

We have just finished up a lengthy section about the use of our freedoms – and in particular – how we are to think of others when exercising our freedoms. Paul wrote about their freedom to eat meat even if it had been sacrificed to an idol and then sold in the market. Remember, he said don't exercise that freedom if it would cause someone else to stumble.

Paul then wrote about his freedom to receive compensation from the Corinthians, but for the better of their community he did not exercise that freedom.

In chapter ten he started a new section. In this chapter he wrote about temptations towards idolatry and sexual immorality. He continues that section but transitions into the Lords Supper where we pick up in chapter ten, verse fourteen.

1 Corinthians 10:14 – Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry. ¹⁵ I speak to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. ¹⁶ Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?

These questions are of course rhetorical, with the answer being yes! The NIV which I read from has cup of thanksgiving in verse 16. Yours may have cup of blessing, which is correct. The cup of blessing was a technical term for the third cup at the Passover meal.

For us, the cup of blessing should take on a new meaning.

Hebrews 9:22 – without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

Our cup of blessing and our breaking of the bread is a participation in the blood and body of Christ. We participate symbolically in what Jesus has done for us. What Jesus has done for us becomes part of who and what we are.

Though we cannot see it just yet, Paul is going to tie all of this in with the eating of food that had been offered to idols.

In verse 16 we have a word that we translate as participation. The Greek word is koinónia. The KJV translates this as communion. That's a good translation, and I like it better than participation.

The word speaks of a spiritual connection. A fellowship of and in the Spirit. Paul is saying that when we participate in the Lords Table, we have a spiritual connection with Christ, and with one another.

Next, we have what is one of my favorite verses about the Lord's table.

10:17 – Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf.

Why would we sacrifice our freedoms for others? Because we are one body. Through Christ, we should have unity amongst us. Unity of the body of Christ will be a theme in chapter 12.

The loaf, of course, represents Christ' body. His body is broken so that we won't be broken. What a beautiful picture.

1 Corinthians 12:27 – Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

Galatians 3:28 – There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

10:18 – Consider the people of Israel: Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar?

This is a verse that has caused much debate. There are two theories as to what Paul is talking about. Some say that Paul is talking about the times in the Old Testament sacrificial system that allowed for the priests, and sometimes the people, to eat food that had been offered to God. We find this in Leviticus 7. If this is the case, then this verse is showing how this eating of the sacrificial food connected them to God.

I believe that when we consider the rest of the passage (always remember the context), that Paul is referring to what he wrote about earlier in this chapter (we covered it two weeks ago). That was about the Israelites in the wilderness who worshipped false idols.

They offered sacrifices to the golden calf and they ate the sacrifice together (Exodus 32). In this case, Paul's point would be that those Israelites had become attached in some symbolic way to the pagan altar by eating the food sacrificed to it.

Either way – the point is the same- even though idols are not real, people connect themselves in a spiritual way to something other than God.

Likewise, when we eat at our sacrificial table – the Lord's table – we connect ourselves in a spiritual way to God.

10:19 – Do I mean then that food sacrificed to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? ²⁰No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons.

Paul has told us that an idol is nothing real, yet now he speaks of the presence of demons. The word we translate as demons is daimonion and it meant an evil spirit. So, the idol wasn't real but the evil spirit is? Yes, indeed.

While we do not discuss them much in Christian circles anymore, the Bible has much to say about demons / evil spirits. We know that Jesus, and the apostles, cast out many evil spirits from people.

Ephesians 2:2 – As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

Ephesians 6:12 – For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

James 2:19 – You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

God has given us God's spirit, but there are other spirits.

1 John 4:2 – This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God,³ but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

1 Corinthians 10:21 – You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons.²² Are we trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

Paul's prior remarks clarified that there is no sin in eating meat sacrificed to an idol (1 Corinthians 8:4-7), and he will say as much in a few verses from now. Here, however, he makes it clear that the problem is not the physical meat, but is in the attitude of the person who eats the meat.

If our hearts are not turned towards the Lord, then something less than godly is being done when we eat it. If our attitudes are not turned towards Christ, then we aren't eating and drinking at the Lord's table.

According to verse 21, if not the Lord's Table, then could it possibly be with evil spirits?

In verse 22 Paul speaks of the Lord's jealousy. This idea of God being jealous for our loyalty runs throughout the Bible.

Exodus 34:14 – Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.

God does not overlook it when we worship other gods.

Are we stronger than God? A rhetorical question. The point being, if God decides to discipline us for idolatry, there is nothing that we can do to stop God.

Paul returns to the point that he was making earlier in the discussion about eating meat sacrificed to an idol. He repeats the statement made by the libertines that was quoted in chapter six, verse twelve.

1 Corinthians 10:23 – “I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything”—but not everything is constructive. ²⁴ No one should seek their own good, but the good of others.

This is a point that Paul makes over and over again – in this letter and in others.

Philippians 2:3 – Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Having given them instructions on being careful around people with weak faith, he now gives once again the general premise for those who asked, assuming they were people of faith and understanding that an idol was not real.

10:25 – Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience, ²⁶ for, “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it.”

The quote is from Psalm 24:1.

Most translations have meat market in verse 25. The KJV has shambles. Why shambles? Because the Shambles was a famous meat market in England dating back to the 14th century. Various towns, in imitating the Shambles in York, would name their meat markets the Shambles.

The KJV was written in England, for English people. They all knew what the Shambles was referencing.

Now Paul re-emphasizes his point of taking into account the people around you in regards to the meat that had been a part of a sacrifice.

10:27 – If an unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience. ²⁸ But if someone says to you, “This has been offered in sacrifice,” then do not eat it, both for the sake of the one who told you and for the sake of conscience.

So, you know this meat is just meat. In your own home be comfortable with that knowledge. In public, or in someone else’s home, don’t let your knowledge trip someone else. Be sensitive to them.

In the ancient Greek in which this was written, there were no common punctuation marks as we know them. When we translate the text, it can seem confusing, and often our translation of sentences and paragraphs isn’t the best.

With this in mind, I believe the following should be read in this manner.

10:29 – I am referring to the other person’s conscience, not yours.

Stop this verse right here. This refers to verses 27 & 28. The second half of verse 29 through verse 31 should be read in this way:

10:29b – For why is my freedom being judged by another’s conscience? ³⁰ If I take part in the meal with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of something I thank God for?
31 Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

The sacrifices that we make with our own freedoms for the sake of others is done for the glory of God! Especially, in this example, when it brings people closer to God.

10:32 – Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God— ³³ even as I try to please everyone in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.

11:1 – Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

This concludes a lengthy part of this letter which is based on our freedoms in relation to others. Each of us should be willing to sacrifice our freedoms for the sake of weaker Christians. We should do this for the glory of God.

Chapter 11

In chapter 11 Paul turns to a discussion about worship. In particular, disorder in their worship. This includes attitudes towards others, the role of women, the Lord's Supper and the gift of tongues.

He starts with a word of praise before launching into his criticism.

11:2 – I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the traditions just as I passed them on to you. ³ But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

Well here we go, we're getting into some controversial stuff now!
There is debate as to what exactly Paul means by the head. It could be an overt reference to authority, meaning that each of us is under the authority of someone.

On the other hand, head could be used in a broader manner as in a representative. Christ is the head of the church in that Christ represents us before God.

Still, others say that Paul is referring to the order we find in creation. Since creation is ordered, so should their worship services – which he is about to address.

Now, Paul did live in a time when women did not have as many rights as men. Certainly it was a patriarchal society. As we move through this, keep in mind all of Paul's teaching about the place of women within the church.

Galatians 3:28 – There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Many folks point to Ephesians 5:22, but speaking to both husbands and wives, consider **Ephesians 5:21** – Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Regardless, one thing we can glean from this and other biblical teachings – every family should have a spiritual leader. A spiritual leader is not a boss, it is a leader.

Women watching, if you are married and your husband is not a spiritual leader, then step up and be the spiritual leader of your family.

Let's move on.

11:4 – Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. ⁵ But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is the same as having her head shaved. ⁶ For if a woman does not cover her head, she might as well have her hair cut off; but if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, then she should cover her head.

Don't try to compare this passage to what you know of Jewish customs today, because this description doesn't even compare to Jewish customs of modern times – much less to Christians customs and traditions.

What we have in these verses is Paul setting up the groundwork for worship services that are ordered and not chaotic.

While traditional Sunday clothing and acceptable Sunday clothing has changed, and will continue to change, Paul is addressing what was then proper worship attire.

Now while some may be offended by this section about women, as Paul seems by our standards to be very patriarchal, do not miss something profound in this passage.

Verse 5 – *⁵ But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head.*

Forget the head covering for just a minute – do you see what Paul is saying? Do you remember the context? Paul is writing about orderly worship services and here he

writes about women praying and prophesying! What is prophesying in the New Testament? It's preaching!

Literally it means a divine teaching. We don't read anywhere that women should only prophesy to other women or only to little children. No, women preached in the early church and Paul was well aware and endorsed it! Well, as long as they were properly attired.

He, like us, was concerned that women preachers should be attired properly. Of course, their properly dressed and our properly dressed are different, but the point is the same.

11:7 – A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. ⁸For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; ⁹neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.

Again, Paul is reflecting creation, and the Genesis 2 account. Man was created first, and then woman was created as a helper (Genesis 2:18).

You think this is difficult to decipher, take a look at the next verse.

11:10 – It is for this reason that a woman ought to have authority over her own head, because of the angels.

Where do the angels come in? What are they about?
Most scholars conclude that Paul is referring to the angels that observe our worship services. Since they are watching, it is important to be appropriately covered.

Having authority over her own head – some say Paul is sticking up for women by saying something like, “They can take care of themselves.”

Paul is talking about order. If you think he is putting women down, let's consider the following.

11:11 – Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. ¹²For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God.

Husbands and wives are not to live or act independent of one another. Remember **Ephesians 5:21** – Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Still, we have an order. We are not independent upon one another, but we are dependent upon God. We are subordinate to God.

11:13 – Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?

A rhetorical question and based upon what he has written so far the answer he was looking for was of course not.

11:14 – Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, ¹⁵but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering. ¹⁶If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God.

When Paul uses the word we translate as nature – the nature of things – he means how most people in society wear their hair. After all, hair grows the same on men and women's heads. But through time and culture, it is men who usually have the shorter hair. This was true for that place and time.

Now, men of the Greek culture wore their hair longer than what our culture would call short, but in their culture men's hair was relatively shorter than women's.

For Paul, this was evidence for men to leave their hair uncovered and women to leave their hair covered.

This seems strange to us coming from the man who fought for the Gentiles, claiming that they were not bound by the Law. Yet, here he is arguing for women to cover their heads. Again, it was about proper attire for women in worship, but particularly, attire for women who led prayers and who preached.

Having written about order for praying and preaching, Paul now moves on to the Lord's supper. Keep in mind that this was the earliest written record we have of followers of Jesus celebrating the Lord's Supper.

A careful reading would suggest that their Lord's Supper looked different from ours. And hey, where are their words of institutions – the prayer of confession – the Great Thanksgiving?

Of course, those are traditions that have developed over the past two thousand years. Perhaps the communion liturgy was instituted because of issues and problems like these that we will read about in Corinth.

1 Corinthians 11:17 – In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. ¹⁸ In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it.

Verse 18 lets us know that Paul has heard a report about this. Remember, Paul began this letter by addressing the divisions amongst the Corinthians over which apostle they were loyal to.

It seems that loyalty to church leaders wasn't the only thing that they were dividing over.

11:19 – No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God’s approval.

While this appears to be sarcastic, and may be, it does contain truth. There are people who claim to be Christian yet believe differently about Scripture, or differently about Christian behavior and practice. There are differences between them. I suppose God approves of one group. This verse could apply to that.

But I think Paul was pointing out how deep their divisions ran, and there were more than one division, and each claimed God’s approval.

11:20 – So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord’s Supper you eat, ²¹ for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk. ²² Don’t you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? Certainly not in this matter!

Wow! Could this possibly be the Lord’s Supper? Sadly, yes. It appears that their practice was that they would bring their own communion elements – and accompanying meal. The Lord’s Supper was a part of a larger meal.

What was happening was something like the rich gathering together and having their meal, and the poor gathering together and having their meal. Perhaps slaves and slave owners were separated, slaves and free were separated. We don’t know exactly.

Some were actually getting drunk? Yes. This meal was separate from their worship services.

11:23 – For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread,

How did Paul receive this from the Lord? Remember, Scriptures point out at least three times in which Paul encountered Jesus in a vision.

In the Gospel of Mark the last supper was a Passover meal. In the Gospel of John is equally clear that the Passover was yet to come. One would think that Paul, given his rich heritage as a Pharisee, would have mentioned the Passover but instead says, “on the night he was betrayed.”

11:24 – 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, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”²⁶ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Verse 26 is most important. The purpose of celebrating communion is to proclaim that Christ died for the sins of all who trust in him. Part of this proclamation is that Christ will one day return.

So, Holy Communion should look back at Christ’s sacrifice, and look forward to Christ’s return.

11:27 – So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.

Older translations have this verse as: whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

Many people have used this verse as their reason to refrain from receiving the sacrament of Holy Communion. The belief by such people is that is they believe themselves to be unworthy and they do partake, then they are sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.

The unworthy manner points towards the way in which they were sharing communion. Of course, it would point to any divisions made by Christians as they share the sacrament.

11:28 – Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. ²⁹ For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves.

Remember who these Corinthians were. They were pagan converts. As a pagan, their religious meals had been drunken parties and orgies. From the start of the church Paul makes it clear that communion is supposed to be sacred and holy.

Paul wasn't setting forth some legalistic steps to follow. Even today there exists some wide freedoms as to how communion can be observed. What Paul is condemning is to partake of communion without a solemn appreciation for what the sacrament represents.

Jesus died on the cross to save us from the wrath of judgment. If we don't take that seriously, then we are subject to that judgment. So, everyone should examine themselves, as Paul says.

11:30 – That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. ³¹ But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment. ³² Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world.

Many people struggle with the idea that God would bring illness or death to a Christian for continuing to participate sinfully in communion. This does, however, go along with his earlier warning to the Corinthians about the Israelites who died in the wilderness after escaping from Egypt.

In chapter 10 Paul clearly implied that God could do the same to them if they participated in idol worship.

In verse 32, Paul clarifies that this judgment does not include the loss of salvation.

In his final summary on the subject of communion, Paul makes it clear that communion is not meant to be a meal that satisfies a physical hunger, but is a time set apart for something sacred.

11:33 – So then, my brothers and sisters, when you gather to eat, you should all eat together. ³⁴ Anyone who is hungry should eat something at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment. And when I come I will give further directions.

Chapter 12

As I have stated, and as we have seen throughout this letter, the church in Corinth had divided themselves over several issues. One of those issues was over the matter of spiritual gifts.

Some were claiming that they possessed particular gift, so they must be more spiritual, or better, than those who did not possess that particular gift.

Paul addresses this topic though chapter 14.

Now it's no coincidence that this section about spiritual gifts follows a section on orderly and disorderly worship. As we read this section, we will note that the use of some spiritual gifts was, indeed, causing some disorder in their worship.

Keep in mind, most of these Christians had previously been pagans. Their pagan worship services were very disorderly, and erratic movements and spontaneous vocalizations were common in the pagan services. It seems that these practices were spilling over into the Christian services.

12:1 – Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. ²You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. ³Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed,” and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.

Scholars continue to debate what Paul is writing about here. Is he writing about words spoken in their worship?

Now some Corinthians, especially those who practiced the gift of tongues, claimed to be more spiritual than those who did not. Here, in verse 3, any Christian who can claim that Jesus is Lord, regardless of their particular spiritual gift, has the Holy Spirit within them.

As we read the next three verses, listen and find the trinity.

12:4 – There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. ⁵There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

Spirit, Lord, God. We call the trinity the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Just because the word Holy Trinity is not in the New Testament does not mean that the New Testament writers were unaware of the concept.

In this passage we have the spirit distributing different kinds of gifts. This will be the basis for much of this section – differing gifts is by God’s design.

Verse 5 tells us that these differing gifts are giving for service. Some translations have administrations. Service is a good translation. The Greek word used often was used to describe someone waiting on tables, a server.

Paul uses a more general term in verse 6 and we translate it as working instead of service. The word can also be translated as effect.

Verse 6 – There are different kinds of effects (of these gifts), but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

So, spiritual gifts will not be used to build ourselves up, but will be used to serve the needs of others, which we have in the next verse.

12:7 – Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

This is an important verse, and much of what Paul will say in the following chapters is commentary on this verse.

Note that each believer is given a manifestation of the Spirit – a Spiritual gift. Whether or not it is used is another story. However, by design, believers in Jesus will receive a manifestation of the Spirit.

Also note, the manifestation of the Spirit will be used for the good of others. This is important – Christians will be in some way serving the Church – and the church is the Body of Christ.

In light of this, Christians need to ask themselves – am I serving the church in some capacity, or am I just a consumer?

Next, Paul will list nine gifts of the Spirit. Please understand that this is not the exhaustive list of spiritual gifts. Paul mentions other gifts in other passages. Let's read through this passage and then go back and break it down.

12:8 – To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, ^[a] and to still another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

12:8 – To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit

Here we have the teaching ministry of the Church. The Greek word for wisdom is Sophia. We get our English word sophistication from this ancient word. Sophia, or wisdom as we translate it, was not just intelligence. It meant insight.

The word we translate as knowledge is gnosis. It was similar in meaning to wisdom, but pertained to doctrine, or teachings of the church.

12:9 – to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit

Many Christians over the years have been troubled by this verse, in particular the gift of faith. Ephesians 2:8 tells us that we are saved by faith, but what if faith is not our gift? Are we not saved if faith is not our gift?

Certainly every believer has faith. Paul is talking about something more here. This is the faith that enables and empowers certain Christians to take on grand projects, or undertakings.

I think of Dianna Whittle and the sack pack program. If she didn't have the gift of faith, she probably would have gave up a long time ago!

The gift of faith is also closely connected to the next gift in the list – healing. The word in the Greek is plural, and probably should be read as healings.

Healing can and does come in different forms. We normally think of physical healing when we read this, but I believe that the gift is broader than just physical healing.

Certainly there is emotional, mental, and spiritual. There is healing in our relationships, as well.

12:10 – to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.

Miracles, or miraculous powers. The Greek word is *dunamis*, we get dynamite from this word. Word literally meant an ability and energy. In a very real way miraculous powers can be the strength to get through something that without God's help we never would have made it.

Prophecy – We talked about this last week. This refers to speaking God's truth. The word also refers to communicating something. Some people have a gift of communicating.

Distinguishing between spirits may be related to prophecy. An ability to tell whether a speaker is truly representing God, or is a false prophet.

Then we have 'speaking in different kinds of tongues.' We get all of that from one Greek word, *glossa*. The word literally meant language. Everyone has a native *glossa*. Of course, in the New Testament it commonly refers to a language supplied by the Lord.

Paul lists it here, but will address the issue further because it was a point of division amongst the Corinthians.

Then the interpretation of tongues.

12:11 – All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

Nobody selects their own spiritual gifts. Nobody supplies the power for their spiritual gifts. Spiritual gifts are not earned. Therefore, no one can take credit for their gift, as some in Corinth were doing.

Key points so far:

1. All believers receive some form of a manifestation of the Holy Spirit, which we call spiritual gifts.
2. The Holy Spirit distributes these gifts as the Spirit determines.

3. These gifts will be used for the common good – that is for others besides the one who possess the gift.

It stands to reason, therefore, that the gifts given by the Holy Spirit will not divide us. If they divide us then either we don't really have a spiritual gift or we are misusing our gifts.

This is what Paul will now address.

12:12 – Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.

To illustrate the truth that we have diverse gifts but we must remain unified in mission, Paul uses the figure of a human body. The body's parts are vastly different, yet they are all part of the same body & they all work for the betterment of the body.

12:13 – For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

When Paul says that we were all baptized by one Spirit to form one body, he is not merely referring to the physical act of baptism. He is referring to a spiritual act.

Romans 6:3 – Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

We have spiritually died to the world and have spiritually risen to new life. This new life is not lived for ourselves. If we are living for ourselves, and focusing on making ourselves look better, then we have not been baptized by the spirit.

12:14 – Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. ¹⁵ Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye,

I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸ But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹ If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!”

Paul lists feet, hands, ears & eyes. If any of those don’t work properly, the body won’t be as healthy as it could be.

Likewise, when the church is not using their differing gifts for the betterment of all, it won’t be as healthy as it could be.

12:22 – On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, ²⁴ while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, ²⁵ so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.

Before verse 22, Paul had mentioned the parts of the body with the most prominent functions. Eyes to see, ears to hear, hands to feel. Remember, this is all an analogy of the Church, the Body of Christ.

There are members of the Body of Christ that have more prominent, or visible, roles. But there are other members of the church who play a more humble role in the Body of Christ, but they are no less important.

We must never look down on anyone who is using their gifts.
I think of people who fold and stuff the bulletins and newsletters.

I think of Oscar Dykes who comes in on Saturday’s – no one ever sees him – and works in the food pantry preparing the bags to be handed out the next week.

I think of Jim Kirk and others who fix leaky toilets, change lightbulbs.

I think of Judy Henderson who coordinates folks to call our shut ins.

And there are so many more. These are not prominent church roles, but every bit as necessary as what I am doing now.

The point of this section is best summarized there in verse 25 – there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.

12:26 – If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

This is how we need to view the Body of Christ. Within our local congregations, and with the Church universal. After all, the church universal is what we mean when we say in the Apostles Creed – we believe in the catholic church.

There exists too much competition and jealousy in the Christian world.

12:27 – Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

This tells us that every church can thrive IF... If every congregation would view one another as someone who has been gifted by God and has a role to play in the Body of Christ then they will thrive.

If there is no arrogance or feelings of superiority amongst members, if all see themselves as equals in the Body, then they can thrive.

12:28 – And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues.²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰ Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues^[d]? Do all interpret?

Keep in mind that one of the biggest problems with the church in Corinth was that those who possessed the gift of tongues were separating themselves, placing a high value on themselves, and placing themselves above others.

They were claiming to have a spiritual superiority because of their gift.

So, where is tongues on this list?

Last, along with the interpretation of tongues.

The questions that Paul asks are rhetorical, meaning the answer was obvious, and the obvious answer was no.

Are all apostles? No.

Are all prophets? No.

Are all teachers? No.

Do all work miracles? No.

Do all have gifts of healing? No.

Do all speak in tongues? No.

Do all interpret? No.

Different gifts for different people, given to them by the Spirit as the Spirit wills.

Let's look at the different gifts mentioned. And like before, this is not an exhaustive list of spiritual gifts. Whenever Paul gives a list they are never the same.

Apostles: apostolos, (ap-os'-tol-os), literally means a messenger sent on a mission.

In the New Testament world this title applied to those to whom the Risen Christ had sent out on a mission.

Prophets: The Greek word means an interpreter of a divine will. In the New Testament world, it applied to someone who interpreted the Will of God.

In modern times we tend to think of prophecy primarily dealing with the eschatological, or end times. While that is a type of prophecy, it was not and is not the only kind.

As I've mentioned before, prophecy in the New Testament world was what we would call preaching today.

Teachers: The Greek word, didaskalos (did-as'-kal-os), simply meant an instructor. We don't know what the official role of a teacher in the church in Corinth may have been, but probably a teacher of the Old Testament Scriptures. In that context, probably a Jewish convert and not a pagan convert, as the Jewish converts would naturally have a better knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures.

So the first three, Apostles, prophets and teachers, are all part of the teaching, or as we would call it today, the discipleship ministries of the church.

Next, we have the gifts that pertain serving the physical needs of the people.

Workers of miracles: Remember this comes from the Greek word dunamis. The word literally meant an ability and energy. How this may have differed from the next, Healing, we can't be sure.

Most likely, miracles referred to an instantaneous or rapid healing. Healing in general may refer to those who practiced the healing arts such as medicine and care for the sick.

In verse 28, there along with the gifts of miracles and healing is one of my favorite types of gifts (although I suppose I'm not supposed to have favorites) is what we translate as the gift of helping.

The Greek word means just that, someone who helps.

Next in the list in verse 28 is what the NIV that I read from calls guidance. Not the best translation. The KJV calls it governments. Probably not the best for our modern English language either.

The Greek word, kubernésis (koo-ber'-nay-sis), means administration.

In our local church we have a finance committee, a Staff Parish Relations committee, and these would be examples of administrations. We also have people that assist with office matters.

Finally we have tongues, literally meaning languages.
No one possessed all of these gifts.

12:31 – Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.

This could seem to be confusing – desire the greater gifts. Didn't he just give us a list of gifts? Apostles was listed first, so should we all desire to be an apostle?

No, our chapter divisions are not always advantageous for good biblical understanding. Chapter 12 doesn't end and then we have some interlude with some nice words about loves, and then back to matters of worship in chapter 14.

Chapter 13 is all about the greater gifts. There's three greater gifts we should all strive for. What are they?

Faith, hope and love. What's the greatest gift?

Love.

Chapter 13

Chapter 13 of 1 Corinthians is one of the better known passages from the Bible. Even non-Christians are familiar with parts of this passage.

It is such a beautiful piece of literature that for some time scholars debated as to whether or not Paul actually wrote it. When we dig into it, we see how the words of chapter 13 fit into what he has already said, so Paul must have wrote it and what is even more amazing, he wrote it while dictating the letter!

Of course, we know that he was divinely inspired. Certainly his Spiritual gifts included the gifts of instruction, teach, and speaking.

Older translations have charity instead of love. The word in this passage is a well-known word amongst Christians, agape. Agape is not the same as other Greek words for love. It

is a choice. It is not a love dependent upon how someone makes us feel, or a love based on our relationship with someone.

The chapter has three parts: The superiority of love; the nature of love; and the permanence of love.

While it does not translate as such into English, in the Greek after verse 1, no adjectives are used, only verbs.

What does that mean? Verbs are action words, and so very clearly we see that love is an action. Love is always on the move. Love is never still, never static, never quiet.

12:31b - And yet I will show you the most excellent way.

13:1 – If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

Tongues of men or angels – Paul is clearly addressing those in Corinth who thought themselves superior because they possessed the gift of tongues.

Paul is not speaking against tongues, just showing what is the greater gifts.

Paul says without love he was only a resounding gong or a clanging symbol. The Corinthians were very familiar with what Paul was saying.

The pagan temples would have a gong or a symbol at the entrance that one would use to awaken the pagan god. As useless as that was, so was the gift of tongues without love.

13:2 – If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

We just read chapter 12, and clearly some had the gift of prophecy, some had wisdom, some even had the gift of faith, but without love it is nothing.

Consider this statement! You can actually believe wholeheartedly in God, in Jesus. You can wholeheartedly have faith in what Jesus did for you on the cross, but without love it is nothing. That is a powerful statement.

13:3 – If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Paul has moved away from verbal displays like speaking and prophesying and has moved into actions.

Some older translations have, ‘give my body to be burned’, instead of give my body to hardship. Most translators today go with hardship, as that is the most common way we find it used in the New Testament. Either way, the point is the same – without love even suffering and martyrdom is nothing.

Now we move into the nature of love.

13:4 – Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

Patient: Also can mean to persevere. The KJV has long suffering. He was talking to church people about their relationships with other church people, but certainly this applies to all of life.

Kind: the Greek word denotes kindness, but also service to others.

Does not envy: There is no jealousy in agape love.

Does not boast: To build oneself up. Certainly this was being done in Corinth, and in particular by the people feeling superior for their spiritual gift.

No proud: The word literally means inflated, puffed up.

While we want to apply all of these to our own lives, remember the context. There were divisions amongst the Corinthians. Some were acting proud and boasting because of their gifts.

Remember why he wrote this as we move along.

13:5 – It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

Do these things ever happen in a church? Of course they do. They happen in all areas of life, but it should not be so for you and I.

The NIV that I am reading has does not dishonor others. Other translations have is not rude, and does not behave unseemly. The Greek word means to act improperly, and can be interpreted in either of those ways.

Not self-seeking: Others have does not seek its own way. The Greek literally says it does not seek itself.

Is not easily angered: Other translations has it is not irritable. Not easily provoked would also be a good translation.

Keeps no record of wrongs: Some translations have is not resentful. The Greek literally says does not account for the bad.

13:6 – Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

The RTT would read: Love does not delight in *injustice / unrighteousness*, but rejoices with the truth.

13:7 – It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Always protects: Other translations have love bears all things. While protecting can be a translation from the Greek, I like bears all things best for this. The Greek word for bearing something can also mean to cover something, and that is what some translations have protect.

Always Trusts: Some translations have believes all things. The ‘believing all things’ does not infer someone is gullible and believes whatever comes along.

Always hopes: While hopes all things is a correct translation from the Greek, I think always hopes is a good modern translation. It fits our syntax best.

Always perseveres: Other translations has endures all things.

Paul has written about the superiority of love, the nature of love, and now he writes about the permanence of love.

13:8 – Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

Never fails: Some translation have love never ends. The Greek word commonly by Paul for end is not used in this verse. So, I think never fails is the best.

The Corinthians prided themselves on things like prophecies, tongues, and knowledge. Those things are not eternal, they fade and then pass.

Love is permanent. 1 John tells us (twice) that God is love and that perfect love casts out all fear. God is that perfect love, and because of that perfect love, we will live with God in perfect peace.

It’s not because of prophecies, tongues or knowledge that we live with God, but because of love.

13:9 – For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears.

When the perfect/completeness comes – the perfect is Jesus. For us this is when we die and meet Jesus in glory, or for all when Jesus returns. When that does happen, we will

no longer need to work to understand. We will no longer even need a spiritual gift to know and to understand some limited amount about God.

13:11 – When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.

God gives us spiritual gifts so that we can build one another up, thereby strengthening the Body of Christ. In this passage, we see that we are to grow from our childish (worldly) ways to mature (Christi like) ways.

13:12 – For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

This verse has been translated in several ways. The most famous is from the KJV: For now we see through a glass, darkly.

The word we translate as mirror or glass referred to anything that reflects a likeness. In the days of Paul, very few had mirrors as we have them today in every home. Some sought their reflection in a shiny plate. Some were polished bronze. Some were actual mirrors, but the quality was very poor.

The point Paul is making is clear, however (pun intended). We can't see/understand God completely in the here and now. However, God does know and understand everything about us in the here and now.

One day, when the complete comes, we will know God fully.

13:13 – And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

Please note that the word we translate as hope literally meant an expectation. In our modern world, hope is often likened to a wish. Not the Greek word used in the New Testament.

At any rate, faith and hope/expectation pale next to love.

The greatest of these. The Greek word we translate as greatest is *meegas* – and it meant the best by far!

Chapter 14

Remember back in chapters 11 and 12, Paul was addressing order in their worship services. That's where he still is. In this chapter Paul will describe why the gift of prophecy is superior to the gift of tongues during their worship, especially if there is no one to interpret. Prophecy benefits everyone in the service, while tongues without an interpreter benefits no one other than the person speaking in tongues.

1 Corinthians 14:1 – Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy. ²For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to God. Indeed, no one understands them; they utter mysteries by the Spirit.

A New Testament understanding of the gift of tongues is that it can manifest in more than one way. In the Book of Acts, on Pentecost, The Spirit caused those who didn't understand the Apostles to hear in their own language. Whether or not different disciples on that day were speaking various languages individually, or if multiple people could hear their own language from one person, we don't know.

In this case, a person with the gift of tongues is communicating with God. Paul is not dismissing the gift, but will show how the gift of prophecy is more helpful to the church.

14:3 – But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort.

Remember what Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 12:7** – Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. This has been his emphasis for Spiritual gifts.

14:4 – Anyone who speaks in a tongue edifies themselves, but the one who prophesies edifies the church. ⁵I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be edified.

So the church may be edified – the Greek word we translate as edified literally meant *to build*. Again, this is Paul’s emphasis. Gifts given for the common good. That is, the good of the church.

14:6 – Now, brothers and sisters, if I come to you and speak in tongues, what good will I be to you, unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or word of instruction?

Translating the syntax from ancient Greek to modern English is often difficult. We have four things here – revelation, knowledge, prophecy and word of instruction. It is most likely that what is implied is that the prophet brings a revelation and the instruction brings knowledge.

Both of these people – prophet and instructor – build up the church.

Paul now uses an analogy of unintelligible music.

14:7 – Even in the case of lifeless things that make sounds, such as the pipe or harp, how will anyone know what tune is being played unless there is a distinction in the notes? ⁸ Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle? ⁹ So it is with you. Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air. ¹⁰ Undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world, yet none of them is without meaning. ¹¹ If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and the speaker is a foreigner to me. ¹² So it is with you. Since you are eager for gifts of the Spirit, try to excel in those that build up the church.

The KJV has barbarian instead of foreigner, and that is what the Greek word says. However, that was their word for foreigner. Foreigner is a fine modern English translation.

As if there were any question about Paul's main point concerning Spiritual gifts, he brings it home again in verse 12 - try to excel in those that build up the church. It's all about building up the church, the Body of Christ.

14:13 – For this reason the one who speaks in a tongue should pray that they may interpret what they say.

Earlier, Paul had spoken about interpretation of tongues as a separate gift. And later in this chapter it will appear that the interpreter is a different person than the one speaking in tongues. Here, it appears that the one praying may actually interpret as well.

Paul never said that a person could not have more than one gift, just that no one possess all of them.

14:14 – For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.

What does he mean by his mind being unfruitful? It refers back to verse 11 - If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker. Where there is no understanding then the mind is unfruitful.

14:15 – So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my understanding; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my understanding.

Again, the understanding makes the prayers and songs fruitful.

14:16 – Otherwise when you are praising God in the Spirit, how can someone else, who is now put in the position of an inquirer, say “Amen” to your thanksgiving, since they do not know what you are saying? ¹⁷ You are giving thanks well enough, but no one else is edified.

Amen was obviously a spoken word of agreement even in the early church.

Keep in mind, this is corporate worship Paul is talking about. Corporate worship is certainly to praise God, but note here another purpose of corporate worship – to build one another up.

Some may say that they can be a Christian without attending worship, but here is a very important purpose. Without joining corporate worship, we miss opportunities to be built up in the Body of Christ.

14:18 – I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. ¹⁹But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.

Here we have another powerful statement about the purpose of corporate worship – instruction. Worship does not just contain praises, but includes instruction. This is how we are built up in worship.

14:20 – Brothers and sisters, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults.

Paul seems to be echoing the words of Jesus in **Matthew 10:16** – “I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.”

14:21 – In the Law it is written:

“With other tongues
and through the lips of foreigners
I will speak to this people,
but even then they will not listen to me,
says the Lord.”

As Paul often does, he now quotes from the Old Testament prophets to make a connection between the present circumstance and how God acted in the past.

Here he refers to Isaiah 28. In that passage, Israel had rejected God's clear message to them in their own language. So, he would speak to them through the Assyrians, people with other tongues.

In other words, his message to them would become less clear because of their sin.

Paul connects that to what was happening in Corinth. He wants the Corinthians to see that the clear teaching that comes from the gift of prophecy is better than the lack of meaning that results from the gift of tongues without interpretation.

Verse 22 can be confusing, especially so because modern Bibles have it in a paragraph in which he seemingly contradicts himself. It should be read in context with verse 21, then we have a separate paragraph.

So, knowing that verse 21 speaks about the ancient Jews being taken away by the Assyrians for their unbelief, let's read verse 21 and 22 together.

14:21 – In the Law it is written:

“With other tongues

and through the lips of foreigners

I will speak to this people,

but even then they will not listen to me,

says the Lord.”

14:22 – Tongues, then (*meaning in that situation*), are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is not for unbelievers but for believers.

Now for a new paragraph.

14:23 – So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and inquirers or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind? ²⁴ But if an unbeliever or an inquirer comes in while everyone is prophesying, they are convicted of sin and are brought under judgment by all, ²⁵ as the secrets of their hearts are laid bare. So they will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, “God is really among you!”

Again, the context is corporate worship, and the issue is orderly worship that can benefit all in attendance.

In the following verses we get a glimpse at their order of worship.

14:26 – What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up.²⁷ If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret.²⁸ If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and to God.

This doesn't resemble formal worship as we know it today. Actually, this resembles a Quaker service more than any other. Not an emphasis on silence, but that in a Quaker service every member is free to speak.

The second part of verse 26 again has Paul's emphasis: Everything must be done so that the church may be built up.

Of course the word for church did not refer to a building, but to a gathered group of people. The goal of the worship service is to build up those in attendance.

14:29 – Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said.³⁰ And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop.³¹ For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged.³² The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets.

Verse 32 has been interpreted in several ways, but keep in mind the context – orderly worship. Spiritual gifts are not to be used to interrupt and make for disorderly worship.

The Holy Spirit will not take over a person's spirit to the point where that person loses restraint and disrupts the worship service. Indeed, the very opposite is true.

Remember from Galatians 5, that self-control is a characteristic of the fruit of the spirit.

Now, we are about to get into something controversial that has been debated for centuries. The controversy actually begins with verse 33. Some modern and not so modern translation (like the KJV) include what some translation have as the beginning sentence in verse 34.

14:33 – For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord’s people.

When we read it this way, as in all the congregations applies to order in all churches. In other words, Paul was saying something like – this order is observed in all the other churches.

I believe this is the correct place for “this order is observed in all the other churches.”

Before we read it, remember, Paul has been responding to issues and to inquiries from the Corinthians throughout this letter.

Also, keep in mind that back in chapter 11 Paul wrote about how a woman should be adorned when she prays and prophesies in church. Yes, as she prayed and prophesied. Prophesying was preaching.

It’s difficult to keep silent when you preach.

Therefore, I believe, as do others (though not all for sure), that in the following verses Paul is quoting what the Corinthians have presented to him. He has already done this at least twice. Once in chapter six and again in chapter ten when he quotes them as saying, “all things are lawful to me.”

So here is Paul quoting from them:

14:34 – Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. ³⁵ If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.

And here is Paul responding to them:

14:36 – Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached?

Reading it this way, we would surmise that there were some disruptive women in the church in Corinth, and there were some who were advocating that they (all women) simply not speak at all in church.

I do read it this way. I read it this way because of what Paul had said previously about women prophesying. He also speaks of women leaders in the church in a number of his letters.

I read it this way because he also wrote in Galatians 3:28 that in the Lord there is no longer male nor female.

In the following verses he continues to place women on equal terms

14:37 – If anyone thinks they are a prophet or otherwise gifted by the Spirit, let them acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord’s command.

The word we translate as anyone was all encompassing. In other words, it does not denote men only.

14:38 – But if anyone ignores this, they will themselves be ignored.

³⁹ Therefore, my brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. ⁴⁰ But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

While Paul did not use brothers and sisters (he used adelfos), the word also is not gender specific. It means all who are like family.

The chapter ends with his main point throughout this section – order.

Chapter 15

While chapter 13 is the best known chapter of 1 Corinthians, chapter 15 has significant historical importance. It contains the earliest written account of the resurrection of Jesus.

The resurrection is brought up because of questions pertaining to the afterlife. In particular, if Jesus is returning soon to bring us all to glory, what about the people who have died recently?

15:1 – Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel/Good News I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. ² By this gospel/Good News you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

In my recent sermon I spoke about this very passage. Please remember and please always read it the way it was written. The word we translate as Gospel is euaggelion, and the word meant and means good news.

If you did not hear that message, let me briefly share with you how we ended up with the word Gospel instead of good news.

In Old English (circa 6th century through 12th century) the Greek word euaggelion was translated as good spel. Spel was the old English word for news. So, their translation was correct – good spel = good news.

As the English language evolved over the century's, good spel became gospel. More significantly, however, is that the meaning of the word drifted away from good news and more or less became truth.

I believe we ought not to change the words that God inspired the biblical writers to write. Euaggelion is used over 90 times in the New Testament. When we read it as good news it brings new life and new meaning to the text.

15:3 – For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures

The first aspect of this good news is that Jesus died for our sins. That is, the penalty for our sins was paid for by Jesus. In my message I shared from Isaiah 53.

Isaiah 53:6 (NIV) – We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to our own way;

and the LORD has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

Psalm 22 is also one noted text that speaks of the Messiah paying for our sins. Interestingly, it is the psalm Jesus quoted from the cross, as it begins ...

Psalm 22:1 – My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

The psalm goes on to answer that very question. Those at the cross would have known the words Jesus was speaking, and they would have known the rest of the psalm.

Jesus wasn't asking God why he was forsaken – he was telling us why he was forsaken.

15:4 – that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

Jesus dying for our sins is not the end of the good news. His burial and resurrection are good news, and the Scriptures foretold it.

Psalm 16:9 – Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
my body also will rest secure,
¹⁰because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,
nor will you let your faithful one see decay.

Isaiah 53:8 – For he was cut off from the land of the living;
for the transgression of my people he was punished.

⁹He was assigned a grave with the wicked,
and with the rich in his death,
though he had done no violence,
nor was any deceit in his mouth.

¹⁰Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer,
and though the LORD makes his life an offering for sin,
he will prolong his days,

To believe in the crucifixion without believing in the resurrection is nothing. They are a packaged deal. The crucifixion without a resurrection would have done nothing for us.

15:5 – and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸ and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

This is the only mention we have of Jesus appearing to a larger crowd. Scholars speculate that this may have been in Galilee. We know from John's gospel that Jesus appeared in Galilee before Pentecost. We also know that most of Jesus' followers were from Galilee.

Some had fallen asleep – a euphemism for having died.

Jesus appearing to James is found in a non-biblical writing called the Gospel to the Hebrews. James very early on became the leader of the Church in Jerusalem. An eyewitness account of the risen Jesus would have been a requirement many believe.

Verse 8 is an interesting verse. The NIV I read has – to one abnormally born. Others have – to one untimely born and also on born out of due time.

The Greek word – *ektroma* – literally meant a miscarriage or untimely birth, Paul may have been speaking of his late conversion, his late re-birth.

It may have been a self-deprecating term, as he goes on to write of his unworthiness.

15:9 – For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. ¹¹ Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.

Paul uses one of his favorite words three times in verse 10. *khar'-ece* meant an unmerited kindness. Something good that we have not earned.

Even though it was unearned, he still worked harder, but it was again God's grace, perhaps in the form of the Holy Spirit, that moved him.

Not wanting to fan the flame of divisions over which leader to follow, and having already addressed that issue in the opening chapters, he quickly adds verse 11 – they all preached the same good news.

15:12 – But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

Many pagans were divided over life after death. Some believed there was none, others believed in something like the ancient Jews believed – some dim misty place. Not bad, not good.

While others believed in a spiritual existence in something like our heaven.

So, as these pagans become Christian there seems to be some debate over the resurrection and life after death.

15:13 – If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised.

The resurrection of the dead is nonnegotiable. Christ's resurrection was not some special event just to prove who he was/is.

15:14 – And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. ¹⁵ More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. ¹⁶ For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.

It is called good news for a reason! That reason is salvation from the death of sin.

In my Easter sermon I spoke about Dr. Paul Tillich, a 20th century theologian who claimed to be a Christian but did not believe in the physical resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

Someone asked me that week – can you actually be a Christian and not believe in the resurrection of Jesus. According to this passage from 1 Corinthians, the answer is no.

15:18 – Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. ¹⁹ If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

Christianity is filled with good moral values for all to live by, but as good as though are, if that were all we had then we deserve to be pitied.

Of course, this is not the end of Paul's logical process here.

15:20 – But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.

Here is one of Paul's most important affirmations of faith. He has thrown all of the what if's aside and has declared what is true. This is the gospel, the good news!

The first fruits were the first of the seasons crops given by the faithful Jewish people as an offering to God. Paul's use of the term here is referring to Jesus being the first of the dead to be resurrected.

Paul will reaffirm this statement again in verse 51.

Just as God raised Jesus to life, he will raise all of those who trust in Christ for life.

15:21 – For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. ²² For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

Like he does in Romans 5:12-18 , Paul contrasts Adam and Christ in regards to effects which followed them.

Because of his sin, Adam returned to the dust of the earth, and mortality was inherited by all of his descendants. Likewise, we can inherit Christ' immortality.

Some take the universality of all people going to heaven from this verse - so in Christ all will be made alive.

I believe that's a stretch, and to do so is taking this verse out of its context. He is, after all, talking to believers. Also, he seems to qualify this in the very next verse.

15:23 – But each in turn: Christ, the first fruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.

Here, we see that it is only those who belong to Christ who will be made alive. Paul now turns to the subject that he has brought up here in verse 23 – the return of Jesus.

15:24 – Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all **dominion/rule, authority and power**.²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is **death**.²⁷ For he “has put everything under his feet.” Now when it says that “everything” has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ.²⁸ When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.

Here we have the opposing forces. Three of them are found in verse 24. Dominion (more correct from the Greek than rule), authority and power. While it is fine to think of these three in earthly terms, I believe we should, in light of other of Paul's writings, see these as spiritual forces of opposition.

He uses the same three forces in ...

Ephesians 6:12 – For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the **rulers**, against the **authorities**, against the **powers** of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Of course, there is one more enemy to be destroyed, and that is death.

There has been a few theories of what Paul means in verse 28 when he says that God may be all in all. He uses the same phrase about Jesus in ...

Colossians 3:11 – Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

I believe the best understanding here in verse 28 is that God's glory will reign supreme over all.

Having addressed some eschatological or end times events, Paul returns to his argument against those who deny the resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:29 – Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them?

Well this is interesting! What does this mean, and what was going on?

This verse has been interpreted in various ways throughout the centuries. The best understanding seems to be that Paul is describing a practice of some people who did not agree with regular Christian teaching.

In that case, his point here is to show the disconnect in their thinking. “Why do some people get baptized on behalf of the dead if the dead are not going to be resurrected?”

The main reason that it is believed that this is some group practicing something not approved by Paul is by the Greek word he uses that we translate as ‘those’, or those people, or simply people. The Greek implies that Paul is not included in the group that he was writing about.

And then in the next verse he clarifies that he – and those who think like him – are not in that group.

Paul now shares some of his own experiences. The implication being – would anyone continue to suffer such things for a lie or a hoax?

15:30 – And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour? ³¹ I face death every day—yes, just as surely as I boast about you in Christ Jesus our Lord. ³² If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus with no more than human hopes, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised,
“Let us eat and drink,
for tomorrow we die.”

Where did Paul encounter wild beasts? Well, this is not a reference to being in something like a gladiator ring with lions. The wild beasts is a metaphor for the troubles – troubles from people – that he encountered in Ephesus.

Paul quotes from Isaiah 22:13, echoing the words of many pagans.

15:33 – Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.”

This is a quote from a Greek playwright named Menander. This line from one of his plays became a well-known proverb in the Greek world, and it’s not surprising that Paul knew the quote.

The meaning is that Christians need to stay on their guard. Spending time with people who continually proclaim falsehoods – and in this case about the resurrection – can wear down even the most faithful.

When we loosen our grip on what we believe it can lead to loosening other convictions and behaviors.

15:34 – Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame.

Paul says to stop sinning. The word he uses was not the customary word for sin. The word he used was *amartanó* which we get the word agnostic from. Not only were they sinning, but they essentially had no belief in Jesus.

In chapter 15 Paul has been writing about the resurrection. Much of what he focused on was the resurrection of Jesus, the first fruits of all who will rise from the dead.

Now he will address our resurrection body. There had been amongst the early Christians, and still among some today, some disagreement on what kind of bodies we will have in the life to come.

In a well known Jewish writing, not in our Bible, it was written that the body that was laid into the ground was the body that we would receive in the afterlife. Some early Christians believed that teaching.

1 Corinthians 15:35 – But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?” ³⁶How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. ³⁸But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body.

Now some like to point out that a seed germinates so it is not technically dead. I think we can move past that and still understand Paul’s point.

15:39 – Not all flesh is the same: People have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another.

Paul uses the word flesh here, but he is still talking about bodies, not the flesh that covers bodies.

15:40 – There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. ⁴¹The

sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor.

Heavenly bodies and earthly bodies – here Paul is writing about angels and humans. He is still showing that throughout God’s creation, things are vastly different.

There is a word we translate in these two verses as splendor. The Greek word is doxa, and we get the word doxology from this. Doxa meant praise, honor and glory.

So, all that God has created, not just here on earth, but the stars, the moon, the sun, are showing not only the splendor of creation, but the greatness of the creator.

15:42 – So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; 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.

Remember, some believed that as the body was laid into the ground, so shall it rise? No, that is not Christian teaching. And, neither is physical bodies in heaven. Our bodies in heaven will be spiritual bodies.

15:45 – So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit.

Earlier in this chapter, in verse 22 we had: For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

Like he does in Romans 5:12-18, in this chapter Paul contrasts Adam and Christ in regards to effects which followed them.

Adam became a living being, as did all that followed him.

Jesus is a life giving spirit, so it follows that following Jesus, we, too, will become a spirit.

15:46 – The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven.

Now some might think Paul doesn't have his facts straight. After all, Jesus – as part of the Trinity – has always existed. Yet, here, Paul says that the natural came first.

How would we reconcile what Paul wrote about Jesus in **Colossians 1:16** – in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible.

Here, Paul is speaking about our lives. What came first for us is the natural life, which we received as descendants of Adam.

15:48 – As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. ⁴⁹ And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.

Some have posed a number of questions to this passage. Do all people have an immortal soul? Looking just at this passage alone, there would appear to be heaven or death.

Well, never take any doctrine or theology based on one passage. Always look at the Bible in total. Let's not speculate on things not said, but instead look at what is said.

The point here is that if we are united with Jesus in this life, we will be united with Jesus in the spiritual realm.

15:50 – I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

In this verse Paul ends his teaching on the resurrection body. There is much that Paul doesn't say about our resurrected bodies, and boy wouldn't we like to know. What does a spiritual body look like?

Again, let's look at what the verse does say, and not speculate on what it doesn't say. Our heavenly bodies will not be flesh and blood. They will be spiritual and that spirit will not perish.

15:51 – Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—⁵² in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

As Paul often does, he uses sleep as a euphemism for death. This passage can be challenging. Scholars believe that Paul was expecting the return of Jesus at any time.

So when he writes that we will not all die/sleep, does that mean that those who have died are still waiting to the return of Jesus to receive their spiritual bodies?

There are Christians and even denominations who hold that to be true. That we will be in a state of soul sleep until the return of Jesus.

But again, let's look at more than one passage.

2 Corinthians 5:8 – We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

In light of this text from 2 Corinthians, I believe that 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 spoke to them and to us. Those who belong to the Lord will be changed in a flash. Death is only the end of the perishable body, but the imperishable life in Christ continue in the twinkling of an eye.

15:53 – For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

Paul uses a word in this verse that he uses only here and in the next verse, and once in 1 Timothy. The Greek word is *athanasia* (ath-an-as-ee'-ah), and we translate it as immortality.

Literally the word meant without death.

The Old Testament contains no word meaning immortal. There is some use of the word in some intertestamental writings that are not in the Bible.

The Jews of the Old Testament were more like the Sadducees, they did not believe in a life after death. Some believed in a dim misty place called Sheol, but it was nothing to look forward to.

Many of the pagan Greeks believed in an immortal soul, but Paul's use of the word in this context is different. Immortality is not something that belongs to us, but instead it is something God does when God raises us from the dead.

Remember, verse 45 said that Jesus is a life giving spirit. Immortality is given to us.

15:54 – When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

“Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?”

The first quote comes from Isaiah 25:8.

The second from Hosea 13:14.

15:56 – The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

Sin brings death. How did sin become so powerful? This verse tells us – from the law.

I believe that by law Paul does mean the law of Moses, but also something more.

He's talking about a natural law of the fallen world in which we live.

Listen to what Paul wrote in Romans 7:21ff.

Romans 7:21 – I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ²² For in my inner being I delight in God's law; ²³ but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me.

Paul follows up that section in Romans 7 with a thanksgiving to God, and he does the same here in 1 Corinthians 15.

15:57 – But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We have victory in Jesus over the sting of death and the power of sin. This victory changes the meaning of physical death for the believer. Instead of separation from God it means eternity with God.

15:58 – Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Stand firm and do not be moved – in light of what we've covered in this letter, Paul is encouraging them not to let their culture shape their actions. Instead of that, labor for the Lord.

Chapter 16

Chapter 16 is the last chapter of this letter, and in it Paul addresses some personal matters. First, he writes about an offering from them.

16:1 – Now about the collection for the Lord's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do.

Your translation may have the collection for the saints. The Greek word is saints, literally holy ones. This was what Paul called Christians. Holy means set apart.

So, literally Christians are to be set apart – set apart from the rest of culture in that we serve the Lord.

We are not given any information about the circumstances for the church in Jerusalem, but there was an obvious need. Perhaps it had something to do with persecution from the Jews. Paul mentions such persecution in a few of his letters.

How interesting that the gentile Christians would be collecting aid for the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem given the resistance of many of them about including the gentiles in the church.

16:2 – On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. ³ Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. ⁴ If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me.

In this passage Paul tells them to give weekly, individually, and proportionally. They are also told to do this on the first day of the week. The first day of the week is Sunday.

We aren't specifically told that they are to do this at their gathering as a church, or to set it aside at home. We can't even read from this that they worshipped on the first day of the week, as do most Christians today.

We do know from other writings outside of the Bible that Christians early on would meet on Sunday, as that was the day that Jesus rose from the dead.

How much were they to give? A Tithe? Actually, tithing is never mentioned in the New Testament. Tithing should be a goal for us, but the only instructions Paul gives is: a sum of money in keeping with your income (NIV); put aside and save whatever extra you earn (NRSV); ay by him in store, as God hath prospered him (KJV).

The Greek just says a portion, or part of, their prosperity. Keep in mind, many of them were slaves, and had very little, but even they were to give.

Indeed, even the poor would give from what they prospered.

Do you prosper? That is, do you have anything left over after your food and shelter? Whatever you have after food and shelter is your prosper. Pray about what you should give from your prosper.

Now Paul shares some travel plans.

16:5 – After I go through Macedonia, I will come to you—for I will be going through Macedonia. ⁶ Perhaps I will stay with you for a while, or even spend the winter, so that you can help me on my journey, wherever I go. ⁷ For I do not want to see you now and make only a passing visit; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. ⁸ But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, ⁹ because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.

He planned to travel through Macedonia, and those travels are chronicled in Acts 19 & 21.

We know from Acts 20:3 that he did spend the winter in Greece, so perhaps some of that was in Corinth.

Something to note in verse 9 – a great door for effective work has opened to Paul, and there were many who opposed it.

Folks, when God sets something good for us, something important for us to do, there will be opposition.

Don't let opposition to what God has called you to do keep you from following the will of God. If God has called you to it then God will lead you through it.

16:10 – When Timothy comes, see to it that he has nothing to fear while he is with you, for he is carrying on the work of the Lord, just as I am. ¹¹ No one, then, should treat him with contempt. Send him on his way in peace so that he may return to me. I am expecting him along with the brothers.

Back in chapter 4, Paul had first written that Timothy would visit them soon. Actually, chapter 4:17 said that Timothy was already on the way. However, he was probably on the way via other churches that he would visit first.

So, this letter was expected to reach them before Timothy.

16:12 – Now about our brother Apollos: I strongly urged him to go to you with the brothers. He was quite unwilling to go now, but he will go when he has the opportunity.

Apollos was an important person in the New Testament period, and he and Paul did work together at times.

Some believe that the New Testament book of Hebrews was written by him.

The evidence I've seen makes it certainly seem plausible.

16:13 – Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. ¹⁴Do everything in love.

These ethical instructions may seem to be a little out of place in this closing chapter that seems to be full of personal words, but Paul is simply wrapping it all up.

It's been a long letter, and as his final thoughts come to mind, he keeps adding them.

Paul has written about the primacy of love in this letter, so it makes sense that he feels the need to get that out there once again.

16:15 – You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the Lord's people.

Paul had mentioned Stephanas back in ...

1:16 – Yes, I also baptized the household of **Stephanas**; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.

The word we translate as service is diakonia (dee-ak-on-ee'-ah). It literally meant waiting tables, but became the word used in Christian churches for ministry.

16:15b – I urge you, brothers and sisters, ¹⁶ to submit to such people and to everyone who joins in the work and labors at it.

While we are not told of any formal position that Stephanas, or others, had, but they were recognized here as leaders in the church in Corinth.

Paul asks the Christians to submit to them. This is something Paul mentions in several of his letters – submitting to their leaders.

1 Thessalonians 5:12 – we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you. ¹³ Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work.

16:17 – I was glad when Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus arrived, because they have supplied what was lacking from you. ¹⁸ For they refreshed my spirit and yours also. Such men deserve recognition.

Other than what we have here and from various legends we don't know anything about these three men. Their names were Gentile names. We know Stephanas was baptized by Paul.

They visited Paul around the time he wrote 1 Corinthians, most likely in Ephesus. Paul wrote that they refreshed his spirit. Most likely this meant that they gave him information about the Corinthians church that he did not get from their letter (which 1 Corinthians was a response to).

16:12 said: Now about our brother Apollos: *I strongly urged him to go to you with the brothers.*

The brothers were most likely Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus, and they probably delivered this letter to the church.

16:19 – The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house.

Her name was Prisca, and that is what Paul wrote. We often see it written as Priscilla. She and her husband Aquila were important church leaders.

In Acts 18:26 we read this about their meeting with Apollos: *When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.*

Prisca was and is recognized as a leader in the early church, and certainly a teacher, maybe a preacher.

16:20 – All the brothers and sisters here send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

A holy kiss is also mentioned in 2 Corinthians, Romans and 1 Thessalonians. For a time it became a part of formal worship.

16:21 – I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand.

Paul would often end a letter written in his own hand, sort of authenticating the letter.

16:22 – If anyone does not love the Lord, let that person be cursed! Come, Lord!

What's up with Paul? Cursing folks?
Most likely this refers to those in Corinth who would teach other doctrine, or cause divisions, or lead people astray. It was not a general cursing of all non-Christians.

Paul wrote, Come Lord. The KJV has Maranatha. Paul wrote maranatha, which was an Aramaic phrase that Paul wrote untranslated in the Greek language letter.

16:23 – The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.

²⁴ My love to all of you in Christ Jesus. Amen.

So there it is, Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth. But remember, especially those of you who were with me from the beginning of this study of 1 Corinthians – this isn't really his first letter to Corinth.

We know this from ...

1 Corinthians 5:9 – I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people

That first letter – or Letter A was written before 55. 1 Corinthians was written around the year 55 while Paul was in Ephesus.

In this letter there were four main areas of discussion.

Chapters 1-4 discussed divisions within the church. Much of those divisions focused on various teachers. Seems even back then people followed teachers and preachers instead of Jesus.

Chapters 5 & 6 dealt with immorality and marriage.

Chapters 7-14 dealt with Christian liberty (food offered to idols) and orderly worship.

Chapter 15 was on the doctrine of the resurrection.