

**NT Survey – 1 Corinthians**  
**Valley Bible Church Adult Sunday School**  
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**Title and Author**

This book’s name is derived from its original recipients: the members of the church at Corinth. The authorship of the apostle Paul is undisputed (1 Cor 1:1-3).

<sup>1</sup>**Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God**, and Sosthenes our brother, <sup>2</sup>**To 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:

<sup>3</sup>Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Cor 1:1-3

**Date of Writing**

Paul most likely wrote 1 Corinthians during his extended ministry in Ephesus during his third missionary journey sometime around the first half of AD 55 (Acts 20:31; 1 Cor 16:8-9).

<sup>8</sup>But I will remain in Ephesus until Pentecost; <sup>9</sup>for a wide door for effective *service* has opened to me, and there are many adversaries. 1 Cor 16:8-9

AD 53-57	Third Missionary Journey (Acts 18:23-21:26)
53	Paul’s journey through Galatia and Phrygia (Acts 18:23-28)
53	Paul’s extended ministry at Ephesus [Churches at Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis “all who lived in Asia”, founded though not by Paul; 19:10] (Acts 19:1-41)
55/56	<i>1 Corinthians written from Ephesus</i>
	Paul’s journey through Macedonia (Acts 20:1-2)
56	<i>2 Corinthians written from Macedonia</i>
	Paul’s three months in Greece (Acts 20:1-2)
56/57	<i>Romans was written from Corinth</i>
57	Paul’s return to Jerusalem through Macedonia and then by sea (Acts 20:3-26)

**Introduction**

Paul first arrived in Corinth from Athens during his second missionary journey (Acts 18). He found Aquila and Priscilla, Jews having recently come from Italy because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. They were tent-makers, the same as Paul, so he stayed with them and worked, reasoning in the synagogue on the Sabbath. When Silas and Timothy met up with Paul, having come to Corinth from Berea, Paul began devoting himself completely to the word. Paul settled in Corinth 18 months teaching the word of God among them.

AD 50-52	Second Missionary Journey (Acts 15:36-18:22)
50	Dispute between Barnabas and Paul over Mark; Paul chooses Silas (Acts 15:36-40); apparently takes <i>Titus</i> along
50	<i>Timothy</i> joins Paul and Silas at Lystra (Acts 16:1-3)
50	Paul’s Macedonian call at Troas (Acts 16:6-10)
50	Paul’s ministry at Philippi (Acts 16:11-40), Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9), Berea (Acts 17:10-15), Athens (Acts 17:16-34), and Corinth (Acts 18:1-17)
~51	<i>1 Thessalonians written from Corinth</i>
~52	<i>2 Thessalonians written from Corinth</i>
53	Paul’s journey to Antioch; stop at Ephesus (Acts 18:18-22)

The extent of immorality in the city is evident in the fact that the term "to corinthianize" came to define the acts of fornication, drunkenness, debauchery, and all other forms of sexual sin.

The Christians at Corinth were unable to break completely from their culture. They were carnal, immature and factious, struggling with sin and the corruption that surrounded. They felt pressure to give in, to compromise; to adapt to their environment. They were being undermined by acts of immorality and immaturity. Their faith was being tried in the crucible of everyday living in an immoral world, and they were failing the test.

The timeline of events is pieced together from the epistles and Acts:

1. ~AD 50 – Paul founds the church at Corinth during his Second Missionary Journey (Acts 18)
2. Paul writes his “lost letter” (1 Cor 5:9).
3. ~AD 53-56 – Paul is at Ephesus during his Third Missionary Journey (Acts 19).
4. The Corinthians write Paul (1 Cor 7:1; 16:17).
5. ~AD 55 – Paul writes 1 Corinthians from Ephesus
6. Paul’s painful visit to Corinth while at Ephesus (2 Cor 2:1).
7. Paul writes his “severe letter”.
8. ~AD 56 – Paul writes 2 Corinthians from Macedonia.
9. ~AD 56 – Paul visits Corinth (Acts 20:1-2).

## **Outline**

- I. Introduction (1:1-9)
- II. Divisions in the Church (1:10-4:21)
- III. Immorality in the Church (5:1-6:20)
- IV. Marriage in the Church (7:1-40)
- V. Liberty in the Church (8:1-11:1)
- VI. Worship in the Church (11:2-34)
- VII. Spiritual Gifts (12:1-14:40)
- VIII. The Hope of the Church (15:1-58)
- IX. A Charge to the Church (16:1-24)

## **Summary**

### **Introduction (1:1-9)**

1:1-9 – Like Romans, this letter begins in typical Pauline fashion. He identifies himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ. He makes it very clear that he is an apostle not by his own will, but by the will of God.

It is reasonable to assume that Sosthenes was the same man mentioned in Acts 18. He was the former leader of the synagogue at Corinth and at some point became a believer. He would have been well known to the church at Corinth. At this time he was at Ephesus with Paul.

1:2-3 – Paul makes it clear that the Corinthians were believers. They were:

1. the church of God
2. sanctified in Christ Jesus
3. saints by calling
4. united in one spiritual body with all believers everywhere under one Lord

1:4-9 – Paul thanks God concerning the Corinthians. It may be a subtlety, but he is not thankful for the Corinthian’s demonstration of faith. He is thankful for God’s work at Corinth:

1. for the grace of God which was given them in Christ Jesus
2. that in everything they were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge
3. that the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in them
4. that they were not lacking in any gift
5. that they were awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ
6. that true believers will be confirmed to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ
7. that God is faithful

❖ **Are we thankful for God’s work in us and others? Do we express our thanks?**

It is because they are saved, well taught, gifted, and kept by God that Paul can strongly admonish and plead with them. And so he does!

## Divisions in the Church (1:10-4:21)

The first major problem that Paul addressed was the divisions that were fragmenting the church.

1:10-17 – The Fact of Divisions – Paul begins with exhorting (to come along side to help someone) the fellow Corinthian believers who belong to the same Lord Jesus Christ to agree and that there be no divisions among them and that they be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment. Believers are not to be carbon copies of each other – there is strength in diversity. But their mind and judgment are to be based on God’s word (in the Corinthian’s case, apostolic teaching).

❖ **Do I ensure that my disagreements are based on God’s word and not opinion?**

❖ **Then, are my opinions base on Scriptural principles?**

❖ **Are the expression of my opinions tempered by grace and love?**

1:18-3:4 – Cause of Divisions – Wrong Concept of the Gospel – At Corinth, the believers had separated into cliques according to human wisdom. Paul makes it clear that the gospel is not about human wisdom for “the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” Salvation is all God’s doing to us who did not deserve it “so that no man may boast before God.” Salvation is about the Spirit’s powerful demonstration to regenerate sinners so that our “faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.” This is how the gospel comes to us. Not in persuasive speech, but in the demonstration of God changing hearts so that “our faith should not rest on the wisdom of me, but on the power of God.”

❖ **Do I believe that the gospel is God’s doing (not in persuasive speech)? Do I live like that?**

No one can come to understand God’s wisdom apart from the enlightening work of the Holy Spirit. If the Corinthians were Spirit-filled, they would have been understanding God’s wisdom and would not have been experiencing divisions among them. The “natural man” does not accept the things of the Spirit because he does not have the Holy Spirit. The fact that divisions were present among them showed that they were fleshly and immature. The Corinthians were behaving like unbelievers.

❖ **Do I ensure that I am Spirit-filled when interacting with people so that Christ’s character will be flowing through me?**

3:5-4:13 – Cause of Divisions – Wrong Concept Ministry and Ministers – Divisions along minister lines is inappropriate because they are just servants through whom people believed, but this was brought about by the Lord. It is God who causes the growth.

❖ **How do I view the elders at VBC or the ministers elsewhere?**

Each laborer must be careful how he builds into people for each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. In the end each 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. If any man’s work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

❖ **Am I careful how I build?**

Laborers should be viewed (and view themselves) as servants of Christ and stewards of the gospel. They must be found trustworthy.

❖ **Am I trustworthy?**

Paul finishes this section showing that the apostles were different than others. Paul was among a group that was enduring persecution and trials beyond the average Christian and even more so the carnal Corinthians. Therefore, they should listen to him.

4:14-21 – Appeal to End Divisions – Paul’s love for the Corinthians is as “beloved children.” His love moves him to admonish them and to not accept their sin. The Corinthians were to be imitators of Paul. He was Spirit-filled and the life of Christ was flowing through him.

❖ **Do I love others enough to say the necessary hard things in love?**

Immorality in the Church (5:1-6:20)

5:1 – Paul is amazed that someone who is living in immorality (fornication with his father’s wife) is permitted to remain in the church. This sin is so gross that it does not even exist among the Gentiles.

❖ **Is there sin that I accept in my own life?**

5:2 – But this is only half the story. The church of God at Corinth had become arrogant (they placed themselves as God deciding what is/is not sin) and not mourned that sin was in their midst.

❖ **Is there sin that I accept in the life of the body?**

5:3-8 – Because this sin is so gross and had been accepted by the Corinthian church, Paul moves directly to the final step of church discipline in his dealing with the man. Sin must be dealt with and removed from the body of Christ or it will spread and destroy its witness and effectiveness.

5:9-13 – Paul makes it clear that it is appropriate and commanded to judge the sin of other believers. The unsaved God will judge. The section also makes it clear that believers are not to live separate from the unbelieving world. We live in the world, but are not of the world.

❖ **Am I caring for by brothers/sisters the way Scripture commands (living out the one-anothers)?**

❖ **Have I separated myself from the world?**

6:1-8 – Continued evidence of the Corinthian’s worldliness is bringing lawsuits against other believers. Qualified church leadership is capable of deciding issues between believers. It should not be done in unbelieving courts. It is better to be wronged and defrauded than to take believers to court.

❖ **This one is tough!**

6:9-11 – Paul contrasts what the believers were like before their conversion with a change that should have taken place at conversion and progressively through growth. The implication here is that they were living like or accepting among them the sins that characterized them before conversion.

<sup>9</sup>Or 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, <sup>10</sup>nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup>Such 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. 1 Cor 6:9-11

❖ **Do I live like an unbeliever (ungodliness = living as if God is totally irrelevant; living one’s everyday life with little or no thought of: God; God’s will; God’s glory; dependence on God; or desire to know God.)?**

6:12-20 – Paul gives the reason that sexual sin is wrong and points out the sanctity of the believer's body as the temple of the Holy Spirit. He wanted to help his readers realize the seriousness of the sins that marked them as a church.

Paul begins by explaining that freedom in Christ does not mean freedom to be mastered by sin. “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.”

<sup>133</sup>Establish my footsteps in Your word, And **do not let any iniquity have dominion over me.**  
Psa 119:133

<sup>1</sup>Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, “I have gotten a manchild with *the help of the LORD.*” <sup>2</sup>Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. <sup>3</sup>So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. <sup>4</sup>Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; <sup>5</sup>but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. <sup>6</sup>Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? <sup>7</sup>If you do well, will not *your countenance* be lifted up? **And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.**” Gen 4:1-7

<sup>16</sup>Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone *as* slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? Rom 6:16

Paul makes it clear, “the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body.”

<sup>18</sup>Flee immorality. Every *other* sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. <sup>19</sup>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? <sup>20</sup>For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. 1 Cor 6:18-20

❖ **Am I dealing immediately and decisively with the lust of the flesh and lust of the eyes?**

Marriage in the Church (7:1-40)

It appears that much of the rest of the letter addresses questions that the Corinthians asked Paul in their letter to him – perhaps delivered by Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (16:17). Paul apparently introduced each of these answers with the phrase “now concerning” (7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12).

<sup>1</sup>**Now concerning** the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. 1 Cor 7:1

<sup>25</sup>**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. 1 Cor 7:25

<sup>1</sup>**Now concerning** things sacrificed to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies. 1 Cor 8:1

<sup>1</sup>**Now concerning** spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware. 1 Cor 12:1

<sup>1</sup>**Now concerning** the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. 1 Cor 16:1

<sup>12</sup>**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. 1 Cor 16:12

7:1-7 – General Principles – Paul gives some general principles concerning marriage and sex as an answer to the Corinthian’s letter to him.

1. Celibacy is good.
2. Marriage is for purity. The purposes of marriage includes: procreation (Gen 1:28), pleasure (Prov 5:18-19), partnership (Gen 2:18), a picture of the church (Eph 5:23-32), and purity. It protects from sexual immorality by meeting the need for physical fulfillment. Paul is pointing out the reality of the sexual temptations of singleness and to acknowledge that they have a legitimate outlet in marriage.
3. The husband and wife are responsible to meet the physical needs of each other.
4. Celibacy in marriage is wrong and should only be entered in to by agreement for a time for the purpose of prayer.
5. Celibacy in marriage can lead to sexual temptation.

6. Singleness and marriage are both gifts from God.

❖ **Do I meet the needs of my spouse?**

7:8-24 – Instructions to the Married – Paul starts this section by saying singleness is good, but it is only for those who have the gift of singleness.

To married believers (to whom Paul gave “instructions”) – they should not leave their mate. If they do, they are to remain unmarried or be reconciled to their mate.

To the believer who is married to an unbeliever, if the unbeliever consents to stay married to the believer, the believer is to not divorce. The believer is a primary vessel through which God can bring the gospel to the unbeliever and their children. If the unbeliever leaves, the believer is permitted to let them leave, but that is not the ideal for the believer should love Christ and desire to share the gospel with their unbelieving mate.

Each married person is to remain in the condition in which he was called. Christians should willingly accept the situation into which God has placed them and be content to serve Him there. We should not be preoccupied with changing our outward circumstances.

❖ **Am I striving to be a doer of the word in all my relationships?**

7:25-35 – Instructions to the Unmarried – Paul now starts another “now concerning section”. He has personally received no command from the Lord, but gives his “opinion” under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This is not optional instruction, it is inspired Scripture.

It is good to not be married because:

1. persecution (present distress) (v26)
2. expected trouble in life (v28)
3. inability to devote oneself to ministry when married (v29)
4. divided interests/concerns when married (v32-35)
5. to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord (v35)

7:36-38 – To Marry (off?) – Paul has established that both singleness and marriage are a gift from God and that both have advantages (even though Paul seems to stress singleness). Now Paul describes the quandary – get married or not.

This section contains an interpretative problem related to the meaning of "virgin" as is clear from the different interpretations in the NASB and ESV/NIV. These verses may introduce a special case (advice to fathers of virgins) or connect with verse 35 where perhaps the man in view is considering the possibility of marriage to a virgin.

NASB	ESV
<sup>36</sup> But if any man thinks that he is acting unbecomingly toward his virgin <i>daughter</i> , 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. <sup>37</sup> But 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 <i>daughter</i> , he will do well. <sup>38</sup> So then both he who gives his own virgin <i>daughter</i> in marriage does well, and he who does not give her in marriage will do better.	<sup>36</sup> If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed, if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: let them marry—it is no sin. <sup>37</sup> But whoever is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity but having his desire under control, and has determined this in his heart, to keep her as his betrothed, he will do well. <sup>38</sup> So then he who marries his betrothed does well, and he who refrains from marriage will do even better.

7:39-40 – Marriage is Semi-Permanent – Paul reiterates that marriage is permanent in this life. Death of a spouse frees the other to remarry or remain single.

## Liberty in the Church (8:1-11:1)

8:1-13 – Principles of Liberty – The Corinthians asked Paul another question. This time concerning the area of Christian liberty/conduct in the area of freedom – when God does not specify exactly what we should do in every situation. In these times, some Christians will do one thing and others another, both within God's moral will. The specific issue is eating meat sacrificed to idols. This section is similar to what Paul wrote in Romans 14:1-15:13.

1. Care must be taken because knowledge of Scriptural principles can lead to arrogance and exercising freedoms at the expense of others. Love does not do that. (v1)
2. There is no such thing as an idol. **We must have a proper, biblical view of reality.** (v4-6)
3. Without a biblical worldview, believers can view areas of freedom as sin (conscience being weak is defiled). (v7)
4. Believers are free to chose in areas of freedom. (v8)
5. Care must be taken so liberty does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. (v9)
6. Believers must self-limit themselves so to not cause a brother to stumble. (v10-13)

### ❖ **Have I thought through my convictions? Do I have a plan?**

9:1-27 – Paul's Example – Paul had the right to be supported financially as he served the Lord full-time. The Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel. But Paul used none of the support from those he directly preached the gospel to. His support came from his own hands or from those that sent him on his way. Paul's principle was:

<sup>19</sup>For though I am free from all *men*, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. ... <sup>22b</sup>I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. <sup>23</sup>I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.

### ❖ **Do I give up things for the sake of the gospel?**

Paul's life was all about serving the Lord; honoring Him; denying self to glorify God.

<sup>27</sup>but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

### ❖ **Am I pressing, serving the Lord?**

10:1-22 – Don't be Overconfident – Paul taught the principle that, although Christians are free to do whatever Scripture does not forbid as being morally wrong, if we love as God calls us to love, we will limit our liberty for the sake of weaker believers. With freedom comes principles. We must take care to not become overconfident and walk the line too closely. A Christian's manners are determined by his attitude toward himself – do not be self-indulgent; toward the world – do not take part in evil practices; and toward others – always act in of love, seeking your brother's welfare.

<sup>12</sup>Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall. <sup>13</sup>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.

Overriding principles:

<sup>23</sup>All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify. <sup>24</sup>Let no one seek his own *good*, but that of his neighbor.

<sup>31</sup>Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. <sup>32</sup>Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; <sup>33</sup>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.

<sup>11:1</sup>Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.

### ❖ **How close do I walk the line?**

## Worship in the Church (11:2-34)

11:2-16 – Roles of Men and Women in the Church – Paul begins this section commending the Corinthians for holding firmly to the traditions which Paul had delivered. The Corinthians were orthodox in their doctrine, but were not living out the result of that truth. The issue next is submissiveness within the body.

Paul's taught that males and females had equal standing before God through Jesus (Gal 3:28).

<sup>28</sup>There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Gal 3:28

He also taught female subordination in the husband/wife relationship (1 Pet 3:1-7; Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19) and the church (1 Tim 3:1; Titus 1:6; 1 Tim 2:11-14). The problem Paul is most likely addressing is that some women had rebelled and were no longer displaying submissive behavior in the Corinthian's culturally representative way. The principle is submissiveness; the demonstration is culturally dependant.

<sup>1</sup>In the same way, you wives, **be submissive** to your own husbands so that even if any *of them* are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, <sup>2</sup>**as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.** <sup>3</sup>Your **adornment must not be merely external**—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; <sup>4</sup>**but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.** <sup>5</sup>For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; 1 Pet 3:1-5

<sup>16</sup>But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God. 1 Cor 11:16

### ❖ **How is submission displayed in our culture?**

11:17-33 – The Lord's Supper – The Lord's Supper is a remembrance of the Lord's death (Matt 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-23) and should be observed until He returns. The issue Paul is addressing here is that the remembrance should only be partaken of in a worthy manner.

1. With unity in the body (v18-19)
2. With a humble, servant heart (v20-22)
3. In a worthy manner, filled with the Spirit (v27)
4. Having first examined oneself (v28)

Participating in the celebration unworthily will result in the Lord's discipline and potentially sickness and death.

### ❖ **Am I remembering the Lord's death properly?**

## Spiritual Gifts (12:1-14:40)

12:1-3 – The Test of the Gifts – Spiritual gifts can be counterfeited. Apparently, some Corinthians had allowed their worship services to become so carnal and paganized that they would actually blurt out "Jesus is accursed." Paul says that this is not from the Holy Spirit and therefore is not a true manifestation of a spiritual gift.

### ❖ **Do I evaluate the words I speak as an indication of being filled with the Spirit?**

## Spiritual Gifts

The Holy Spirit bestows spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:11) which are not natural talents, but special Spirit-given abilities for service. Every believer has a gift or gifts (1 Pet 4:10). Some gifts were for the founding of the church (Eph 2:20) and the authentication of the Apostle's message (Heb 2:3-4). A partial listing of gifts is found in Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:8-10, 28-30; and Eph 4:11.



The Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts supernaturally and sovereignly (1 Cor 12:11; Heb 2:3-4) distributes spiritual gifts to each believer (Rom 8:9) individually just as He wills. Each believer is given at least one permanent (Rom 11:29) spiritual gift (1 Cor 12:7) which is to be employed to serve other believers as a good steward of God's grace (1 Pet 4:10). Spiritual gifts are given for the advantage of all (1 Cor 12:7), the edification of the church (1 Cor 14:26), the equipping of the saints (Eph 4:7, 12), and the glory of God (1 Pet 4:10-11).

The way to discover our spiritual gift(s) is to be Spirit filled (Eph 5:18+) since it is the Spirit who energizes the use of spiritual gifts and to obey and serve (1 Pet 4:10). We must actively serve in the church and through that service we will discover what our spiritual gift is.

12:4-11 – Source, Purpose, and Varieties of Gifts – There are varieties of spiritual gifts given by the same Spirit and there are varieties of ministry and the same Lord and there are varieties of effects but the same God who works all things in all persons. All Christian giftedness and service is empowered by the Triune God.

Spiritual gifts are given sovereignly by the Spirit for the common good (1 Cor 12:7, 1; 1 Pet 4:10).

<sup>10</sup>As each one has received a *special* gift, **employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.** <sup>11</sup>Whoever speaks, *is to do so* as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves *is to do so* as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; **so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ**, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. 1 Pet 4:10-11

#### ❖ **Am I serving?**

12:12-27 – Unity in Diversity – “Church” translates the Greek *ekklesia* meaning “a called out group”. This called out group is not people who simply profess to know Jesus nor those who identify themselves with a particular Christian group (Matt 7:21-23). The church is the total group of individuals who place their faith in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. When born again, these individuals are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual Body (1 Cor 12:12-13). The head of the church is Jesus (Col 1:18). The universal church is a united spiritual organism consisting of all members of the body of Christ (Matt 16:18; 1 Cor 12:12-13; Col. 1:18; Eph 2:11, 3:6; 3:10). The formation of the church began at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-21, 38-47) and will come to an end with the Rapture (1 Cor 15:51-52; 1 Thess 4:13-18). The church is distinct from Israel (1 Cor 10:32; Eph 3:1-6; 5:32).

The body figure illustrates the diverse-unity and interdependence that is present in the church. The body is made up of unique individuals who are united by the indwelling Holy Spirit. The many are one body in Christ and individually members of one another (cf. Rom 12:4-5).

<sup>25</sup>so that there may be no division in the body, but *that* the members may have the same care for one another. <sup>26</sup>And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if *one* member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. 1 Cor 12:25-26

#### ❖ **Do I view all my brothers/sisters as a special relationship given by God?**

12:28-31 – Back to Spiritual Gifts – Everyone is not gifted with the same spiritual gifts nor the same seemingly showier gifts. Verse 31 is better translated “But you earnestly desire the greater gifts.” The Spirit through Paul says, “I show you a still more excellent way.”

#### ❖ **Am I content with the gift(s) God has I given me?**

13:1-13 – Love – Paul now explains the “more excellent way”. Love surpasses the most important spiritual gifts. Paul described the basics of spiritual gifts in the body in chapter 12. In chapter 14, he will speak to the regulation of spiritual gifts in the body. Chapter 13 describes the proper heart motivation for the exercise of spiritual gifts.

MacArthur (NT Commentary: 1 Cor) says, “...the simplest and most profound description of Christian character ... is love.”

Love is the sacrificial commitment of my will to another's needs and best interests regardless of the cost to myself. Love seeks another's highest good, even if it costs a great deal; even if there is no response of love or gratitude. Love is not an impulse from the feelings. It does not always run with the natural inclinations nor does it spend itself only upon those whom we like or deem worthy to receive love. It is an act of the will, so we can choose to love even if we do not feel like doing it.

<sup>16</sup>“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. John 3:16

Love is significant in the life of the body in that it demonstrates tangibly that we belong to Jesus and is foundational in relationships.

<sup>34</sup>“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. <sup>35</sup>“By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:34-35

<sup>8</sup>Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. 1 Pet 4:8

13:1-3 – The Prominence of Love – We can be and do many things and be endowed with magnificent spiritual gifts, but without love we are nothing.

- Gift of tongues or eloquence without love = nothing
- Gift of prophecy without love = nothing
- Know all mysteries and all knowledge without love = nothing
- Have all faith without love = nothing
- Benevolence without love = nothing
- Martyrdom without love = nothing

#### ❖ Does love empower my service?

13:4-7b – The Description of Love – The Spirit through Paul gives the most amazing and comprehensive description of agape love. In the Greek, all of these descriptions are verbs describing what love does. We should not “feel” these descriptors, we should DO them.

- patient
- kind
- not jealous
- does not brag
- is not arrogant
- does not act unbecomingly
- does not seek its own
- is not provoked
- does not take into account a wrong *suffered*,
- does not rejoice in unrighteousness
- rejoices with the truth
- bears all things
- believes all things
- hopes all things
- endures all things
- never fails

#### Exercise

<sup>4</sup>[*My name*] is patient, [*My name*] is kind *and* is not jealous; [*My name*] does not brag *and* is not arrogant, <sup>5</sup>does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong *suffered*, <sup>6</sup>does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; <sup>7</sup>bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. <sup>8</sup>[*My name*] never fails;

#### ❖ How do I stack up?

13:7-13 – The Permanence of Love – Paul explains that the showy sign gifts will cease, but love is permanent. Love is greater.

#### Cessation of Sign gifts

1 Cor 13:8-13 specifically teaches that prophecy, tongues, and knowledge will cease to exist. However, when the ceasing will occur is debated. There are two basic views:

1. the second coming of Christ
2. the end of the apostolic age and completion of the NT

Both interpretations regarding the timing of the cessation of sign gifts rest on the understanding of the word “perfect” in 1 Cor 13:10. Does “perfect” mean a completing of what was incomplete, or a perfecting of what was imperfect? The word for “perfect” (TELEIOS) in 1 Cor 13:10 has a well-established meaning of “complete.” In addition, Paul never uses TELEIOS to mean absolute perfection, which occurs at the return of Christ. The completion of the God’s revelation fits Paul’s usage of TELEIOS.

Understanding TELEIOS in 1 Cor 13:10 as “complete” makes more sense than “perfect” because of the contrast with “partial.” The completed Scripture is the reason why the partial, or incomplete, prophecy and knowledge are done away, for they are no longer necessary. We know in part before the completion of the NT (1 Cor 13:9) and with the completion of the canon the partial revelation of prophecy will be done away (1 Cor 13:10).

Also, 1 Cor 13:11 describes a development from childhood to maturity, which is not instantaneous but gradual. This does not fit the return of Christ. It rather fits the gradual reduction of prophecy as the NT was being written and the apostles and prophets passed on.

The better explanation is to view 1 Cor 13:12 as teaching that with the completion of the biblical revelation, we will know ourselves fully, as we are fully known. The metaphor of the mirror (ESOPRON) is used only in one other place in the NT, in James 1:23, where it refers to God’s revelation in the Bible. Moreover, we look at ourselves in a mirror, not at God. In addition, when the phrase “face to face” is used about God and man in the Bible, it normally means God’s revelation to man, not God’s fellowship with man. God’s complete revelation enables us to see ourselves as in a mirror face to face, completely, rather than as in a mirror dimly, partially. With God’s complete revelation, we are able to understand God’s view of us in a way not possible before.

Finally, this view explains the contrast of 1 Cor 13:13. In contrast to the three gifts which will not endure throughout the church age (prophecy, tongues and knowledge) are the three virtues which will endure throughout the age (faith, hope and love). This temporal understanding of the virtues is further affirmed when we learn that love is the greatest, in that it alone is permanent while faith and hope will be fulfilled when we see Christ face to face (cf. 2 Cor 5:6-8; Rom 8:24-25).

If prophecy and knowledge will be done away with when the canon of Scripture is completed, then it follows that the ceasing of tongues will occur also at that time since they are grouped together in verse eight. The significance of the terms “cease” for tongues and “done away” for knowledge and prophecy is in regard to the process of how the cessation will occur, not with regard to timing of when the cessation will occur. This minor distinction is due to the nature of tongues as validating sign of the messenger and message of God’s direct revelation. After God ends the revelation of knowledge and prophecy, the evidence affirming the revelation is no longer necessary and thus ceases to exist all by itself. The ceasing of tongues as taught in 1 Cor 13:8 is the natural result of the end of God’s special revelation in the age of the apostles.

14:1-40 – Properly and Orderly – Paul now confronts the misuse of tongues which resulted in chaos in the church (14:40). All things must be done to edify others. Prophecy is greater than tongues because one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church. Tongues are unintelligible. Therefore, unless there is an interpreter, it is not edifying.

❖ **Is edifying the brethren preeminent on my mind?**

Tongues are a sign to unbelievers where prophecy is a sign to believers. Unbelievers think that people who speak in tongues, without interpretation, are crazy. But if an unbeliever hears the words of God “he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you.”

If there are sign gifts of tongues or prophecy in the assembly, they must be exercised in a prescribed way “for God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.”

Women are not to engage in speaking ministry in the total assembly of the church where men are present (cf 1 Tim 2:9-15)

<sup>9</sup>Likewise, *I want* women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, <sup>10</sup>but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness. <sup>11</sup>A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. <sup>12</sup>But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. <sup>13</sup>For it was Adam who was first created, *and* then Eve. <sup>14</sup>And *it was* not Adam *who* was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. <sup>15</sup>But *women* will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint. 1 Tim 2:9-15

In summary... <sup>37</sup>If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord’s commandment. <sup>38</sup>But if anyone does not recognize *this*, he is not recognized. <sup>39</sup>Therefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues. <sup>40</sup>**But all things must be done properly and in an orderly manner.**

The Hope of the Church (15:1-58)

Paul now devotes a section of his letter to the doctrine of the resurrection. This section does not respond to a question from the Corinthians (“now concerning”), but to questionings or unacceptance of the doctrine that some at Corinth apparently had.

The resurrection is central to the gospel message.

15:1-11 – Evidences for the Resurrection of Jesus – Paul began by reaffirming all believers’ common bond through the gospel. Paul did not make up the gospel, he received it from the Lord Himself, the church, and Scripture.

The gospel nutshell: “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and He was buried, and He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared...”. The message was “preached” to each of us and we “believed.”

Paul remembered his former hostility to God, but understood that he had become what he had become by God’s grace.

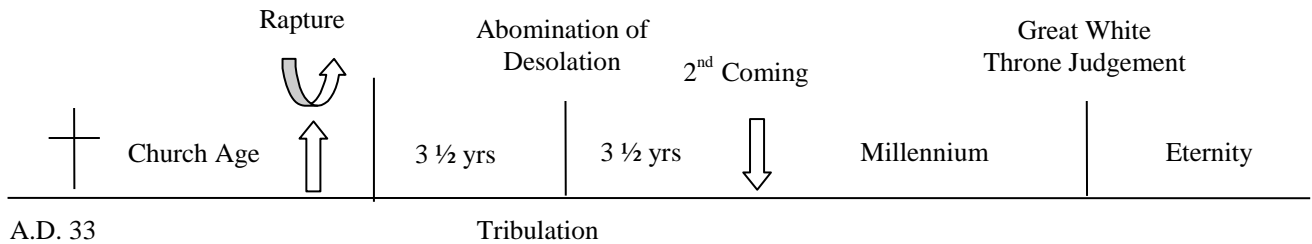
<sup>10</sup>But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me. 1 Cor 15:10

15:12-19 – Certainty of the Resurrection from the Dead – Paul makes a carefully worded argument that shows that the resurrection of Christ is central to salvation which proves the future resurrection.

<sup>16</sup>For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; <sup>17</sup>and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. <sup>18</sup>Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. <sup>19</sup>If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. 1 Cor 15:16-19

15:20-28 – The Resurrection Plan – The return of Jesus is a prominent doctrine in Scripture.

Evangelicals all hold that Christ will return, though they differ, sometimes significantly, on the details. The diagram below presents the premillennial second coming and pretribulational rapture position held by VBC.



In this section, Paul describes the future resurrections and the eternal state.

There are two general categories of resurrections: the “first” resurrection (resurrection of the just or resurrection of life) and the “second” resurrection (resurrection of the unjust or resurrection of condemnation). The first resurrection includes the dead in Christ who are raised at the rapture (1 Thess 4:16), the tribulation martyrs (Rev 20:4-5), and the OT saints (Dan 12:2) at either the rapture or the second coming. The second resurrection will include the unsaved dead of all time and will occur at the Great White Throne judgment (Rev 20:11-15).

After the rapture, tribulation, second coming, millennium, and Great White Throne judgment the eternal state will be ushered in (Rev 21). The current universe will be destroyed with intense heat (2 Pet 3:10) and replaced with a new earth (Rev 21:1). The new Jerusalem (Rev 21:2) will come down out of heaven and be the dwelling place of the saints (Rev 21-22). The focus of the eternal state is the fellowship of the redeemed with their Creator (Rev 21:3-4; 22-27; Rev 22: 1-5).

15:29-34 – Personal Results – If the dead are not raised then there is no motive for suffering and God honoring living. We must be sober-minded and stop sinning.

<sup>30</sup>Why are we also in danger every hour? <sup>31</sup>I affirm, brethren, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily <sup>32</sup>If 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. <sup>33</sup>Do not be deceived: “Bad company corrupts good morals.” <sup>34</sup>Become sober-minded as you ought, and stop sinning; for some have no knowledge of God. I speak *this* to your shame.

However, to make his argument, Paul makes one of the most difficult statements to understand in all of Scripture.

<sup>29</sup>Otherwise, 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?

**20. Should we baptize people on behalf of those who have died (1 Corinthians 15:29)?  
(From VBC Website)**

This is an obscure and challenging verse that has been assigned up to 200 interpretations! One thing is clear — there is no salvation by proxy. The Scripture clearly teaches that after death comes judgment (Hebrews 9:27) and there is no way out of hell (Luke 16:19-31). Each person is called to belief while living and if they reject Christ no action on the part of any human can save them.

With this in mind some of the views of this verse are:

- a. The false Mormon view that living people should be baptized to ensure salvation for those who have died.
- b. “Baptism for the dead” means baptizing new converts to replace those believers who have died. Thus the church is replenished after it has been depleted upon the death of a believer. Paul would then be saying in this verse, “why do you continue to replenish the church with baptized converts if you don’t believe there will be a resurrection.”
- c. “Baptism for the dead” refers to the symbolism of our death with Christ in baptism (cf. Romans 6:3-5). We are then baptized with a view toward our death in Christ. Paul would then be saying, “Why are you baptized with a view toward your death and resurrection with Christ, if you do not believe in the resurrection?”
- d. “Baptism for the dead” means “for the sake of those who have died.” When a believer had died and in his final days had communicated the gospel to unbelievers who repented and became Christians, those new converts would be baptized for the sake of the one who had passed away. Paul would then be saying, “Why are you baptized for the sake of those who have died, if you do not believe in the resurrection?”
- e. “Baptism for the dead” refers to living believers who superstitiously were baptized in place of those who had died with the false hope of ensuring their resurrection. Paul would then be saying, “Why are you wrongly baptized in place of those who have died, if you do not believe in the resurrection?”
- f. Perhaps the best view is that “baptism for the dead” refers to the practice of pagan religions of the day, who were being baptized in place of those who had died. There is evidence that some pagan religions of the day were practicing rituals which would accrue to the account of those who had died. That Paul does not rebuke the practice but only refers to it and that Paul uses the pronoun “they” rather than “we” or “you,” indicates that this false practice was not active among the Corinthians. Thus Paul would be saying, “Why are the pagans baptizing in place of those who have died, if they do not believe in the resurrection?” In other words, even their obviously wrong practice is evidence from general revelation that there is a resurrection.

15:35-49 – Resurrection Bodies – What kind of body are we given in the resurrection? <sup>42</sup>So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable *body*, it is raised an imperishable *body*; <sup>43</sup>it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; <sup>44</sup>it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

15:50-57 – The Rapture – Paul now tells the Corinthians of the exceptional case of resurrection at the rapture of the Church.

<sup>51</sup>Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, <sup>52</sup>in 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. 1 Cor 15:51-52

This is not a new teaching for Paul since he wrote the same thing to the Thessalonians from Corinth during his second missionary journey (~AD 51).

<sup>13</sup>But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. <sup>14</sup>For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. <sup>15</sup>For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. <sup>16</sup>For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup>Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. 1 Thess 4:13-17

15:50-57 – Therefore... – Because of the resurrection, because of our hope, because Christ is coming to get us... <sup>58</sup>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.**

❖ **Am I steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord?**

#### A Charge to the Church (16:1-24)

16:1-4 – Collection/Giving – This is the offering that Paul was collecting to take to the poverty stricken in Jerusalem (Acts 20; Rom 15:26; 2 Cor 8:1-5).

Paul provides principles for giving:

- Giving should be regular (“on the first day of **every** week”)
- Giving should be systematically saved for (“put aside and save”)
- Giving should be in proportion to the Lord’s prosperity (“as he may prosper”)

❖ **Do I have a biblical view of money and am I living out God’s priorities in my finances?**

16:5-24 – Paul’s Plans – Paul lays out his coming plans and acknowledges fellow workers. In the midst of this he gives a charge:

<sup>13</sup>Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. <sup>14</sup>Let all that you do be done in love. ... <sup>20</sup>All the brethren greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. <sup>21</sup>The greeting is in my own hand—Paul. <sup>22</sup>If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed. Maranatha. <sup>23</sup>The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. <sup>24</sup>My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

“Maranatha, is an Aramaic term meaning “Our Lord, come.” Contextually, it appears to refer to asking the Lord to come quickly to execute judgment on the “accursed.”

❖ **Am I standing firm, mature, and strong?**

#### Homework

Read 2 Corinthians.