.** This designation developed into Elzevir’s edition of the Greek NT in 1633 AD. Basically it is a form of the Greek NT that was produced from a few late Greek manuscripts and Latin versions of Erasmus (1510-1535), Stephanus (1546-1559) and Elzevir (1624-1678). In An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament, p. 27, A. T. Robertson says “the Byzantine text is practically the Textus Receptus.” The Byzantine text is the least valuable of the three families of early Greek manuscripts (Western, Alexandrian and Byzantine). It contains the accumulation errors of centuries of hand-copied texts. However, A.T. Robertson also says “the Textus Receptus has preserved for us a substantially accurate text” (p. 21). This Greek manuscript tradition (especially Erasmus’ third edition of 1522) forms the basis of the King James Version of 1611 A.D.

**Torah.** This is the Hebrew term for “teaching.” It came to be the official title for the writings of Moses (Genesis through Deuteronomy). It is, for the Jews, the most authoritative division of the Hebrew canon.
Typological. This is a specialized type of interpretation. Usually it involves New Testament truth found in Old Testament passages by means of an analogical symbol. This category of hermeneutics was a major element of the Alexandrian method. Because of the abuse of this type of interpretation, one should limit its use to specific examples recorded in the New Testament.

Vaticanus. This is the Greek manuscript of the fourth century A.D. It was found in the Vatican's library. It originally contained all the Old Testament, Apocrypha and New Testament. However, some parts were lost (Genesis, Psalms, Hebrews, the Pastorals, Philemon and Revelation). It is a very helpful manuscript in determining the original wording of the autographs. It is designated by a capital “B.”

Vulgate. This is the name of Jerome’s Latin translation of the Bible. It became the basic or “common” translation for the Roman Catholic Church. It was done in the 380's A.D.

Wisdom literature. This was a genre of literature common in the ancient near east (and modern world). It basically was an attempt to instruct a new generation on guidelines for successful living through poetry, proverb, or essay. It was addressed more to the individual than to corporate society. It did not use allusions to history, but was based on life experiences and observation. In the Bible, Job through Song of Songs assumed the presence and worship of YHWH, but this religious world view is not explicit in every human experience every time.

As a genre it stated general truths. However, this genre cannot be used in every specific situation. These are general statements that do not always apply to every individual situation.

These sages dared to ask the hard questions of life. Often they challenged traditional religious views (Job and Ecclesiastes). They form a balance and tension to the easy answers about life’s tragedies.

World picture and worldview. These are companion terms. They are both philosophical concepts related to creation. The term “world picture” refers to “the how” of creation while “worldview” relates to “the Who.” These terms are relevant to the interpretation that Gen. 1-2 deals primarily with the Who, not the how, of creation.

YHWH. This is the Covenant name for God in the Old Testament. It is defined in Ex. 3:14. It is the CAUSATIVE form of the Hebrew term “to be.” The Jews were afraid to pronounce the name, lest they take it in vain; therefore, they substituted the Hebrew term Adonai, “lord.” This is how this covenant name is translated in English.
APPENDIX FOUR
DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

I do not particularly care for statements of faith or creeds. I prefer to affirm the Bible itself. However, I realize that a statement of faith will provide those who are unfamiliar with me a way to evaluate my doctrinal perspective. In our day of so much theological error and deception, the following brief summary of my theology is offered.

1. The Bible, both the Old and New Testament, is the inspired, infallible, authoritative, eternal Word of God. It is the self-revelation of God recorded by men under supernatural leadership. It is our only source of clear truth about God and His purposes. It is also the only source of faith and practice for His church.

2. There is only one eternal, creator, redeemer God. He is the creator of all things, visible and invisible. He has revealed Himself as loving and caring although He is also fair and just. He has revealed Himself in three distinct persons: Father, Son and Spirit; truly separate and yet the same in essence.

3. God is actively in control of His world. There is both an eternal plan for His creation that is unalterable and an individually focused one that allows human free will. Nothing happens without God's knowledge and permission, yet He allows individual choices both among angels and humans. Jesus is the Father's Elect Man and all are potentially elect in Him. God's foreknowledge of events does not reduce humans to a determined pre-written script. All of us are responsible for our thoughts and deeds.

4. Mankind, though created in God's image and free from sin, chose to rebel against God. Although tempted by a supernatural agent, Adam and Eve were responsible for their willful self-centeredness. Their rebellion has affected humanity and creation. We are all in need of God's mercy and grace both for our corporate condition in Adam and our individual volitional rebellion.

5. God has provided a means of forgiveness and restoration for fallen humanity. Jesus Christ, God's unique son, became a man, lived a sinless life, and by means of his substitutionary death, paid the penalty for mankind's sin. He is the only way to restoration and fellowship with God. There is no other means of salvation except through faith in His finished work.

6. Each of us must personally receive God's offer of forgiveness and restoration in Jesus. This is accomplished by means of volitional trust in God's promises through Jesus and a willful turning from known sin.

7. All of us are fully forgiven and restored based upon our trust in Christ and repentance from sin. However, the evidence for this new relationship is seen in a changed, and changing, life. The goal of God for humanity is not only heaven someday, but Christlikeness now. Those who are truly redeemed, though occasionally sinning, will continue in faith and repentance throughout their lives.

8. The Holy Spirit is “the other Jesus.” He is present in the world to lead the lost to Christ and develop Christlikeness in the saved. The gifts of the Spirit are given at salvation. They are the life and ministry of Jesus divided among His body, the Church. The gifts which are basically the attitudes and motives of Jesus need to be motivated by the fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit is active in our day as He was in the biblical times.

9. The Father has made the resurrected Jesus Christ the Judge of all things. He will return to earth to judge all mankind. Those who have trusted Jesus and whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will receive their eternal glorified bodies at His return. They will be with Him forever. However, those who have refused to respond to God's truth will be separated eternally from the joys of fellowship with the Triune God. They will be condemned along with the Devil and his angels.

This is surely not complete or thorough but I hope it will give you the theological flavor of my heart. I like the statement:

“In essentials—unity, In peripherals—freedom, In all things—love.”