

*Paul's Epistles  
To  
The Corinthians*



*Bible Study Series  
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# *The Epistles to the Corinthians*

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## ***Introduction:***

### **The City of Corinth:**

Because of its geographical location, the city of Corinth was considered to be one of the greatest trading and commercial centers of the ancient world.

The southern part of the modern Greece (Called Achaia at that time) was connected to the northern part (Called Macedonia at that time) by a very narrow strip of land (Isthmus) which does not exceed four miles across.

On this very narrow strip, stood the city of Corinth. So, all the north to south traffic of Greece had to pass through Corinth.

And because of the severe wind and current eddies of the Aegean sea, navigation was very dangerous around the southern part of Greece, and the trading ships coming from east to west in the Mediterranean or vice versa, had to avoid it by passing through Corinth.

And what they did at that time was as follows:

If the ship is small enough, they drag it out of the water to the land, then roll it on wooden rollers across the four mile strip of land to the other side and re-launch it. But if the ship is big they empty the goods and carry it on animals across the four mile strip to the other side and load it on another ship.

And although this seems to be a tedious work to us, yet it saved them time, money and possible death than to risk the other trip around Greece which was over 200 miles long.

So, for the sailors as well as the traders, Corinth was the vanity fair of the ancient world, where they found and did everything they could possibly wish for or desire, from trading to gambling to exotic foods and drinks to night life and all other pleasures that their hungry lust could consume.

But on the good side, Corinth was the place where the isthmian games were held, and these were second only to the Olympic Games.

All the above mentioned features made Corinth a very rich, popular and populous city.

And as expected from any sea-port city where the good, the bad and ugly lives and where strangers from every walk of life gather, Corinth became an evil and immoral city with a reputation of wickedness so well known that it became a saying that he who lives a drunken, immoral, and reckless life was called Corinthian.

And above the hill there towered the Acropolis, and in there stood the great temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. And attached to that temple, there were one thousand priestesses who were sacred prostitutes, who descend down from the Acropolis at night and pile their trade upon the streets of Corinth.

And the history of Corinth goes back to a very ancient time, when it was famous by building ships. And in 140 B.C., Mummius the Roman general captured the

city and devastated it into a desolate heap of ruins, and it remained as such till 40 A.D. (i.e. 100 years) when Emperor Julius Caesar rebuilt it, and it became a Roman colony.

Then it became the capital of Achaia, and remained as such till Paul's days.

And the population of Corinth was a mixture of:

**1- Roman Veterans.**

As mentioned above Corinth was rebuilt and became a colony. A colony had a unique status in the Roman Empire, because after a soldier serves his time (fifteen years) in the Emperor's Praetorian, he is granted a sum of gold and a piece of land in a newly - founded city called colony. These colonies were scattered all over the Roman Empire in important strategic locations. By doing this, the Emperor served himself and the loyal soldiers since these colonies will be a sort of safe-guard and watch – tower for the Empire being populated by loyal retired well rewarded praetorian guards. Add to this uniqueness, this colony though part of the Roman Empire, yet it governs its own self; a situation of a government inside a government. No other city in the whole Roman Empire enjoyed such a privilege except for its sister colonies.

And it is worth mentioning here, that Paul was aware of these colonies and their importance that he concentrated his preaching in them, and as example of these colonies apart from Corinth, was Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Ephesus, Colosse, Pergamos, Philadelphia, Smyrna, Thyatira, Derbe, and many others.

**2- The merchants** from all over the Roman Empire at least, if not from other parts of the world.

**3- Jews** who found many new opportunities there.

**4- Some others:** Phoenicians, Phrygians, people from the east, and Greek philosophers.

In short, Corinth was inhabited by a mixture of ex-soldiers, Jews, Philosophers, merchants, sailors, slaves, trade-people, hucksters and agents of every form of vice.

And one can feel the kind of culture the Corinthians led, and their life style from the way Paul talked to them in this Epistle especially in 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 5:1, and 6:10.

**Paul's work in Corinth:**

Paul's first arrival to Corinth was during his 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary trip to Asia Minor which led him to cross over from Troas (Troy) to Europe.

As you recall, the Holy Scripture tells us in Acts 16: 9 that Paul while he was in Troas in Asia Minor he saw a vision at night: a man of Macedonia, stood by him pleading to cross over to Macedonia and help them. And the rest of Chapter 16 and chapter 17 describe how Paul crossed over to Macedonia preaching the good news in Philippi first, then in Thessalonica, then in Berea, then in Athens (a very unpleasant trip where he was jailed with Silas in Philippi and was asked to leave the city, and in Thessalonica, he was opposed by the Jews who caused a serious uproar and ran him off the city, then followed him to Berea and stirred the crowd against him and ran him off that city also, and in Athens he was able to preach the gospel without that much trouble). And in Chapter 18 verse one the Holy Scripture tells us about his arrival to Corinth where he stayed for 18 months,

an exceptionally long period of time longer than his stay in any other city where he preached the gospel with the single exception of Ephesus where he stayed three years.

In Corinth, because, he was of the same trade as theirs (tent-makers), Paul lived with Aquila and Priscilla, a Jewish couple who fled Rome at the time of Claudius Caesar who ordered all the Jews out of Rome in the year 52 A.D.

Paul reasoned with the Jews in the Synagogue on the Sabbath, and persuaded many of them and of the Greeks as well. Then he was joined by Timothy and Silas who had stayed behind in Macedonia after his flee from there; and he kept preaching the gospel there for one year and half. During this period Gallio was appointed a proconsul on Achaia. The Jews wanted to take advantage of him being new to the job, further more he was famous of being gentle and charming; so they brought Paul for trial before him with a charge of teaching contrary to their law. But Gallio refused to hear the case, and Paul was free to work in Corinth till he left it to Syria.

#### ***Author of the Epistles:***

Paul, no doubt. He gave his name as the author in 1<sup>st</sup> Cor 1:1& in 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 1:1

#### ***Time and background of the Epistles:***

In the year 55 A.D. when Paul was in Ephesus, it came to his knowledge that things were not going well in Corinth, and he wrote a letter to the church. But before going into further details of how many letters he wrote to the church, we must always remember that all the Pauline letters were not collected and put in order until the year 90 A.D. or shortly after. And when the Corinthian letters were collected, they were not all discovered at the same time nor they were in the same order we know now, plus we should understand that these letters were not divided into chapters and verses as we see them now (dividing the Holy Scripture in chapters did not occur till the 13<sup>th</sup> century; and further division to verses did not happen till the 16<sup>th</sup> century), and lastly there is a great possibility that some of them or at least a 3<sup>rd</sup> letter is / are missing as we shall explain soon and as did happen in the case of the letter to the church of Laodicea mentioned in Col. 4:16. :

In 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 5:9, Paul says "I wrote to you in my Epistle, not to keep company with sexually immoral people." So, this obviously refers to a previous letter. Some scholars believe that this letter was never found, and some others believe that it is contained in 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 6:14 - 7:1, which seems to be out of context, and if true, then it reflects the fact that it is not in the proper order. And some scholars refer to that passage ( 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 6:14 – 7:1), as "***the previous letter***", which Paul referred to in 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 5:9.

#### **What did Paul hear and from whom?**

- (1) From the household of Chloe (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 1:11): that concerned divisions in the church.
- (2) From Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 16:17): They were visiting Ephesus. They briefed Paul about what was going on in the church.

(3) From a letter from the church itself (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 7:1), asking Paul for guidance on some of their problems. And in answer to all that, Paul wrote the 1<sup>st</sup> Epistle, and sent it apparently by the hands of Timothy (1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 4:17).

### **What was the result?**

Things got worse than before. And apparently Paul had to pay them a visit, as it is obvious from 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 12:14 where Paul says; "Now for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time, I am ready to come to you." And in 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 13:1, 2 he says: "This will be the 3<sup>rd</sup> time that I am coming to you." As we see, this indicates that he visited them twice before. After all, Corinth is only 2 or 3 days sailing from Ephesus, so he must have done a quick visit to stabilize the situation.

### **Then what?**

Apparently after the visit, things reached a climax of rottenness, which compelled Paul to write an exceedingly severe letter; because in 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 2:4, Paul says: "For out of much affliction and anguish of heart, I wrote to you with many tears.", and in 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 7:8, he wrote: "For even if I made you sorry with my letter, I do not regret it; though I regret it. For I perceive that the same Epistle made you sorry, though only for a while." It is obvious from the above that in a state of severe anguish of his mind, Paul wrote this severe letter, which is referred to by scholars as "**The severe letter.**"

### **Where is this severe letter?**

Has it been lost like the "**The previous letter**" mentioned above on page 4? Or is it there included or sensed in one of his two letters known to us now as 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians?

When we read 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians more carefully, we find that the first 9 chapters reflect a smooth friendly talk. But chapters 10 – 13, the tone abruptly changed to the most heart broken cry that Paul ever wrote. He has been profoundly hurt, insulted and slandered. He was attacked right and left: in his appearance, in his speech, in his apostleship, and in his honesty.

Most scholars believe that these chapters (10 – 13) are "**The severe letter.**", and that it was mingled and mixed with the other papyrus papers or parchment or whatever material was used at that time, when they were collected.

So, one would be correct if we say that chapters 10 – 13 should be before chapters 1 – 9 to be in the correct chronological order. Furthermore, we do know that this 2<sup>nd</sup> Epistle was sent by the hands of Titus as it is obvious from 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 2:13 ; and 7:13., while the 1<sup>st</sup> one was sent by the hands of Timothy as mentioned above.

### **Then what?**

Paul was so worried about the percussions that this sever letter may have caused, so much so that he did not wish to wait for Titus to come back with an answer, but he set out to meet him in Macedonia as obvious from 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 2:13 ; and 7:5, 13, and learned from him that all was well, so in Macedonia probably in Philippi, he sat down and wrote what we know now as chapters 1 – 9 of 2<sup>nd</sup>

Corinthians which is practically a **“Letter of reconciliation”** which is very smooth and friendly as mentioned above.

**So**, in summary here is the correspondence of Paul to the Corinthians in a Chronological order:

- (1) **“The previous letter”** which may be contained in 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 6:14 – 7:1.
- (2) The arrival of Chloe’ household, Stephanas, Fortunatus, Achaicus, and the letter from the Church.
- (3) 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians was wrote as a reply, and sent by Timothy.
- (4) The situation became worse, and Paul had to pay them a visit.
- (5) Apparently, this did not help, and things became even worse.

So, **“The severe letter “**was sent by the hand of Titus. This letter is thought to be chapters 10 – 13 of 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians.

- (6) Paul unable to wait for answer, went and met Titus in Macedonia, and wrote probably from Philippi a **“Letter of reconciliation”** which is the first 9 chapters of 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians,

This is the sequence of events as it could have plausibly happened, and I would suggest carrying this study in this same chronological order, to see if it really fits. And by no means I am trying to change the order of the Scripture; this is not my purpose or intention, but it is only for the purpose of this study, so when one reads 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 5:9 where Paul says I wrote to you in my Epistle, then one knows that probably there was a previous letter or actually there was a previous letter because Paul says so, and probably it was lost or not found, or it could have been mislaid when collected and was put in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians. in the space between 6:14 and 7:1. And that is the purpose of any study.

### ***Problems in the Church:***

As one would expect from such a cosmopolitan city not only in race, but also in backgrounds as there was the philosopher as well as the uneducated; the Jew, the Greek and the barbarian; the slave and the free; the divided families with a member believer and the other unbeliever; and above all there was the permissive who found no shame in sleeping with his step mother.

The church was not any different because these constituted its population.

So, Paul has to deal with all these moral issues as well as some spiritual issues such as the division in the church some saying they are of Paul, and others of Apollos, and others of Christ. There were other issues such as talking in tongues and prophesying, and breaking bread and communion, and divorce.

### ***Purpose of the Epistle:***

From the above, it seems that one can easily deduct the purpose, so there is no need for unnecessary repetition.

### ***Recipients of the Epistle:***

Obviously the saints (believers) or the church of Corinth.(1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 1:2 & 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 1:1).

**Outline of the Study:**

- (1) The Previous letter. (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 6:14 – 7:1).
- (2) 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians.
- (3) The Severe letter. (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians Chapters 10 – 13).
- (4) The Letter of Reconciliation. (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians Chapters 1 – 9).

## **The Previous letter** **2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 6:14 – 7:1**

Of course, it should not escape our mind, that this letter being contained in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Epistle, it lacks the characteristics of a complete letter. So it lacks the name of the author, the name of the recipient, the greetings, the conclusion, and the closing statement, although these are all included in the whole 2<sup>nd</sup> Epistle.

Yet it can also mean, that it may be that all the letter or it could be a section of it and the rest is lost; remember that the papyrus papers were brittle and easily breakable.

So, we find ourselves directly facing the heart of the subject or the purpose of this previous letter.

When one reads verse 7:2, one finds that it is in direct continuation with verse 6:13. So, let us put the two together and see what it reads:

***“Now in return for the same, you also be open. Open your hearts to us. We have wronged no one. We have cheated no one.”***

This shows that what is in between these two verses, does not belong there, and that is the subject of this study.

When we read this passage, we find that it is mostly exhortation and encouragement to live a holy life nothing else, the thing which one would expect from a caring father like Paul to write to a baby church trying to grow and thrive amidst a filthy city as mentioned above. And this might as well fit to be a short letter which he wrote till he gets a chance to see them again or send someone like Timothy or Titus when available.

We must also remember that at the time he wrote this **previous letter**, he had not yet received any news from Corinth, so he has nothing else to write except this exhorting encouraging letter.

Here Paul urges the Corinthian believers not to be under the same yoke with the unbelievers. The Old Testament reference to this is Deut. 22:10 where the Scripture says: *“Thou shalt not plough with an ox and an ass together.”*

And when we look at it, we really find it very odd to tie an ox and an ass together under the same yoke, simply they cannot go together, they are not made to work

in harmony with each other, and they are incompatible. So also is the believer and the unbeliever. Then he puts several examples of incompatibility, such as: Righteousness and lawlessness; Light and darkness; Christ and Bellial; Believer and unbeliever; Temple of God and temple of Idols. And as one can see, each one is completely contrary to the other. The bottom line is that the whole passage, calls for not holding any sort of fellowship with unbelievers.

Of course as we can see, this poses a great challenge to the Christian Corinthians, since they live in such a diverse population as mentioned above. But that is the call for every Christian. There are some things in this world that the Christian should leave out of his or her life. The best biblical example to this, is the calling of God to Abraham; "**Get out of your country, and from your kindred and from your father's house**" So, as we see, when God elected to have Abraham, He made him or actually ordered him to segregate himself from his surroundings.

For us who have been born or brought up in Christian families, may not appreciate how much those people who came recently to faith, my have suffered. at that time, a new believer may have to leave his trade, wife, children, and friends.

Imagine what would a new Christian builder do if he was asked to build a temple for an idol? Or a new Christian sailor assigned to a ship for slave trading? Or a new Christian soldier to displace Christians and burn their houses? Or a separated pagan wife who took the children away from their new Christian father? And the list goes on and on. It is said that a new Christian in the early days of Christianity ultimately will loose his job because of his faith. Many others lost their inheritance.

Another aspect of life which we may not be aware of, and that is the social life. Many a new Christian had to kiss it good bye. The custom in the pagan world was that the social gatherings and formal occasions were done in one or another of the idol temples in which a libation pouring of wine for their god before and after the meal was done, what would the new Christian do who attends such occasions?

How many children, husband, or wife were disowned because of their faith? That explains what Christ our Lord meant when He said: "**Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth, I did not come to bring peace but sword. For I have come to set a son against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.**" (Mat. 10:34,35)

However difficult and hard it may be, the fact remains that a Christian cannot do or keep certain things and be a Christian at the same time.

And this concludes the first letter known as **the previous letter** in this series.

# ***First Corinthians***

As we mentioned briefly in the outline, this letter was written in response to the news which Paul received through the different sources mentioned above under the heading “**problems in the church**” on page 6.

So, we shall find that he will deal methodically and systematically with each problem one at a time.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Verses 1:1- 2 “Paul called to be an apostle.....”**

Don't we often get apprehensive when we are to talk about a sensitive matter, and we often don't know where to start, and sometimes even we wish that God would take away that cup from us?

That is the situation I feel which was confronting Paul in this epistle.

He is about to deal with very delicate matters. And he is in the very need of God's help. And I am sure he had prayed day and night before starting to write, asking God for guidance, wisdom, tact, and courage as one can see from the first ten verses where he mentioned **Jesus Christ** ten times, that is apart from mentioning **God** five times as well.

Of course there is nothing wrong with that; on the contrary it shows us the proper way of dealing with such matters, to always put Jesus Christ our Lord in front of our eyes and in every step we take.

So, in the light of the guidance of our Lord, Paul starts his letter in the usual manner announcing his name as the writer, and the church of God at Corinth as the recipient.

First, he states the fact that he is **called** by Jesus Christ to be his messenger.

This right away tells the Corinthians that his authority is not from his own self or from another human being, but it is from God.

Then he says the **church of God** at Corinth. And again this right away tells them that it is not the church of Corinth, or the church of men, it is the church of God. This is exactly like when we say the University of San Francisco at Fresno or at Sacramento, or at Bakersfield. It is all one university but in different places. So also is the church of God. It is one church but in different cities. It denotes the unity of the church in spite of its different locations. It is the church of God no matter where it is.

Does this have any bearing on what is happening in the church? Yes indeed.

The news which he received from the house hold of Chloe declared a division in the church, some saying they are of Paul and others of Apollos, and yet others of Jesus. So to them it was a church of men, and right away Paul wanted to put every thing in its right place.

Then he describes the congregation as:-

1- **Sanctified**, or consecrated or set apart for God. How are they sanctified?

That was by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This is the mark of the Christian

He or she is the one whom Christ died for.

2- **Called** to be saints, which means devoted to the possession and the service of God, or in other words to be holy. This puts them in a different and special category for they belong to and serve God, not to Satan, an idol, or even an angel as some declare themselves nowadays. This description is not new to Paul, for the Jews used to describe themselves as holy people.

And to be holy, one must show in his or her daily life in a way that shows that he or she belongs to God.

3- **With all who** in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ.

This describes the universal church. It doesn't matter where this congregation is so long as they call on the name of Jesus Christ.

Then Paul says "**both theirs and ours**" describing Jesus Christ as Lord, meaning that He is not Lord of one congregation and not the other. He is Lord of all, this reminds me by the hymnal praise "**And crown Him Lord of all**".

God loves every and each one of us as if he is the only one to be loved.

**Greetings: vs. 3 "Grace to you and peace....."**

Paul's greeting is the grace and peace of God from God Himself and not from men. And I suppose he is right in that, because who else can give peace and grace except God, and as you know, the beauty of it is that it is free. Yes, free, God does not want or require anything in return. Just trust in His word and all will be yours.

And again, he puts **Grace** which was a familiar Greek greeting; and **peace** which was a familiar Jewish greeting.

**Thanksgiving: vs. 4-9 "I thank my God....."**

In this section, Paul thanks God for three noticeable matters:-

1) **The Grace of God** which was given to them, which enriched them in every knowledge and utterance.

2) **The gifts of God** which were given to them.

It is interesting here to note that Paul used the word "**Charisma**" in the Greek origin, which is translated into "gifts" in the English language. And the word Charisma literally means a free gift to someone who does not deserve it.

What was that free gift? That free gift came from God in two ways:

a- The greatest gift of all is in one category on its own, and that is **Salvation**, coming out of the sheer generosity of the love of God, which is eternal life (Rom. 6:23).

b- The other gifts which are translated as talents in the parable of the rich man and his servants uttered by Jesus in Mat. 25:14-30.

We possess these gifts temporarily as special equipment for glorifying God each in its own way, e.g. gift of healing, speaking, teaching, singing, music, art, talking in tongues, prophesying, and any other talent that man possess,

all are from God, and so, they are held in trust with us. So one has to use this trust wisely for the glory of God, and not for his own glory or benefit; because we are going to give an account of them at the day of judgment.

3) **The day of the Lord**, this is the End day or the Day of Judgment.

But why do we or Paul thank God for that?

First because it is one of God's days which He gave us and we should thank God for everything He gives.

Secondly, because at the time when every unbeliever dreads and fears it, yet to the believer it is the day of joy when we join our Lord in eternity, and let no one have any doubt about that, because though it is not happening now, yet it is as sure as the air we breath.

We are not afraid of this day, because that is the day when we shall be clothed not in our own merits but in the merits of Jesus Christ who imputed them in our account.

**Vs. 10-17 The first problem: Division among them.**

**“Now, I plead with you brethren,.....”**

Here, Paul is about to rebuke them for the division they have created in the church. He knows or actually intends to do that. But at the same time, he does not want to loose them. So, he starts softly calling them brothers, and then he repeats it in the next verse. Not only that, but he uses the word **“I plead with you”**, which is far softer than saying “I tell you or I order you”. And by addressing them as brothers, he reminds them about loving each other as brothers do, and that he loves them too. And then, he doesn't want to refer directly to their division, but he says that he pleads with them to speak the same thing, and to be perfectly joined together.

Then, in case they don't know what he is talking about, he tells them about what he had heard.

It is not unusual that a group or another in a church may look up to a pastor, an associate pastor or a visiting pastor, and make an ideal of him and stand for him in any discussion or dispute. That is what had happened in that church.

But let us look at the probable factors that could be the cause:-

**First:** To the Jews, Paul was liberal, calling for freedom from the rituals of the law, and other things like circumcision, foods, days, feasts and the traditions of the fathers. Some may have even considered him a traitor to the Jewish nation. On the other hand, to the Gentiles, he is a hero, because of this same freedom.

**Second:** Apollos who according to Acts 18:24 was a Jew from Alexandria, eloquent man and mighty in the Scripture. And Alexandria at that time, was the center of intellectual activity, not only in science but also in theology, and it was the mother of allegoric interpretation of the Scripture, where they make the most profound or vague meaning out of a simple statement.

An example to that is the fact mentioned in Gen. 14:14, and 17:27 that Abraham circumcised **318** of his male household. Now they allegorize this as follows:

**18** in the Roman language which used letters for the numbers was written in letters which happened to be the first two letters of the name Jesus. And **300** was written in a letter which happened to be in the shape of a cross. So, they came up with the conclusion that this innocent incidence of circumcision of the Old Testament was a foretelling or a prophesy of the crucifixion of Jesus.

In short, Apollos must have come up with some bizarre and fancy deductions like that which may have found its way to the hearts of some of them especially the

philosophers (We should not forget that this is Greece), and some others who did not make any sense of it at all.

**Third:** Cephas who was Peter (that is his Jewish name). And we all know that Peter was the Apostle to the Jews while Paul was the Apostle to the Gentiles. So, it must have been the Jewish believers who found comfort in following him, since he is still conserving their heritage.

**Fourth:** Jesus Christ. This group may have been the most proper thinking group of all, though on the other hand, they may have been the most rigid unbending party and the most judgmental and self-righteous of them all. And they may have thought or even claimed that they were the only true Christians.

It may seem that I have invented all that, but don't we see this in our churches all the time?

Then comes the question of baptism. Paul did not hate baptism that he thanks God that he did not baptize except very few, and he named them. On the contrary, he said that, so no one can claim that he belongs to Paul being baptized by him.

Then he adds that Christ sent him to preach the Gospel not to baptize. And to do that, he used the simplest words, otherwise the message of the cross (Salvation) would be made of no effect. This means that if he used his own wisdom and big fancy words, he might attract people around him and in this case the message of the Cross will be nullified.

This goes very well with what he said before, that some claimed they belong to him.

### **Vs. 18-25 Wisdom, Stumbling block, and foolishness.**

**“For the message of the cross is foolishness.....”**

To understand this section, one must go to the basics.

The basic teaching of Christianity is that after God had talked in the past to the fathers by the prophets, He in this age has talked to us in His Son Jesus Christ the long waited for Messiah Who came in the flesh born by a virgin, to die for our sins and redeem us to Himself. He was nailed to the cross, buried and resurrected on the third day. Then He ascended into Heaven, sitting on the right hand of Power interceding for us, and all that is free out of His love and mercy. Now, this to the Jews is a stumbling block because it does not fit in their understanding of the Messiah, and being free it does not fit also in their law of works, plus it is written in their books **“Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.”** (Duet.21:23 & Gal. 3:13)

As for the Greeks who call themselves philosophers (lovers of wisdom), it is a foolish story or a myth, that no one in his sane mind would believe.

As far as they are concerned, a suffering God cannot be God, because God cannot feel anything and the fact that God became a man is stupid and revolting. And we also know that the Gnostics believed that God is good because He is a spirit, and man is evil because he is matter. So, it is impossible for God to be a man. And lastly, the Greeks were so intoxicated with fine words and talks, that a Christian preacher with his blunt message seemed crude and uncultured, deserves nothing but to be laughed at and ridiculed.

And from the entire above, one can sense that Christianity had no success in such community, but as Paul says;” What looks like God’s foolishness is wiser than men’s wisdom; and what looks like God’s weakness is stronger than men’s strength.”

### **Vs. 26-31 Glory of the Lord.**

**“For you see your calling, brethren.....”**

It is true that apart from few rich, well to do, and educated members, the earlier church was composed mostly of poor, modest, and fairly educated people, and a good number of them, were slaves. But thank God for that; for those who had no hope in life, lived in hope, and those who were considered nothing, became real humans with dignity and pride, sufficient to say they became children of God. Perhaps that is the whole purpose of God’s wisdom, so that we can always remember what we were, and what we are now, and the cause of that is the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ as Paul said **“That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.”** (Phil. 3:10), so that no one can boast about anything, because everything came and comes and still will come from God. And as Paul says **“He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.”** And this is a quotation from Jeremiah 9:23, 24.

Then in verse 30, Paul states four things about what Jesus Christ is to us:

- 1- He is **our wisdom**. We walk, move, and live by His wisdom.
- 2- He is **our righteousness**. We can never be on right terms with God except through Him.
- 3- He is **our sanctification**. Not with any other than Jesus, that we can keep ourselves clean, pure and sorted out for Him.
- 4- He is **our redemption**. Who else died for us? No One, then He must be our sole redeemer!

## **Chapter 2**

### **God’s Wisdom and Spirit**

#### **Vs. 2:1-16**

We all know that Greeks claimed to be philosophers, and nothing pleases their hearts and attracts their attention more than the talks of philosophy. But here Paul tells them quite blankly that he is not a philosopher, and that he did not come to speak to them in big fancy words as they would expect, but he came to narrate the story of Jesus Christ and the cross in its simplest way. And yet you accepted it gladly which proves that the power is not in the wisdom of men, but in the Holy Spirit and the wisdom of God.

The facts about the cross is simple and basic as Paul mentioned, but as the Christian matures in faith, he needs more teaching about what these facts mean. It is a matter of difference of the stage of faith they are in; but unfortunately a good number of people become content with the stage they are in, and they don’t want to learn or know any more.

So, Paul says in verse 7 **“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery”**.

Actually the original Greek word that is translated as mystery, means a hidden meaning to those in the elementary stage, but is quite clear to those in the higher stage. And if that is the case with Christians how much more true would it be to the non-Christians?

So, in other word, and as Barclay put it; Paul is saying we explain things which are only clear to those who have given their heart to Christ, and they will understand.

But let us not be mistaken; this teaching is not of the wisdom of men, it is the gift of God that came to the world with Jesus Christ. All knowledge is given by God. And as a student seeking more and more knowledge from his teacher, so we should seek and strive to understand, and God will give without limits.

Then in verse 10, Paul adds that these things which may be hidden from others have been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit.

Then in verse 11, Paul moves to the role of the Spirit in knowing the things of God, putting down a human analogy saying that as no one can know about the inward of a person except his own spirit, so also is God. It is only by this Spirit of God that His thoughts can be revealed to us, and we can have an intimate knowledge of Him. So, in other words, it is the person who has the Spirit of God in him that understands the things of God; but to the one, who does not have the Spirit of God in him, he would not understand the things of God and it may even looks foolish to him. And in verse 12, he states that we have that Spirit which enables us to understand the meaning of all these free gifts of God.

And the word “we” here means the believers. But for the others who live by the flesh, they don’t have this gift. And it is only when Christ dwells in us that we become immune to the worldly life style and its sequences.

Why does Paul so intensely stress on this Spiritual life? This is discussed next.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **The second problem: Not living by the Spirit.**

##### **Vs. 3:1-9**

We referred to part of this problem in the first problem, which was division among themselves. Now Paul is getting to the roots of this division.

So, he tells them bluntly that they do not conduct themselves in a spiritual manner. And he blames their division to their earthly (according to the flesh) conduct; and because they think and behave earthly, they cannot grasp the Spiritual matters. They have allowed the lower side of their nature to dominate their thinking and action. To relate lovingly to others is praised by God. That is why when Jesus was asked about the greatest commandment, He answered **“you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.”** And He did not stop at this point, because He felt that this answer is not complete, so He continued:” **This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it;” you shall love your neighbor as yourself.**” (Mat. 22:37, 38) So here, Jesus made it quite clear that loving the neighbor is of equal importance to loving God.

Now, if a person is at variance with others, quarrelsome, argumentative, trouble-maker, then that person is not of God. And if he or she is distant from others, then that person is away from God too. And if he or she is divided with others, then that person is divided with God too.

Then Paul moves to show the benefit of unity; so he says one may sow the seeds, another may water it, but neither can make it grow, because only God can do that. So, there is no place for either to claim anything over the other, and both are servants of God, the one Lord and one Master.

### **Foundation and building:**

#### **Vs.3:10-15**

Paul as we read in Acts was always on the move. So in every city he visited. He had to lay the foundation and leave to another. But what is the foundation he lays? That was Jesus Christ and his message which is the message of the cross. Hear what he says in 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 2:2 **“For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”** This is the foundation of Christianity which Paul laid and each one of us should build on it. What is so marvelous about this foundation that every Christian should proclaim?

#### **First: Forgiveness for past sins**

And if anyone can talk about this, it should be Paul, because he resisted this way as he said, he persecuted the saints dragging them out of their homes and families, beating them, putting some in prisons, killing or approving of killing others, and running some others out of their cities. And he did that in ignorance as we see later in 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 15:9, 10). But look at God's forgiveness. He not only forgave him, but He labeled him as a Chosen vessel (Acts 9:15), and crowned him with the honor of serving Him and proclaiming His salvation.

Shouldn't we be so proud to make this our foundation when we talk to others?

#### **Second: Strength for the present**

No one can find strength in anything except in Jesus Christ. And again Paul is the best person to talk about that. Listen to what he says:” **I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.**” (Phil. 4:13)

How beautiful to walk with the Lord where one can find help and strength.

#### **Third: Hope for the future**

If we have no hope in Christ, then we are the most miserable people.

The Christian lives on the hope of being in God's presence for eternity.

How about here on earth? He controls the world. Nothing happens without His previous knowledge, and as Paul told the people in Athens: **“For in Him we live and move and have our being.”** (Acts 17:28).

As I said above Paul laid the foundation and others built on it, and in verse 12 he lists some building materials, some of gold, silver, precious stones, wood and straw. I do not think that he literally means that. What I mean is he is not talking here about the material in as much as he means the means or methods.

Take for example the different teachings that various churches and pastors do or stress on: some stress on Jesus and all His glory but never on Satan and his wickedness and his army of fallen angels, others stress on Eternal life but never on hell and eternal fire, some stress on salvation by faith alone and some on faith

and works, some stress on good deeds and never on prayer and fasting, some stress on speaking in tongues and never on prophesying, and so on. That is what I feel Paul is talking about. They are all teaching good things but the fruits of each teaching are different, and some of them grow and increase and others may diminish till burn down completely.

And the “**Day**” which Paul refers to is the day of the Lord’s second coming, when He and no one else will Judge the world.

And here we shall see the real mercy of God who will not dismiss all as failures but one, but on the contrary He will still reward each one by His salvation.

### **Wisdom and foolishness:**

#### **3:16-22**

The community of saints (the church) is where the Holy Spirit dwells. So, it is the temple of God. And if it is divided then the temple of God is destroyed, and the Holy Spirit cannot operate. As a result bitterness and hatred replace love, and lies replace the truth. And soon the church is reduced to ruins.

And in case the Corinthians do not yet understand the underlying cause of their division, Paul goes back to the subject of the wisdom of God and the Foolishness of man or the worldly wisdom.

We mentioned before that the Greeks claimed that they are the beacon of philosophy in the whole old world. And their measure of wisdom or philosophy was based on how eloquent the speaker was and how big complicated words and terms he used, not giving any consideration to the core and content of the message. That is what Paul calls worldly wisdom.

That is why they considered Paul as” **babbler**”. (Acts 17:18).

And Paul substantiates this thought by quoting from Job 5:13 “**He catches the wise in their own craftiness.**” And from Psalm 94:11 “**The lord knows the thoughts of the wise that they are futile.**”

And those who called themselves philosophers thought they are always right and so cannot bear to see anyone dispute or contradict what they say. And in that they are not humble either, and they look down at others. And that is why when Paul urges the one who thinks he is wise to be fool which means to reduce his pride enough to listen to other’s opinions. This way they can learn from others. And we know that no one can teach a man who thinks he knows it all.

And Plato said “The wisest is he who knows himself to be very ill-equipped for the study of wisdom.

And in verse 22, Paul tells them that no matter what you own or possess, you in whole are Christ’s, as Christ is God’s. And that in itself shows the sincere intimacy of fellowship with God.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Vs. 4:1-21**

#### **Servants of Christ:**

In this Chapter, Paul talks about the servants of Christ and the stewards of God's mysteries.

After telling the Corinthians in the previous chapter that neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase, he tells them to count them (meaning Paul, Apollos and Cephas) as servants of Christ which is self explanatory. Then he adds saying "**and stewards**" which is a term used for a servant to whom his master has entrusted the oversight of his house, who also is held responsible for his master's possessions, and giving him an account every now and then..

Then he puts the word "**mysteries**". No one knows the thoughts of God. So, they are mystery to us. But according to His pleasure and will, He led us to know the mystery of salvation which was hidden from us since creation till He declared it to us through His Son Jesus Christ, and which was proclaimed to us later by the Apostles. So Paul is saying that he and all the other apostles are stewards of this revelation. And the steward should be honest and faithful because he has to give an account of his stewardship to His Master.

Then in verses 3 & 4, he says since this is the case, I should be judged by my own Master Jesus Christ, not by you and certainly not by myself either.

Humans could be wrong about judging others, and they could be bias when judging themselves, but God who sees the hidden is the only one who judges justly.

And in verse 5, he comes to the conclusion that since our judgments may be wrong, then we should leave the judgment to the only one who is entitled to that, Jesus Christ who will judge the quick and the dead at that day. And in that day he who is worthy of praise, he will be praised by God Himself, and what an honor; and who deserves punishment, it will be rightly so.

And in this same verse, Paul assures us of few important points:

- 1- The Lord will return.
- 2- The Lord will reveal what man has hidden from others, but of course not from God. He will bring to light what was in the darkness.
- 3- He will praise whoever is worthy of this Royal prize. And of course this is a word of exhortation from Paul to the Corinthians and to us as well.

Then in verse 6, Paul tells the Corinthians that **He figuratively applied these things to himself and Apollos**. What are these things? When we go back to the section between 3:5 and 4:5, we find that he described himself and Apollos at one time as gardeners, then as builders, and lastly as stewards.

Why did he not include Peter (Cephas) here although his name was mentioned earlier? Because it was Paul and Apollos who proclaimed the gospel of salvation to the Corinthians.

So, he says that he did that **so that they might learn not to go beyond what is written**. And he means by that, what is written in the Scripture, and we should notice that he always quotes from the Old Testament, and in essence he is telling them that all what we proclaim was previously referred to in the word of God.

Then he says "**that no one of you might become arrogant, favoring the one over against the other.**" This makes it quite obvious that Paul condemns arrogance as being the prime cause of this division.

So, if we take the verse as a whole, we find that Paul is telling them not to boast about one leader over the other, but to learn from them what the Scripture says. And in verse 7, Paul asks them 3 questions:

- 1- Who makes you different from anyone else? And I imagine that Paul is answering this question to himself while writing the letter, **“No one. Surely I did not, and I am equally sure that Apollos did not either.”**
- 2- What do you have that you did not receive? Again the answer must be **“nothing”**. An honest Christian must acknowledge God as the sole giver and that all he has is previously received from Him.
- 3- If indeed you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it? I think what Paul wants to say here is **“If God is the giver, don’t take the credit, but give thanks.”**

Verse 8 is still pertaining to the arrogance of the Corinthians. The arrogant thinks so much of himself, he thinks he is superior and above anyone else, and hence he is self sufficient and does not need anything or any body. He thinks he is rich in every aspect in his life whether materially or even spiritually.

So, Paul if I may say, is in a way mocking and sarcastic at their arrogance saying **“You think you are rich, I wish you have been, so that we can also gain from your richness. But you are actually poor in everything.”**

And this reminds me of Revelation 3:17 where the Spirit rebukes the church of Laodicea, **“You say I am rich, I have indeed acquired wealth and do not need a thing. But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked.”**

And in verse 9, Paul moves to describe the real life of an apostle. He says we apostles (a general term) are the last in the parade. He refers to the parade of a triumphant general coming back from war, him and his army at first, and then comes the defeated captives to be executed by man or by wild beasts. This execution was usually held in the amphitheater where everybody can see, whether it is men or angels who watch over the saints.

Then in verse 10, he continues his description of an apostle. So he says **“we are fools because of Christ”**. To be called fool is degrading to the person.

So, Paul says that he was degraded or been looked down at because he preached Christ and His cross. And still in his sarcastic mood, he tells them, **“But you rely on your self-wisdom and thoughts about Christ and His apostles which of course is erroneous.”** And he continues on the same line saying **“We are weak, but you are strong; you are honored, but we are dishonored.”** And he keeps going on the same theme till the end of verse 13. And to this point he ends discussing the division among themselves.

#### **Vs. 14-21**

Feeling that he was in a way sarcastic and also harsh, Paul starts this section by saying that he did not write this to shame them but as a father who warns his children. And the original Greek word which is translated as warn, means advice or bring up in the training and admonition of the Lord. (Please see Eph. 6:4).

As if he is saying **“I am your father. I have begotten you to life in Jesus Christ. You may have so many teachers but you have only one father, I call upon you to take after me in the true knowledge of Christ.**

Then he says that he will send Timothy to **“remind”** them with his ways. As if he is saying that they have not done that deliberately but they just forgot and needed reminding.

But let us be honest, don't we all sometimes by way of forgetting turn our backs to Jesus and ignore His presence in our life, and remember Him only on Sundays, communion, Christmas, Easter, and few other occasions!

Then he assures them that by sending Timothy, he is only filling the gap till he personally comes if and when God wills. And at that time, he will personally know how they are doing spiritually; as Jesus said **“By their fruits, you shall know them.”** (Mat. 7:16).

And he ends this section by another fatherly remark, **“Do you want me to come with a rod or should I come with love in the spirit of gentleness.”**

As if he is telling them that the matter is in their hands. They have the choice, if he hears that they have matured spiritually, then he will rejoice and come to them in the Spirit of love and gentleness, otherwise he will come to them in a harsh rebuking attitude.

To this point, Paul has dealt with two of their problems. Then in Chapter 5, we shall see him dealing with the third problem.

## **Chapter 5**

### **The third problem: Incest. Vs. 5:1-13**

Paul must have been very upset and sad when he heard the news. And I imagine him telling them **“Do you call yourselves Christians to permit such a shameful action to happen, which is not heard of even in a Heathen community? A man sleeps with his step mother? What a revolting shame; and none of you had the decency or the sense of moral values to tell him off. What is even more shameful is that the church did not take any action about that. What a complacency! At least you should have mourned! If we cease to take a serious view of such a sin, then we are in a very serious trouble. Here is my decision:- Such a man should be sent back to Satan's world, which means excommunicated; hoping that the humiliation would bring him back to his senses, and his spirit might be saved.**

This is as Barclay explains; *“A discipline, not exercised solely to punish, but exercised rather to awaken.”*

And in the early church such actions were taken not for breaking but for awaking. Then Paul moves to an example of leavened and unleavened bread. But before we get into that, one should remember that leaven (With very few exceptions), in Jewish terms and also in the Old Testament stands for an evil influence, because they identified fermentation with putrefaction and rotteness.

So he says that a small leaven makes the whole dough rotten. So remove that little leaven from among you so that you become unleavened and fit to be followers of Jesus Christ who was our unleavened sacrifice. Paul here is

painting a picture from the Old Testament where the bread of the Passover was unleavened, and on the day before the Passover feast, every Jew was ordered to light a candle and search for any leaven in the house and cast it out before the family can celebrate the Passover which was held on the 14<sup>th</sup> of the 10<sup>th</sup> month (Nisan) each year.

In essence Paul is telling them to cast the evil influence from the church lest it can corrupt the whole congregation.

In fact there are some instances where unkindness may have to be applied.

Don't we pluck the weed out before it spreads through out the whole garden?

Don't we wash out the stomach of a child who swallowed poison lest he dies?

Discipline is never for satisfaction, but for mending he who does wrong.

In this study we assumed that there was a previous letter which Paul sent to the Corinthians before first Corinthians and we discussed that on page 7.

In verse 9, Paul refers to that. He says that in his previous letter he mentioned to them not to associate with fornicators. And of course he meant those who are in the sphere of the church like this man who was the subject of our discussion in this chapter, and we know the verdict which is the same as what he told them in his previous letter. Some of the congregation took it as Paul was forbidding them from association with fornicators outside the church, a matter which would be absolutely impossible since they were living in a predominantly pagan society.

And they had to live and buy and sell and trade and do business with them.

Moreover the church has authority on its members only and not on the outsiders.

The moral values of the pagan society are vastly different from the Christian society. Loose moral values degrade man to the level of animals, where he seeks sexual gratification with complete disregard to others, add to that, it makes of the partner an instrument through which this gratification can be obtained.

As for the Christian, he or she is a child of God, living in this world, but always looking beyond it to a pure life not dominated by physical desires.

Then he mentions other immoral characters such as greedy persons, idolaters, slanderers, drunken persons, and thieves.

Then he ends the passage by repeating the order of casting away the wicked from among them.

## **Chapter 6**

### **The fourth problem: The pagan court 6:1-8**

Again this is a cultural problem, because usually the Jews do not go to court; they try to solve their problems through the elders of their villages or elders of their synagogues. The Greeks on the contrary enjoy going to court. As a matter of fact, they consider it an entertainment or an outing when they go to court.

And in fact, the Jewish law prohibits the Jew to go to a non-Jewish court, and this of course is the background in which Paul grew up. So to him, for a Christian to go to a pagan court was something unheard of and even revolting and insulting to the Christian values. His way of thinking is not because they were pagans, after all they are humans, and Paul would not hate or look down at God's creation; but because how could a Christian look for Justice in the presence of

the unjust? And what makes it more unreasonable; how could the saints be tried in a Gentile court; while they themselves will sit on the judgment seat with Jesus Judging all the nations of the earth on the Day of Judgment? They will even judge the Angles! And then in the midst of his denial to this action, he tells them, O.K. if you want to go to court, then let whom you think are least in the church to sit and judge you. Actually I don't think that Paul means or encourages a class distinction here; on the contrary, he feels that they have degraded themselves to a level far below all Christian values of love, and brotherhood. If a Christian has even the remotest tinge of the love of Christ within his heart, he would rather suffer an insult, loss, injury, or damage, than to inflict them on someone else especially if he is his brother, and we all are brothers and sisters in Christ. Even Plato in the far past said that the good man, will choose to suffer wrong rather than to do wrong; and he was a heathen.

### **Who will inherit the Kingdom of God? Vs. 9-11**

As you remember, we mentioned on page 2 that Corinth was reputed for its filth, wickedness, and every possible vice. Here Paul is showing the Corinthians that this style of life is utterly unacceptable in Christianity, and it will lead them to nothing but hell. Then he listed some vices, and I am sure that what he listed were just few examples of the vices that were shamelessly practiced at that time. Let us now discuss each one briefly:

**Fornicators:** a term was specific for male prostitution.

**Idolaters:** It is interesting to know that originally men did not worship idols, but they made idols to represent the god or goddess they worshipped, to be present in front of them when they worship their god. Then as time passed and by practicing the same every day, they found themselves worshipping the idol. It is very dangerous that men will always worship the symbol rather than the reality behind it.

And we see that every day, people are worshipping saints and angles.

**Adulterers:** We already discussed the sexual laxity of the heathens and how the virtue of chastity was unheard of in their life.

**Homosexuals:** This vice riddled the ancient world, and it might have been in every nation, but it was a plague in Greece, and spread from there to the Roman Empire after. Socrates practiced it. Plato's famous dialogue of the symposium was about un-natural love. Fourteen out of the first fifteen Roman Emperors were homosexuals. Emperor Nero shamelessly took a boy called Sporus, castrated him, married him in an official marital ceremony, and lived with him as a wife. He even went further and had himself married to a man called Pythagoras and called him his husband. Emperor Otho after Nero, took possession of Sporus.

Much later Emperor Hadrian married Antinous a boy from Bithynea, and lived with him inseparably, and when he died, he made a deity of him and covered the world with his statues and immortalized him by calling a star after him.

We may say Sodom and Gomorrah were filthy, how about this!

**Sodomites:** A kind of wallowing in luxury in which a man has lost all resistance power to pleasure.

**Thieves:** Theft in Greece was a plague also. Houses were easy to break into. Thieves particularly attacked public baths and public gymnasia stealing their clothes and also kidnapping slaves with special gifts.

**Covetous:** This describes those who have the lust of always reaching after more and grabbing what is not theirs.

**Drunkards:** Normally the Greeks drank diluted wine or better call it medicated water. The water supply in Greece was inadequate and unhealthy, so their drink was composed of two parts of water and three parts of wine. That is why Paul wrote to Timothy his disciple urging him to stop drinking water and to use a little wine because of his stomach and sicknesses.(1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 5:23); and unfortunately those who drink for pleasure, take this verse as a support to their conduct. The Greeks' breakfast was nothing but bread dipped in wine.

But that is not what Paul is talking about. He talks about those who intentionally drink to get drunk and lose their faculties.

**Revilers:** Those who verbally abuse, or address or assail with contemptuous or opprobrious language.

**Extortioners:** The computer did not accept this word! It keeps correcting it to extortionists. These are who obtain from unwilling or reluctant person by physical force, intimidation, or the abuse of legal or official authority.

After all these nasty vices, Paul shows what Christianity does. So, he tells them that some of you were like that, but look at what Jesus has done with you. He can take men lost to shame and make them sons of God.

And there are men all over the world who are a walking proof of this marvelous re-creating power of God, e.g. John Newton who wrote "Amazing Grace"..

### **The temple of The Holy Spirit: Vs.12-20**

The Greek philosophy was that man is composed of body and soul, and what matters is the soul, but the body is of no importance at all. And since the body is of no importance, then one can do anything with it. And if Christianity calls for freedom, then let the body have its own way, and do whatever it likes.

**The Corinthians argue;** "The stomach is made for the food and the food for the stomach, and so is the body which is made for its desires, and since the sexual organs are part of the body, then it is made to satisfy the sexual desires of the body."

**And Paul answers;** There will come a day when the food and stomach will pass away, but the whole man is made for union with Christ, both in this world and the world to come. And when a man commits adultery with a harlot, he is actually united with her according to what the Holy Scripture says; "Therefore a man shall.....be joined to his wife and they shall become one flesh." (Gen. 2:24). So, how could the body which rightly belongs to God be literally prostituted to someone else? Of all sins, adultery is the one that affects the body which is originally destined for union with Christ. And since the Holy Spirit dwells in us, we are the sacred temple of God who died for man to save both his body and soul. Further more, God created the body for glorifying Him and not for the satisfaction of man's lusts.

From the above, we deduct two important facts:-

- 1- The Christian though free to do what he likes, yet nothing of his old habits, practices, or ways of life should master him. It is the strength of Christ in us which helps us in this matter.
- 2- We are not our own, because we did not create ourselves, God created us from the beginning, then He recreated us on the expense of His son's life, so we must always do what pleases Him.

## **Chapter 7**

**So far**, Paul has dealt with four of the problems which he heard of, whether from the house hold of Chloe or from some others. But there were other problems that the church wrote to him about, seeking his advice, and we shall see these problems and how Paul deals with them in the rest of this epistle.

And that is obvious from verse 7:1 where he says;” Now, concerning the things of which you wrote to me.”

But before we start on these, I would like to mention that some may find his advice a little to the extreme, and it may be so; but let us remember that Corinth was the most immoral city in the whole ancient world, and it is not as easy as we may think that a man brought up in that filth can change his life style. So, Paul has to be very strict and even harsh in his advice.

So, I am going to put these problems in the form of questions, and how Paul answered them.

### **Question One: Vs.7:1, 2**

#### **Should Christians not marry at all?**

This seems to be a very strange question! How can any man in general or a Corinthian in particular whose life is centered on sex ask that?

Here we must also remember that Paul firmly believed that the second coming of Christ is very near at the door, and he preached that everywhere he preached the Gospel; and that is very obvious when we read his two epistles to the Thessalonians. And the Thessalonians' response was not to bother to work, while the Christian Corinthians' response was why bother to get married.

#### **Paul's Answer:**

It is morally good that a man should not touch a woman. But every man should stick to his wife and every woman to her husband.

It is very obvious here that he is talking about extra-marital affairs.

Remember that Paul had just quoted Gen.2:24 in the previous chapter; so he cannot possibly mean refraining from marriage at all as some believe.

### **Question Two: Vs.3-7**

#### **Should those who are already married abstain from sexual activities?**

This question is naturally expected after the first one!

#### **Paul's Answer:**

It takes two to establish a marital life. So, neither the husband can do without the wife nor the wife without the husband. Each partner should fulfill the other his or

her dues. None of them should act independently. Each of them should look at the marriage from its physical and spiritual sides. So as they are together physically, so they should be in prayers, praises, and reading the Holy Scripture. Then he moves to the question whether one should marry or not, but he makes it clear from the beginning that what he is going to say is not an order from God; it is only his way of thinking. And there is no harm in that, because when one is happy and comfortable in the way he lives, he wishes that the others would do the same; and that is what he meant by the word "as I am" which is taken by many as being unmarried. After all Eve liked the taste of the fruit (apple?), and so she wished that Adam enjoy it as well.

Don't we all do that simply as a jester of love to others.

But the question here is; "was Paul married or not? There is no direct verse in the Holy Scripture that tells us of either situation. But there is an indirect indication that he was married. Paul was trained as rabbi at the feet of Gamaliel the well famous teacher of the law (Acts 22:3), and Paul himself tells us that concerning the law he is blameless (Phil. 3:6). An orthodox Jew in general and a rabbi in particular has to be married, and if that is the case with Paul then his wife must have died earlier in his life before he became famous about persecuting the church; or she could have denounced him and left him after his conversion to Christianity.

### **The bond of marriage: Vs. 8-40**

Here Paul has categorized people in four categories:

**1- Those who are unmarried or who are widows:** And here again we find the influence of his belief that the second coming of Christ is at the doors, he advises that each one should remain as is, because there is no time to get married and spend time caring for a spouse or children. But for chastity, one has to get married which of course is better than sinning. And of course this is a personal matter, because we all differ in our endurance.

**2- Those who are married:** Here he forbids divorce, but if it happens that the wife separates then she should stay unmarried. And I suppose the law is the same for the husband also if he chooses to separate, although it is not mentioned clearly in the Scripture.

**3- Those who are already married to unbelievers:** And before we get into that, let no one think that this is a license to marry an unbeliever. A believer should not be under the same yoke with a non believer. (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 6:14). Paul here is dealing with a special situation which happened early in Christianity. When Christianity was preached, it happened that in some families both spouses accepted it and became Christians. Paul is not talking about this group. But on the other hand it happened that one of the spouses was converted and the other was not. This situation is not without its own problems. Some of these are related to the way of worshipping of each of them, foods, sacrifices to idols, habits of each society, meeting places for worshipping especially if it were in their homes, and lastly bringing up their children and the type of tutoring. So, Paul says that if the spouse agrees, then there is no problem, but if not, then they should separate, because there will be no peace in that house.

And of course I assume that when Paul says "If agrees", he means if they agree on all the differences mentioned above; otherwise their life together will be hell. Another point of great interest is that it was a custom in the early Church that they greeted each other with a holy kiss as they were taught (Rom. 16:16; 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 16:20; 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 13:12; 1<sup>st</sup> Tim. 5:26; and 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5:14).

Imagine now an unbelieving husband seeing his wife being kissed by a man whom he doesn't even know, or even worse by a slave, and vice versa.

And then Paul puts two comforting thoughts:

- 1- The unbelieving spouse is consecrated by the believing spouse because they are one flesh (Gen. 2:24).
- 2- Who knows, it may happen that the unbelieving spouse becomes believer by observing the kind merciful conduct of his or her spouse. And of course this nullifies the old Jewish thought that the gentiles are unclean.

#### **4- Those who are virgins: Vs. 25-40**

We shall skip vs. 17-24 for the present time because it is out of the context of marriage. And that proves what we said before that the Epistle when was written, it was not divided into chapters and verses, and the sequence sometimes does not fit because of the fragility of the writing materials and its collection.

Now back to the virgins.

Paul says that he has no information from the Lord about them, but that is his own advice, and he is sure it would be correct, because from the beginning, God in His mercy entrusted him with preaching the gospel.

From this section and the ones before, one may deduct that Paul hate marriage and forbids it. It may be so. But one has to look at the picture as a whole:

1- As we mentioned before, Paul truly believed that the second coming of Christ is eminent and at the door at any moment. So **the time is short** to look after a wife and children. Better spend it preparing for His coming.

2- Surely he honored and advocated marital life as obvious from his epistle to the Ephesians 5:22-26 in which he symbolizes the marital life as a sign of God's love to the church. What a beautiful and solemn picture of marriage. Nothing on earth is more precious than that.

So in summary his opinion about the virgin is not to get married. Stay as you are, if unmarried don't seek marriage, but on the other hand if you are married don't seek separation. However, if you get married it is not a sin.

And in verse 29, he assures what we said before that **the time is short**.

Then in verses 29b-33 he again assures that the time is short so much so that one should not care about anything but to be prepared.

Then in verses 34-40, he tries to justify what he just said by the way of logic, since he or she who is married thinks and works for what to please the other spouse, but those who have no attachment, they dedicate their lives and efforts to serving and pleasing God.

That was his theme so far, but in verse 36, he says, nevertheless, if any man behaves incorrectly towards his virgin then he should marry her, and this verse goes very well with what he said before in verse 9.

Then in verses 39 and 40 he puts a general but fundamental rule which our Lord Jesus Christ said before that a spouse is bound to the other till he or she dies, then he or she is free to marry again only in the Lord but again he prefers that neither will marry again.

Now we go back to the section we skipped:

### **What matters: Vs. 17-24**

Paul teaches here not to be discontent with the previous status one has been in before becoming Christian. If one was circumcised, uncircumcised, slave, or anything else, it does not matter. **What matters** is conducting oneself in a way that pleases His heavenly Master. We have been purchased by a very precious price, the blood of Jesus Christ, so we are His possession, and we should please Him, and obey His commands. So, be satisfied with the status you are in because He loves you the way you are. Your status is not going to change His love for you.

### **Question 3: Chapter 8**

#### ***Is it lawful to eat meat offered or sacrificed to idols?***

Before discussing this subject, I would like to mention some facts:

Although it may seem silly for us to discuss whether to eat meat or not, yet to the early church in Corinth and probably in all the churches in Asia Minor (Turkey now) and Europe, it was a very important and delicate subject for the following reasons:

- 1- Before Christianity came, these parts of the world were dominated by idol worshipping.
- 2- The people in these regions were obsessed and very aware of demons. They believed that demons lived and existed in the air around them and in the sky. And that if they possess a person, then his or her life will be miserable. And one of the channels of entry is through the food he or she eats. So, before killing or eating the animal whether for private consumption or to be sold in the market place, they have to dedicate it to one of their good gods to protect them from the evil ones.
- 3- As for the sacrifices itself, they were of two kinds:
  - a- Private; and these were sacrificed by the person to please the god.
  - b- Public: and these were sacrificed by the local government officials in the city on several public occasions, and feast days.

In either case, the sacrifice was to be divided in three portions, one for the idol, the second for the priest, and the third for the person or the institution which offered the sacrifice. The portion for the idol was symbolic and very insignificant even as small as few hairs from the forehead of the animal burnt over the altar. The priest's portion was a portion of the ribs, ham (the animal's thigh), and the left side of the face, and the rest was for the person who offered the sacrifice, and this portion is the one we are discussing in this section because it was used either for selling it in the market place or using it for a feast or certain celebration as the case may be, which were conducted either in the temple of the god itself or in the private house of the worshipper.

So, as we see from the above, all meat whether sold in the market place or offered in a party in private homes, was dedicated or offered to an idol, unless one has to kill the animal himself in his home, and of course he will be limited to an animal that is small enough to be killed at home.

The problem now is how can a Christian who partakes in the sacred body and blood of Jesus Christ, partakes also in sacrifices for idols? How can the lips and teeth which eat and drink the body and blood of Jesus be defiled by eating what is sacrificed for idols?

That was the problem which they wrote to Paul about.

Now let us see what Paul's response is.

**Paul's answer:**

Paul states here that he knows and they know that there is no such thing as other gods, but our God whom we know and worship, but there were others out there who do not know. Here, the knowledge is dangerous, because by my action I could cause the one who does not know to stumble.

So, we should not look down on those who do not know or ignore them or ignore their feelings. We who are knowledgeable (Strong in faith) look at what is offered to idols as nothing to worry about because we know that there is no other gods; but what about the others who believe that there are other gods though they do not worship them? They certainly believe that eating what is offered to these gods is unlawful for them.

What then, should I ignore my brother for whom Jesus Christ has died, just because I think I know better? Should I ignore his feeling and do what may offend him and cause him to stumble or even cause him to doubt his faith?

If I love God, then certainly I would love my brother, and more certainly I would not offend him. Then Paul mentions two important points:

1- Eating special food will not better our spiritual life or our relation with God, nor will not- eating worsen it. God does not look at what we eat.

2- If you, who knows, eat what is offered to idols, and your brother who does not know sees you, wouldn't that encourage him to do the same, and in that case he would have done something contrary to his conscience. Wouldn't you in this case have caused your brother to stumble?

Then he puts a very bold statement saying that if food makes his brother stumble he will not eat meat forever and so should we.

This is the summary of chapter 8, though Paul will return to this subject later on in chapter 10, and we will refer to that in due time.

## **Chapter 9**

### **Paul's Defense:**

As you recall we mentioned before, that Paul was attacked right and left in his person (page 5). We don't know the exact accusations against him; but one can sense it from his defense.

First they must have attacked his apostleship, and that is very evident from the first verse in the epistle where he tells them that he is called to be an **Apostle** of

Jesus Christ. As if from the beginning he wants to establish the fact that he is an apostle; let no one make mistake about that. And in the same verse he assures that the fact that he is called to be an apostle, is not from men but it is by the will of God.

And here in this chapter, he states the reasons why he is an apostle in a series of short questions where no one can help but answering them by the word “**Yes**”. Am I not a free man in Christ? Am I not an Apostle? Have I not seen the living Jesus Christ who appeared to me on the way to Damascus? Are you not my work in the Lord? And here I would imagine him saying to himself, then what is the problem? Why some of you deny my apostleship? Then he still talking to himself and to them; even if I am not an apostle to others, I am certainly an apostle to you. You are the fruit of my work. You heard the gospel through me. And above all you are the seal of my apostleship to the Lord.

The early church, believed that the apostles are the original twelve disciples of Christ, except for Judas Iscariot who betrayed Him, then hung himself (Mat. 27:5), and then he was substituted by Matthias by casting a lot (Acts 2:26).

And Peter in his famous speech to choose that substitute, he stressed on the point that whom they should choose must have been following Jesus from the beginning when He was baptized till the day of His resurrection and ascension. According to this, a lot of people did not consider Paul as an apostle.

But Paul defends himself saying that he saw the living Christ, and that is by itself a proof of Him been dead then resurrected.

And in his epistle to the Galatians, Paul states that he received the gospel from no man, but from God who granted him this apostleship (Gal. 1:1, 11, 12).

Then he gives examples of his freedom in Christ and how he uses it.

So, he says that he is free to eat what he likes but he prefers not to eat what is sacrificed to idols because he does not want to offend his brother for whom Christ has died.

He also has the right to have a wife but he preferred not, so that nothing would hinder him in preaching and teaching the gospel.

And he also has the right to live of his ministry, but he opted not to, so that the preaching of the gospel will not be hindered.

And we know that he lived with Aquila and Priscilla working with them in making tents to support himself (Acts 18:2, 3), and in verse 18, he blankly told the Corinthians that he offered his services to them free of charge.

A little information here is due. The Greeks as well as the Romans despised he who works with his hands. That is why all the labor was done by slaves. So, while Paul intended to support himself by working with his own hands, without putting any financial burden on the church, they despised him, and questioned his motives.

Then in **verses 7-10**, he explains what he just said by giving examples of he who serves in the army, and one should not muzzle an ox while it is threshing ((Duet. 25:4).

Then in **verses 11, 12** he says if we have sown the spiritual things for you, should we be denied to reap the material things? But we didn't use our right, and we endured so as not to hinder the gospel.

And if others (The false teachers), use this right, wouldn't I be more entitled to it since I am the one who established the church? **But**, I chose not to. **Why?** Because I don't want anyone to think that I am preaching salvation for a price. Otherwise I would be in a position of selling salvation.

Then again in **verses 13, 14** He puts another question which must be answered by "**Yes**". He says "did it skip your mind that those who serve in the temple, live on their share of what is offered on the altar? In the old Testament, God's command was for the Levites to receive their income from the gifts offered on the altar because they did not have a share in the land like the rest of the tribes of Israel (Duet. 18:1).

The same for us, for God directed that those who preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

However, in **verse 15**, Paul insists that in the future he will keep observing the same principle of not using that right, and he will keep relying on his own hand work to support himself, simply because he is not interested in his own advancement, but in the progress of the gospel.

It seems to me that Paul had put it in his heart from the very beginning to preach and to spread the good news free of charge, and no wonder, for Jesus himself when He sent His disciples out, He told them, "**Freely you have received, freely give.**" (Mat. 10:8), and in that he boasts; so if he accepts any compensation, that will void his boasting.

Remember that he is not boasting about preaching the gospel and his personal work and effort in doing that; but he is boasting about not costing any church any expense for his work. That is why in **verse 16** he says that when he preaches the gospel, he has nothing to boast about, for since it is his duty to preach, then woe to him if he does not preach. Then one would ask why he does that? And the answer would be, because he is looking forward for his reward. And that is exactly what he says in **verse 17**. Listen to what he says;" If I do this of my own choice, I have a reward; but if I do so under compulsion, I simply fulfill the stewardship entrusted to me; and in this I would be no different from any other steward.

And in **verse 18**, he ascertains what he said before in a form of a Question and answer. So, he says; what then is my reward? And he answers saying; when I preach the gospel, I offer it free of charge so as not to abuse my authority in the gospel.

And in **verses 19 - 23**, He says I am free to preach the gospel the way I like, nevertheless I am a slave to all so that I may win as many as possible to Christ. So, in spite of my status as an apostle and the knowledge granted to me by God, I do not look down at anyone. So to the Jew I conduct myself as a Jew to win the Jew; and to those who are under the law, I conduct myself as under the law to win those who are under the law; and to those who are without law, I conduct myself as without law so that I win those who are without law, though I am not without law, for I am under the law of Christ; and to those who are weak in faith I conduct myself as weak in faith, to win those who are weak in faith. I have become all things to all men so that by all means I may save some. Of course Paul cannot save any body. What he means here is that he will go to any length,

up or down in the society in order to show the way of salvation to whoever he can. As we say, I will do what it takes to achieve this goal. Now the question is, would Paul loose any status or anything by being a servant? And the answer would be “**No**” on the contrary he will be the beneficiary of all blessings and joy;” for there will be joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety nine just persons who need no repentance” (Luke 15:7) And surely, Paul will also share in that rejoice.

### **Verses 24-27:**

Here is a very interesting fact. We know that Paul spent 18 months preaching the gospel in Corinth. That was between 50-52 A.D.. The Isthmian games were held in the spring of 51 A.D. So Paul most probably attended at least part if not all of it. This event used to be held in Corinth every two years, and as mentioned before it was second only to the Olympic games; and Paul surely would not miss this occasion if not for the sake of watching, it would be even more for preaching the good news to more multitudes of people may be in the range of hundreds of thousands. So, here he puts a statement which probably every Corinthian knows about, and that is racing. He says that all run in the race but one and only one receives the prize. So run the race that you may win. Paul here is certainly not suggesting that only one believer will win; but he is exhorting them to take their spiritual life seriously and to exert themselves to the limit which a winner in the race can do to win.

And every one who runs the race prepares himself by tedious and unrelenting exercises and self control; all that for a perishing prize, how much more would it be for us who are looking for imperishable eternal prize?

Then he gives example of himself, telling them that his aim is to run the race, pressing on toward the goal to win the heavenly prize for which God has called him (Phil.3:13-14). For that, he trains and enslaves his body, so that he will be ready and not being disqualified.

## **Chapter 10:**

### **Examples from the past and warning: 10:1-13**

This is not a new subject, but it is actually in continuity with verses 24-27 of the previous chapter.

Here Paul gives an example of the past. He rewrites the story of the Israelites who left the bondage of Egypt to fall in the bondage of sin wandering in the wilderness for 40 years before reaching the Promised Land. They were 600,000 men and about 1,800,000 women and children considering that each family has average two children. How many of these reached the Promised Land? None, except Joshua son of nun and Caleb son of Japhunneh (Num. 14:23, 24 &30) who persevered, did not loose faith and won the prize, and entered the Promised Land with the new generation of Israelites who were born in the wilderness. Why did they perish? Because they sinned against God. And then Paul lists the train of sins they committed: Idolatry, adultery, sexual immorality, testing God, and murmuring against God and Moses, although they lacked nothing of food, drink, shelter, protection, and guidance by day and night.

Why should Paul mention all that? **Verse 6** states that these things were written so as to be an example for us, so that we should not long for evil things just as those people did. And of course when Paul says “**Us**” He means the Corinthians then and us now. And in **verse 7**, he says do not act as they did for they sat down eating, drinking, and playing. There is nothing wrong with eating, drinking, or playing so long as it is decent and not occupying all our time, but Paul is condemning these things when they become our life style which of course does not glorify God, or give thanks to Him Who provides all these.

And in **verse 8**, he mentions the sexual immorality referred to before and the fact that God punished them by killing 23,000 in one day.

Then in **verse 9** he mentions that some of them tested Christ and were destroyed by snakes. And he refers here to the incidence mentioned in (Num. 21:4-9) where the people displayed impatience, blasphemy, denouncing Moses, loathing the manna, and clamoring for water. So, God sent poisonous snakes to their camp which killed a good number of them. Then God ordered Moses to fashion a copper snake and to put it on a pole so that whoever looks at it will live. And in **verse 10** Paul mentions grumbling. This is a general term, because the Israelites were practically grumbling all the time that it is very difficult to pin down a certain incidence that Paul had in mind.

And in **verse 11, 12**, Paul mentions that this is written for our admonition as we mentioned before. So, whoever thinks he is good, righteous and immune let him think twice and watch his steps lest he may fall.

Then he ends this passage by a comforting and encouraging **verse 13** where he States that God in His mercy has set limits to our temptations. Yet James in his epistle mentions that God does not tempt anyone (James1:13), and Jesus teaches us in the Lord’s Prayer” and lead us not into temptation”. So, some theologians, in an attempt to keep the harmony of the Scripture, differentiate between the words “temptation and trial””. So they say that temptations are from Satan, while trials are from God. To me as a lay person, I cannot see any difference between trial and Temptation. As a matter of fact, it is used interchangeably in the whole Scripture. But I do strongly and sincerely believe that in the Lord’s prayer, it means that we petition to God to help us not to fall into temptation, or in other words to lead our path away from temptation, and in this way there is no controversy at all.

Then Paul continues his comforting statement by saying that God does not permit trials beyond what one can bear, not only that, but He also provides the way out, so that we can endure. This explains why God does not permit temptation beyond our ability.

### **Idolatry and Sacrifices: Vs. 14-30**

Then Paul goes back to idolatry. He just said in the previous passage that the first sin the Israelites committed against God was idolatry.

So he addresses the Corinthians in **verse 14** as friends and urges them not to do the same. Then in **verse 15**, he tells them that they are wise and sensible, so he urges them to judge for their selves and make sense of what he says. He is now up to a theological commonsense. So, in **verse 16**, as always his style, he asks

a question which requires a positive answer;” The cup of blessing we drink, and the bread we break are they not a participation in the blood and body of Christ?” And in **verse 17**, as if he hears them answering him saying “Yes”. Then as if he continues his train of thoughts, he says; then you agree that we have one bread (loaf) who is Christ and we though many participate in that one bread which makes us to be one body.

Then in **verse 18**, he moves to another aspect of his train of logic, and lays down another fact putting it again in the affirmative question; “in this particular case of Israel, weren’t all who ate the sacrifices partakers at the altar of the idol they worshipped? And again the answer is “Yes”. And again as if he sees the affirmation in their faces, he continues in **verses 19, 20** saying;” Can’t you see? The food that is offered is meaningless and of no value since it is offered to dumb lifeless idol statues made of stone or wood. The real problem here is not in the food or the altar, it is the sin of not worshipping the real living God, and substituting Him for a dumb wooden or stone idol. This is a demonic action. Whatever they offered was for demons and not for God. In other words they were partakers of demons, and God forbids, I don’t want you to become like them partakers of demons.

And in **verses 21, 22**, he says;” It is as simple as that; you cannot be partakers of God and demons. So choose today for yourselves whom you worship? As for me and my household, I choose to worship God” (Joshua 24:15). Who dares to provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are you strong enough to take the wrath of God, for the Scripture states that God is a jealous God (Exod. 20:5 & Duet. 5:9).

### **The Freedom we enjoy: Vs.23-32**

We are free to do whatever we want, but let us not be selfish and we must not forget others too. By this, Paul means we are free from all the traditions, works of the law; man-made rules and stipulations, but we must keep others in mind. Selfishness neither profits oneself nor does it edify others. Paul also referred to that in 8:1 and in Rom. 14:19 saying that love and pursuit of peace lead to mutual edification. And also in Rom. 15:2, he says; “each of us should please his neighbor for his good to build him up”. And in Phil. 2:4 he says” Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.” All this echoes what Jesus said “Love your neighbor as you love yourself (Mat. 22:39).

You are free to eat what is sold in the meat market.

We must understand here that Paul is addressing the Jewish Christians his countrymen, who are still clinging to their previous habits of eating Kosher food which is seldom found not only in Corinth but also in any other pagan dominated city or country. He says, we have settled that question before, that no food is defiled, but for the sake of your conscience do not ask any question. And if you do ask questions, be also ready to accept the fact that you will not eat meat for the rest of your life.

As for the pagan Christians they have been into that all their lives.

If we realize that all the earth and what is in it is from the Lord then we should not question its eligibility for consumption. And Paul quotes Ps. 24:1 which the Jews use in their rituals of praising and thanking on the table before eating.

And in **verses 27-29**, he stresses what he said in verse 26, giving an example if an unbeliever invites you for dinner, then eat what is offered without questioning for the sake of your conscience. But if someone voluntarily informs you that what you are about to eat was offered for an idol, then do not eat; and that is for the sake of his conscience. Why would Paul say that? Let us look at the situation in a deeper aspect. That informant is one of two:

1- A Christian guest on the same table (either a Jew or pagan in origin), but weak in faith.

2- A pagan unbeliever guest or the host himself.

The motive for either is different: the first is asking an advice whether he should eat or not because he is weak in faith. While the second is testing you to see if you honor what you believe in or not.

To answer both, you have to conduct yourself in the right manner: As for the first, it is not the proper time or place to teach him that all foods are from God and nothing is considered unclean. As for the second, you have to show him that you certainly honor what you believe in. And the end result for both is not to eat, and politely thank the guest for his thoughtfulness and hospitality.

Then he adds why should my freedom be judged by the conscience of another? And if I partake with thanksgiving, why am I denounced for something for which I give thanks?

And of course the answer is to go back to what Paul mentioned in verses 23 and 24 and refrain from eating to respect other people's feeling.

Then in **verses 31, 32 & 33** he summarizes what he said ;" therefore whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all things for the glory of God. Think of this: if you offend your neighbor, then you do not glorify God. Give no offence either to the Jews, or to the Greeks, or to the church of God, just as I also please all men in all things, seeking not my own profit but the profit of many, so that they may be saved.

**Note:** Paul is not practicing hypocrisy here. His sole and ultimate aim is for many others to be saved as he is.

## **Chapter 11:**

### **Verse 1 "Be imitators of me, just I am of Christ."**

It may be obvious that this verse compliments and concludes the last two verses of chapter 10, because he says that he imitates Jesus in His conduct and that is what he is teaching them; i.e. to be like Jesus.

**But,** it could be as well an introduction to the next 4 chapters where he instructs them how to conduct themselves while worshipping and also with others.

## **Question 4:**

### **Should we cover our heads when praying?**

Probably the sect who claimed they were for Cephas raised this problem in the congregation and it became so critical that they had to ask for Paul's opinion.

#### **Paul's answer:**

Paul usually before reproofing or instructing a church finds something good to praise them about. So he starts this section by praising them for their remembrance of him and the traditions he had entrusted to them. I am sure some of the congregation grew fond of Paul and remembered good things about him, and kept his instructions at heart.

#### **Verse 3:**

Then before he gets into the core of the subject, he tells them that he wants them to understand a fundamental doctrine in Christianity which is **“God is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of every man, and man is the head of the woman.”**

Now this seems to be a serious statement or doctrine, but before getting into more detail, we must understand what is the meaning of the word **“Head”** in its original Greek language, considering that there are several words in any original language that cannot be correctly translated into another language or has no synonym for it, The Greek word that is translated as “head” means **“source”** or **“authority”**, and in the Aramaic language of the old testament it is translated as **“chief”** or **“ruler”**.

If we use it in the sense of **“source”**, it may fit with Adam and Eve because Eve was a part of Adam's flesh; but it does not fit with Christ and God because Jesus was not created, he is begotten of the Father and the Holy Scripture tells us that He is eternal from the beginning and everything was created by Him (John 1:1-4), and also that Jesus is the brightness of God's glory and the express image of His Person upholding all things by the word of His power (Heb. 1:3).

And if we use it to mean **“authority”**, then it fits better; since Christ has authority over man or the church and man has authority over the woman, and God over Christ; and this doesn't necessarily mean that one party is superior to the other, or the other party is inferior or subordinate. On the contrary, just as Christ in His essence is equal to God the Father, so the woman in her being and worth is equal to man. There are several references to this in the Holy Scripture such as Eph.1:22, 4:15, 5:23 and Clo.2:10. And if we look at them all together plus this verse discussion, we come to the conclusion that Paul presents Christ's headship as a model; just as Christ is the head of every man and of the church, so the husband is the head of the wife, and as Christ submits to the Father, so the wife submits to her husband.

#### **Verse 4:**

Here he answers the question of covering the head.

But before we start, we must realize that Corinth was a cosmopolitan city, with many nationalities and ethnic groups, and of course each of them has their own cultural, clothing, and eating habits.

I think that Paul was much aware of differentiating between the genders; and he objected to blurring the images that God has given to each gender. Once a woman covers her head as he advises, while a man does not, then on entering the place of gathering, one would immediately know who is who. But on the other hand Paul may be applying his own cultural habits being a Jew; and history tells us that a respectable, honorable Jewish woman would always cover her hair while the loose one does not.

Does Paul talk here about a worshipping public place or private house or at large every day living? I think he is talking about the worshipping place meaning the place where they meet. The reason is that; he talks about prophesying and edifying and this cannot happen except in a group of people.

Now, prophesying means teaching, preaching or explaining God's revelation. But why does a man dishonor his head when he covers it? This goes back to the pagan custom, because they used to cover their heads when offering sacrifices to their idols, and Paul does not want this custom to penetrate the Christian society.

We mentioned above that the respectable woman would cover her head or hair and the loose one does not; we might add that if a woman was caught in adultery, they used to shave her head as a public evidence for what she has committed, and that would be a shame and disgrace for her and for her husband if she is married. We also mentioned that the loose woman uncovers her head and that was also considered as a sign of disrespect to her husband, as if she publicly announces that she has no regard to her husband.

I would imagine that Paul has all these considerations in his mind while writing, especially since he says in **verses 5 & 6**, that the woman, who leaves her head uncovered, is equal to the woman who has her hair shaven.

But why such a woman would dishonor her head as Paul states?

In order to understand this, one has to find out what Paul means by the word "**Head**". Obviously, he does not mean the physical head, because in verse 15, he says "But if a woman lets her hair grow long, it is her glory." Then what does he mean? We find that he previously gave the answer in **verse 3**, which states that man is the head of the woman, and Christ is the head of the church whether man or a woman of course. So, the word "head" he mentioned here means either man or Christ. And I am in favor of Christ, again because of **verse 15**; because since the hair is the woman's glory, so in the presence of God, this human glory should be covered.

Then in **verses 7-9**, he refers to the story of creation recorded in Gen. 2:18-24. As for **verse 10**, no one knows what it actually means. All commentators have failed to explain it; yet one point could be valid which states that angels attend the worshipping meetings and they are offended to see a woman with uncovered head. Whether this is a biblical fact or an imagination of a commentator or a scholar, no body knows, and certainly I am not an authority to talk of that.

But there is a biblical story that Barclays refers to, and it is mentioned in Gen. 6:1 & 2 which tells how the angles fell a prey to the charms of mortal women and so sinned, although the verse says “The sons of God” and not “The angels”, and there is a rabbinic tradition which says that it was the beauty of women’s long hair which tempted the angles.

And as we look at **verses 11 & 12**, we find that it is in direct continuation with **verse 9**, as if there is nothing in between.

And as for **verses 13 –15** we already touched on the in the previous discussion. And I imagine Paul in **verse 16** is telling them” we have discussed this subject in detail and by now you must have understood what I say and if one or some of you choose not to follow these guide lines, we as the church of God do not approve of that”.

The following passage is not an answer to an inquiry they pose, but it is a problem he heard of as is clear from **verse 18** where he says “**I hear that**”. So, I am adding it to the list of problems mentioned before.

### **The Fifth Problem: The Lord’s Supper**

#### **Verses 18 - 34**

At the beginning of this chapter as we recall, Paul praised the Corinthians for remembering him and observing his previous teaching. Here he says “in this subject that I am about to discuss, I do not praise you; because when you meet together you meet for the worse and not for the better”.

Why does he say that?

Because he heard that there are some differences among them, and he believes it at least partially. Paul here is considering the different cultures, backgrounds, social status and level of education of the congregation; so there must be some differences, and there must be some true believers who believe they are right and feel that the rest should follow.

Then he gets to the heart of the problem rebuking them for their inconsiderate, unloving, and ill-mannered attitude towards each other when gathering for the Lord’s supper; as shown by the fact that they do not wait for each other, but each one eats before the other, and the result is that some are full and some are hungry and some are drunk.

Now a word of clarity is due. The Holy Scripture tells us that in the early church, they made it a regular practice to sit together and break bread, which means having a brotherly meal together (Acts 2:42 & 20:7,11), and this they called communion, which is completely different from practicing communion nowadays. Now it is symbolic to remember the Lord’s sufferings, but then it was sharing a complete genuine meal together.

Now we can see the picture and why Paul says that some get full, others remain hungry and some get drunk from the wine consumed without regards to others. And **verse 22** shows that Paul is really angry at them, telling them “Don’t you have homes to eat and drink as you like, but this is a church where the Lord is present; and it is a meal of sharing, consideration, and showing love. What you have done is disgrace and dishonor to the body of Christ which is the church and

you all are equal members of it, rich or poor. If you think that I am pleased, no, I am not and certainly I do not praise you for that.

You may not clearly know the significance of the Lord's Supper. It was at the night in which Christ was betrayed, He took bread, gave thanks and then broke it and said "**This is my body which is for you, do this in remembrance of me.**"

This revelation, I received from the Lord and I also delivered it to you.

In the same way, He took the cup after supper and said "**This cup is the new covenant in my blood: do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until He comes.**"

So, this is the significance of this Royal meal. It is not a matter of gathering together and filling your bellies as if in a party. It is a solemn sacred meal; and I advise you to thoroughly examine your hearts before partaking in it; for whoever eats the bread and drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily shall be guilty of prophaning the body and the blood of the Lord, and shall store for himself condemnation on the day of judgment".

Then in **verses 30-32**, Paul speaks about their afflictions and illness and relates it to their dishonorable approach to the Lord's Supper; and he says that even death may have been caused by that. This is an old rabbinic teaching that illnesses and afflictions are caused by sinning and a good example of that is the story of the born blind mentioned in John 9:2 Then he tells them to sober up and correctly judge themselves so that they may not be found guilty which leads them to condemnation.

Then in **verses 33 & 34**, He concludes by telling them that when they meet they should wait for each other and whoever feels hungry should eat at home before coming to the meeting. As for the rest of the things he will arrange for it when he comes.

Now, having dealt with problem 5, Paul resumes answering their inquiries.

### **Question 5:**

## **Is The Holy Spirit in those who do not speak in tongues?**

### **Chapter 12:1 – 11**

Before we start this section I would like to describe a situation that was in the church of Corinth which is not unknown to us nowadays in some of the churches which believe and teach that the only sign of the Holy Spirit filling a person or a congregation is speaking in tongues. They may also agree about prophesy as a sign of the Holy Spirit but still speaking in tongues is superior and whoever does not have either, does not have the Holy Spirit in him. As a result they do not consider other believers as true Christians; and they boast about that and look down on the others.

Paul starts by addressing them as friends and saying that he does not want them to be ignorant about the various gifts of God to man through the Holy Spirit.

Then he says: you were once pagans continuously led astray by mute idols. You were in the grip of devil stumbling around in darkness.

Then in **verse 3**, he says that he wants them to know two facts:

1- The person who blasphemes Jesus cannot utter that through the Holy Spirit.  
2- The person who confesses that Jesus is Lord is filled with the Holy Spirit.  
Then in verses 4-6, he tells them that there are **varieties** of gifts, ministries and activities, but the source is **ONE** which is the Holy Spirit., Lord Jesus Christ, and God the father; and here right away he is emphasizing the Holy Trinity, and this also denotes that these gifts are not the specialty of one or the other of the Holy Trinity, but are by the three in one. Therefore since all this is God's gift, and man did not do anything to earn it, then why should anyone boast about the gift granted free to him and look down on others?

And in **verses 7-11**, Paul lists 9 gifts just as example of Gods gifts which are innumerable. He begins by saying that each person is given one or more of these gifts not for personal use or benefit, but for the common good which means for the good of the whole body of believers. Kingdom service is often thought to be performed only by certain ordained people. But this is not true. Each believer has been given certain gift or gifts to serve the Lord in his or her own capacity. So, God gave the one a word of wisdom, to the other He gave a word of knowledge, to another faith, gift of healing, doing miracles, prophecy, distinguishing of spirits, speaking in tongues, and yet to another the gift of interpretation of tongues.

All these are manifestations of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

Let us now take them one by one:

**Word of wisdom:**

Scholars think that Paul means Divine wisdom versus human wisdom because of the word "**word**" which in the original Greek language means "**utterance**". Isaiah prophesied that the spirit of wisdom would rest on the Messiah and that was fulfilled in Jesus, who increased in wisdom (Luke2:52). Also the Holy Scripture tells us that Stephen was filled with wisdom and the Spirit (Acts6:10).

**Word of knowledge:**

Here again the scholars define that as the intimate personal knowledge of God which depends, not upon intellect but on love, and on God's knowledge of or acquaintance with man. This knowledge must be used in the Christian community for the benefit of all the members.

Wisdom and knowledge overlap, and that is why Paul put them together.

**Faith, Healing and Miracles:**

These also go together. For instance Peter and John expressed great courage opposing the members of the Sanhedrin, preaching the Gospel, and healing a cripple in the name of Jesus (Acts 3:1 - 4:2). Paul boldly testified for Jesus in Rome (Acts 28:23 -28). By faith, Paul testified for his God and encouraged the crew and passengers when all hope in being saved had gone on his way to Rome (Acts 27: 23 – 26). A list of heroes of faith is recorded in Heb. 11. Faith and healing are also closely related. James says that the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the lord will raise him up (James 5:15). We must understand that the will of God is always in control, so sometimes God in his wisdom - which is always for our good - does not will for a certain person to be healed.

The Holy Scripture tells us that all the sick who came to the apostles were healed (Acts 5:16). Peter healed people even by having his shadow falling on them

(Acts 5:15-16). Stephen and Philip performed miracles of healing in Jerusalem and Samaria (Acts 6:8; 8:6-7). Paul healed a cripple at Lystra in Asia Minor (Acts 14:8-10).

**Word of warning:** When we pray for a sick person to be healed, God may choose to heal or may not. If He doesn't, then we and the patient and his or her family must understand that this is for our own good. This may not be evident immediately but it will become evident later on.

But if God choose to heal, then we must not take the credit, but to thank, praise and give all the glory to God who gives abundantly without reproach (James 1:5). Miracles are supernatural acts that occur contrary to the laws of nature:

**In the Old Testament,** God through Moses performed many miracles before and after exodus from Egypt. God hold the sun from setting till the Israelites won Canaan (Josh. 10:13). God also made so many miracles through Elijah and Elisha. Daniel was saved from the lions (Dan. 6:16-23); his three friends were also saved from the blazing furnace (Dan. 3:19-27).

**In the New Testament,** Jesus did numerous miracles. Apostles were removed from prisons by miracles (Acts 3:19; 12:6-10; 16:22-28).

It seems that Miracles after Jesus were restricted only to the apostles; and after that era, we did and do not hear now about supernatural miracles.

God worked miracles only to confirm the message of the gospel (Acts 6:8; 8:7; 13:6-12; Heb. 2:4).

#### **Prophecy:**

Whether uttering predictions (e.g. Agabus in Acts 11:28; 21:11), or interpreting God's will to the church (Eph. 4:11), whoever does this is just acting as the voice of God to the people. Yet Paul in 14:30 says that the prophetic utterance of these people should be subject to close examination by the church in the light of the Holy Scriptures, for prophets are not above the church but members of that Christian community and are subject to it.

**However** I must warn that God has completed His revelations to man by the end of the book of Revelation; and I mean by that (all what God wants man to know).

No additional revelations were given after that (Rev. 22:18, 19). This means that whatever revelation any man gives, is not new from what is already there in the Holy Scripture. Then you may ask, then why God permits prophecy? And the answer is that it is just to interpret His word i.e. to make it understandable to the human mind. That is why Jesus and the apostles after Him, warned against the false prophets because whatever they say is different and new compared to the Holy Scripture.

#### **Discerning of spirit:**

This is different and should not be confused with what we said before about the utterance of the profits and that it should be examined by the church.

The Scripture tells us that the devil delivers false information and he can appear as an angel of light (2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 11:14). Satan deceived Eve by giving her wrong meaning of what God told Adam (Gen. 2:16,17; 3:1, 4, 5), and Jesus discerned the voice of Satan when Peter rebuked Him (Mat. 16:23). Paul recognized Bar Jesus as son of devil (Acts 13:10), and the devilish fortuneteller girl in Philippi (Acts 16:18), and John advices testing the spirits (1<sup>st</sup> John 4:1-3).

Satan can perform counterfeit miracles and wanders through his false prophets to deceive the people (Mat.24:24; 2<sup>nd</sup> Thess. 2:9, 10; Rev. 13:11-14)

Satan also enters the communities of believers through false and counterfeit teachers (Jude 4; 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter 2:1, 2)

Those who are given this gift should be able to recognize and expose these false spirits

### **Different kinds of tongues & Interpretation of Tongues:**

These two go together, because no one can interpret a tongue unless he understands what is spoken, and both are by the guidance of the Holy Spirit..

These two and prophecy caused a lot of misunderstanding and confusion in the church of Corinth that compelled Paul to mention them again at the end of this chapter and to devote an entire chapter 14 to them.

There is no doubt that speaking of tongues was a necessity in the church of Corinth since it was composed of so many nationalities and foreigners, that whoever preaches or teaches or given revelation could be understood, and the community of believers would be edified.

And in conclusion to this section, Paul emphasizes that all and every one of these gifts are given by the one Spirit, and He does not only give but He also enables the recipient to properly use them.

Some scholars emphasize that each member of the Holy trinity has his own office, and according to this passage the Holy Spirit is the one who does all things. I cannot claim that I am a scholar or a theologian, but I do not understand why they emphasize this point while the Holy Scripture describes God as Spirit. In John 4:24, Jesus Himself said “**God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and truth.**”

So I do not see any reason to emphasize this fact.

Anyway, the last part of this verse asserts that no one receives all the gifts, and no one is without a gift, for the Holy Spirit allocates them to each one as He desires.

So far, Paul talked about the Holy Spirit and the gifts he allocates to every believer. In the next passage, he talks about the church as one body composed of many members, each has its own job to keep the body performing in proper way. But if we look deeper, we find that he is making an introduction to what he is going to discuss about speaking in tongue and prophesying in chapter 14.

### **Verses 12,13:**

Paul always taught that the church is the body of Christ. Perhaps he got that from his encounter with Jesus on the way to Damascus, when Jesus told him Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? (Acts 9:4). But Paul at that time was persecuting the Church, and from that time on, Paul considered the church as the body of Christ. However, Jesus Himself taught that He and His people are one (Matt. 10:40; 25:45).

So, Paul says that as the human body is composed of many different members and these members have different functions, but all of them work together to keep the body working properly. So is the church which is the body of Christ, is composed of a huge diversity of members who have different gifts, and each

member uses his gift to keep the church working properly in spite of the difference in race, color, language, culture, tradition and social status. Please notice that Paul does not mean the physical baptism with water. But he means by the Holy Spirit. As a result, the regenerated person enters into the body of Christ which is the church. And that is also noticed in Gal. 3:27 where he says **“They have clothed themselves with Christ.”**

As for the phrase **“Drink of one Spirit”**, the original Greek word can mean **drink** or **irrigate**. So, irrigate is a better translation, which means that the believer is fed by the Holy Spirit, which is the essence of our life.

#### **Verses 14-26:**

Here, Paul elaborates on what he just said that it is many members but one body; so it is not right for any member to be independent of the others, or look down on other members, or isolate himself from the others, because he cannot perform any of the functions of the others.

And in verse 18, he states the fact that God in His wisdom placed and gave a different function for each member; and if each acts independently, then how can the body be one?

And interestingly enough, the member that appears to be the weaker or the most insignificant, or less honorable or most unpresentable is even the more honorable, and indispensable. And God in His wisdom, has given greater honor to those members who lack it, so that there will be no divisions, or boasting, and all will carry the same care to each other; so much so that if one member suffers, all will suffer, and if honored all will rejoice.

#### **Verses 27-31:**

These last five verses of this chapter are actually Paul's introduction to what he is going to say in Chapter 14 which is mainly about speaking in tongues.

So, he starts by repeating what he already said before that the church is the body of Christ and that each individual Christian is a member in this body. And since we have one Lord who is Christ then there should be no divisions in that body. Then he points out that God has appointed these individuals to serve in different capacities: first apostles, next prophets, then teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, and other helpful deeds, then administrations, then the last of the list is kinds of tongues. And since God has appointed these individuals, then this means that He has called every individual to do a certain job in the universal church.

#### **Apostles;**

These served as Christ's ambassadors to proclaim, teach and record the good news. Jesus before ascension commissioned His disciples to be apostles except Judas who betrayed Him and then hanged himself, then later was replaced by Matthias. Paul was an apostle though he was not a disciple. Paul here is not talking about apostles in the local church, but of the universal one which is the body of Christ. And the apostleship ended by the death of John the last survivor of them in 98 A.D. Why is that? As we mentioned before, the apostle should be a person who followed Jesus since his baptism to His ascension and witnessing

His crucifixion and resurrection (Acts 1:21, 22), so after John's death it was virtually impossible to find a survivor who fits in this description.

**Prophets:**

Unlike the apostle, the prophet can serve the local church.(Acts 13:1). But a prophet can never function as an apostle, because the office of each of them is different and unequal. Furthermore the utterance of the apostle is irrevocable, while that of the prophets is subject to evaluation (14:29) because of the false prophets. Prophets as we mentioned before, are mainly teachers, though some may predict future events such as Agabus (Acts 11:28; 21:10).

In the early church, the roll of prophets as teachers was more predominant than the **minister**, but nowadays the roll of teaching is mainly by the minister.

**Teachers:**

We said above that prophets are teachers, and then what is the difference?

1) Teachers were regarded with high esteem, e.g. Jesus was called **Rabbi** which in Hebrew means **my great teacher**, but prophets did not have such a high esteem because of the stigma attached to the false prophets.

2) The prophet sticks to the one revelation given by God to be taught till he receives a new revelation from God. The teacher teaches all the revelations and doctrines contained in the Holy Scriptures to his students.

Notice that Paul relates that he was an apostle and a teacher of Christ's gospel (2<sup>nd</sup> Tim. 1:11).

3) Paul indicates that the work of the teacher is closely related to that of the pastor (Eph. 4:11). Much of the pastor's time is devoted to teaching the congregation.

**Miracles:**

This was discussed before.

**Gifts of Healings:**

This was also discussed before.

**Helpful deeds:**

It means the helping hand of love and mercy both within and beyond the Christian community.

**Administrations:**

This means the gift of the ability to hold the helm of the church or steer the ship.

**Kind of Tongues:**

This is the last of the list of gifts and therefore the least important, and that is why Paul put it last. Yet some of the Corinthian congregation put so much emphasis on it that it became a serious controversial issue in the church; that urged Paul to devote a whole chapter 14 just to it. So we shall discuss it in great detail later.

## **Chapter 13:**

Nearly every Christian identifies this chapter as the chapter of "**Love**"; and it is rightly so. But if we put this whole chapter (which is 13 verses all in all) in between brackets, and go back to the fact that this epistle was not divided into chapters till the 13<sup>th</sup> century, then immediately we shall notice that chapter 14 is in direct continuity with chapter 12. And when we look more closely, we shall

also find that what is in between brackets is also in continuity with chapter 14. Or in another word, Paul wrote it to pave the road for what he is going to say in chapter 14.

Look for example at the first two verses where he says “If I **u**speak in the **tongues of men or even those of angles.....If I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge.....If I have all faith.**

Isn't that what he was discussing in chapter 12, and will discuss in chapter 14?

All what he wants to stress on is “**Why are you quarrelling about something that is worth nothing? What really matters is love.**”

Then after starting on that theme, he found out that he must list the reasons why he thinks that love is superior to everything else, and so he wrote the next ten verses. Then he concludes by saying that when **prophecy** ceases and **tongues** are silenced and **knowledge** disappears, love stands forever and is the greatest of all even faith and hope.

Then he resumed talking about speaking in tongues and prophesying in chapter 14.

### **Verses 1-3:**

Before we discuss in detail, we should remember that Paul is talking to the Corinthian church which is composed of Previous Jews and previous pagans. The pagans used cymbals of copper and bronze in their enchanting songs to their gods. They also inflicted injuries and burns to their bodies to please the gods. As for the Jews they used to give alms in public to be seen by others, they also did the same with praying and fasting. So Paul reflects all that in his writing. So, in verse 1, he says that if he can speak in the **tongues** of both this world and the one above, but have no love then he is no more than a pagan who worships idols.

And in verse 2, he says if I can **prophecy** and **know all mysteries**, and even if I have strong **faith** to move mountains, and have no love, then I am nothing.

And verse 3 is a mixture of Jewish and Pagan styles. So, he says if he spends all his money on the poor, and inflicts harm to his body, and has no love, then he profits nothing, because he has satisfied his ego and pride.

### **Verses 4-7:**

In these verses, Paul listed 15 characteristics of love. We shall discuss them in detail:

#### **Love suffers long:**

This describes the person that is slow to anger; the one that has the ability to avenge but does not use it. This is what God does with us all the time. So, we must use it with others no matter how much we are hurt or insulted.

In doing that, we must understand that this is not weakness or defeat, but it is strength and victory.

#### **Love is Kind:**

Nothing is more insulting and humiliating and degrading than unkindness.

One may be generous, pious, knowledgeable, a pillar in the church, or a doctor, but just a word of unkindness may completely ruin the one he may be helping.

**Love does not envy:**

Barclay said: "there are two kinds of envy: One who **covets**, and the other who **grudges**. The first is bad enough, but the second is worse because he grudges the very fact that others have what he doesn't have, and wishes that the others wouldn't have what they have. Meanness of soul can sink no further than that"

**Love does not parade itself:**

In other translation it says love does not brag which means should not be impressed by its own merits, but by its unworthiness.

**Love is not puffed up:**

He, whose heart is full of love, can never think of his own importance. No one likes him who thinks so much of himself, but the humble is highly esteemed.

**Love does not behave rudely:**

Some take delight in being blunt and almost rude. Graciousness, tact, courtesy, and politeness win others.

**Love does not seek its own:**

There are people in this world who think of nothing but their rights or what the society should do for them, and never think of what they can do for the society. If all of us think of our responsibilities rather than our rights, our society will be healthy and productive and there will be no problems in this world.

**Love is not provoked:**

When one loses his temper, he also loses the cause for which he stands. And he who masters his temper can master anything.

**Love thinks no evil:**

Many people nurse their anger and keep it kindled till it reaches the stage where it is impossible to forget. Christian love should not only forgive but also forget.

**Love does not rejoice in iniquities:**

It is this malicious pleasure which comes to most of us when we hear about something derogatory about someone else especially an enemy. We are more interested to hear a spicy story to someone's discredit than a story to his praise. Christian love should not find pleasure in ill-reports.

**Love rejoices in the truth:**

There are times when we do not want to hear the truth. Christian love has nothing to hide, and so it is glad to hear and declare the truth.

**Love bears everything:**

This is somewhat different from long suffering mentioned above, in the sense that one should not only bear the suffering inflicted by others, but also try not to drag them publicly in the light. It would be better to mend them quietly.

**Love believes all things:**

Paul is not talking here about trusting God, because we cannot be Christians unless we have complete trust in God's word and promises. He is talking about trusting our fellow believer. If we do not trust them, then they will not trust us also. All of us then will become untrustworthy. And our Christian society will fail.

**Love hopes all things:**

Hope is the trade mark of Christianity. The worldly hope is a wish that may or may not come to reality: but our hope is built on the solid rock of God's word and promises, so it is not a wish, it is a future fact.

**Love endures all things:**

This also differs from the above mentioned, in that it is a positive rather than passive attitude. It is not only bearing the difficulties or sufferings, but has a triumphant and conquering attitude as well. It means not only bearing difficulties without complaint but also with praise knowing that whatever our Heavenly Father gives at all times, are good things to those who love him.

**Verses 8 – 13:**

In this passage, there are three important points:

**1- Love never fails:**

Prophecies will fail, tongues will cease, and knowledge will vanish, but love will stand forever.

**2- The perfect image:**

No one has seen God. We know of God through His creation, through His word, and through His Son. But all that is a blurred mirror image of God. The mirrors at Paul's time were made of highly polished metal and Corinth was famous about making them, and the image it gave at best was blurred. This is how we see God now. But in the end of time, we shall see Him as He is and we also shall be seen as we are.

This cannot be accomplished without love, the love of the Father to us and our love to Him.

**3- Love is the greatest:**

Without faith we shall not see God, and without Hope our eternity will be uncertain; yet without love our faith will be cold, and our hope will be grim.

Love is the fire which kindles faith, and the light of certainty.

And at that day we shall need neither faith nor hope, but love will be permanently eternal because God is love.

## **Chapter 14:**

**Verses 1 - 19**

Paul starts this chapter as a continuation to what he said in chapter 13.

As if he says; "I have told you everything I know about love, now I beseech you to pursue that love."

Then he gets into the core of the message he intends to deliver, and that is talking about speaking in tongues and prophesying. So he advises to desire Spiritual gifts, and he picks up only two of them, because of the controversy that happened in the church about them; and these are speaking in tongues and prophesying.

**Speaking in tongues:**

I shall copy here Barclay's description, because I cannot put it in a better way than he did: "This phenomenon was very common in the early church. In it a man became worked up to an ecstasy and frenzy, and in that state he poured out a quite uncontrollable torrent of sounds in no known language, and unless these

sounds are interpreted, no one had any clue to what they meant. Strange as it may seem this was a highly coveted gift. This was very dangerous, because it became so desirable to possess, and hence people took pride in it.”

The reason for that goes back to the stories they heard about the Pentecostal event when the Holy Spirit came on the disciples in the shape of tongues of fire and they began to speak in different tongues. So the early church had the impression that unless they speak in tongues, they do not have the Holy Spirit. We must remember that the knowledge they had about Christianity was not written in books at that time, but it was transmitted as series of stories from one person to another by word of mouth; and one can never know how much stress was put on each story.

I have been to some of these churches where they speak in tongues, and believe me it is a chaos, where so many stood up and gibbered some unintelligible babbling which no body understood or at least me. I also know of some of my family members who were obsessed and dying to speak in tongues and did not achieve that in their lifetime

No one can deny this gift, because the Holy Scripture tells us about it happening on different occasions in the early church, but that was for the sole purpose of spreading the word. But in a community where everyone speaks the same language, I do not see any purpose for it; and certainly it may have been a necessity in the church of Corinth because of the diversity of its population; and that is why Paul ends this chapter by saying “Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues (verse 39).

#### **Prophecy:**

We mentioned before that a prophet is mainly a teacher, but he may on certain occasions foretell a truth (which is still not outside the sphere of the Holy Scripture) revealed to him by God. This is not foreseeing or fortune telling. Unfortunately the Church of Corinth understood it in its second meaning. So, again some took pride in prophesying because they can tell the future which the rest do not know.

So from the above we can see that the Corinthian church had misconceived the whole truth about the gifts of the Holy Spirit, at least of these two gifts.

In this section, Paul deals with these two misused Spiritual gifts.

So, he starts by saying that since no one understands the foreign tongue spoken in the church, then obviously the person concerned is not talking to the people but to God. So he is not edifying the church but edifying himself. But the gift of prophesying edifies the church because the people understand the message. And he illustrates this by the musical instrument and the trumpet, if used properly they will produce the result expected from them, but if they are used in a way that no one can understand, then no one will enjoy the music and no one will be ready for the war. If I do not know French and some one speaks French to me then he sounds gibberish and neither of us will benefit. God granted us gifts to use them in a beneficial way for the growth of His kingdom. Imagine a loving father giving a gift to his son which he cannot use! Does this make any sense? So, the gift of speaking in tongues is utterly useless unless it is interpreted.

Then he says that whether a man is speaking or praying or singing, he must do it not only with his spirit but with his mind, so that the congregation can say Amen. Then he comes to the conclusion that it is better to speak a few intelligible words than to pour out a flood of unintelligible sounds in an unknown tongue.

What we get out of this passage is:

- 1) Preaching should aim to build up, and increase one's knowledge of Christian truth, and to enable him to live a better equipped life.
- 2) Preaching should aim to encourage those who are depressed or discouraged.
- 3) Preaching should aim to comfort the brokenhearted and those who hurt.
- 4) Preaching comes from a direct revelation from God, no one should boast.
- 5) Preaching should give special knowledge to others if it is from an honest heart.

### **Verses 20 – 25:**

We are still on the same subject. Paul starts by saying let aside this childish behavior. Then he quotes from Is. 28:9-12 what God had done with the Children of Israel when they hardened their hearts and disobeyed Him, although in fact that quotation was not meant for the subject of discussion.

Then he puts a very valuable argument saying suppose a person foreign to the church enters while every body is pouring out a flood of unintelligible sounds, wouldn't he think that he has entered a madhouse? But if the truth of God is intelligibly proclaimed, what a great difference would it make, and that person would be confronted with the bare truth, and the result would be:

- 1) **He is convicted of his own sin.** A good example is the Samaritan woman who heard the truth for the first time directly from Jesus' mouth and was convicted of her own sin. She said to her people "Come, see a man who told me everything I have ever done" (John 4:29). The bare truth makes one realize he is a sinner.
- 2) **The truth brings man under judgment.** Being convicted, he realizes that he must answer for what he has done, and begins to think about his end.
- 3) **It shows man the secrets of his heart.** Usually we do not think of looking at ourselves, and frequently we do not like to face the truth. The Christian truth compels us to honestly look at ourselves.
- 4) **It brings man to his knees before God.** The gateway to God's presence is so low that we can only enter it upon our knees. We ought to kneel down in humility asking for His mercy.

### **Application: Verses 26-33**

Approaching the end of this discussion, Paul tells the Corinthians that we are not in a challenging contest. Each one who has been granted a gift whether a psalm, a hymn, a teaching or a direct message from God in a tongue or prophesy let him use it for the benefit and edification of all, and it should be in order. As for speaking in tongues, let two or three do that conditioned by interpretation, and if not let them be silent. As for prophesy let only two or three exercise it. And let no one take all the time for himself, others can teach as well.

From what Paul says, one can discern that in the early church everyone had the right to speak and there was no formality. And one can deduct that they had no official minister. The podium was open for anyone to speak what is in his heart. Something like our bible study nowadays.

Also one can deduct that everything was informal with no specific order as we do in our churches now. It may be that we have become slaves to order in our worshipping nowadays; where everything has to be conducted in a certain way and in a certain order. The early church was better in a way that every member came to the meeting not in a passive mode but feeling that he has come to benefit and at the same time he has certain obligation towards contributing to the service; while nowadays we come to the church in a passive mode, leaving everything to the pastor and feeling that it is his duty anyway.

The only drawback to this is when it is conducted in a disorderly manner.

### **Summation: Verses 34 – 40**

Before we talk about women's rights in the church, we have to consider Paul's background. He was a Jew, brought up on respecting the law and the traditions of the fathers. Not only that but he was a Rabbi teaching these things to others, so one cannot expect that he will forget all that in a glimpse of an eye.

The Jewish woman had no value at all in the society. She was a possession of her husband who can get rid of her for any reason or for no reason at all.

In the synagogues, she was not allowed to sit with the men, but there was a place on the roof closed with a wall of interlaced wood from which she can peep at what is taking place down in the main hall. There was a saying in the Rabbinic teaching that to teach the law to a woman was to cast pearls before swine. It was even forbidden to speak to a woman on the street or ask for a service from a woman, or salute her; that is why the disciples found it odd that Jesus talked to the Samaritan woman (John 4:29). From this picture, one can even say that Paul was a lot lenient in his remarks let alone allowing her to sit with the men in the meeting place. So, here Paul absolutely disallows the woman to talk in the congregation and if she wants to learn then she could ask her husband in the privacy of their home. And in the Greek philosophy there is a saying that silence confers grace upon a woman. This may be a valid point, but the other point which may have prompted Paul to write this, was the filthy state of morality in the city of Corinth, and Paul considering himself the father and protector of the Christian community there, he did not want anything done in the church that can, even remotely jeopardize the reputation of this infant church.

However, it would be very wrong if we take what Paul says here, out of its context and apply it as a universal rule in the church.

Then he tells them that what he told them is from the Lord, and let no one disobey them even if he prophesies or speaks in tongues; they are not above God's commandments.

Then he ends this chapter by saying that he strives for order in the church, and that all gifts are from God, so we must use them for His glory.

## **Chapter 15:**

In this chapter Paul intends to touch on the subject of resurrection of the body which we believe in and utter it every time we recite the apostolic creed. But before getting into the depth of the matter, there are some facts we should know.

We previously said that the background of the Corinthian church was Jews and Gentiles mainly Greeks. Let us now see what each one of them believed in.

**The Jews:**

They believed that all the dead good or bad go down to a subterranean dark vague place called **Sheol**, where they abide aimlessly in a ghostly manner and never see God again. So the resurrection of the body is not in their mind at all. The best example of that is the sect called the **Sadducees** of which all the lineage of priesthood descends. Few of the rest believe in resurrection (the **Pharisees**), but not of the body because they believed that the relationship of God is with the nation of Israel as a whole and not with the individuals. And this is only for the purpose of judgment at the end of times.

**The Greeks:**

They believed in the resurrection of the soul, but not the body, because the body is composed of matter and that is evil. When the person dies, his soul is set free from his evil body which decays to its basic elements, and the soul which was a beam of fire goes back to the Fiery God who originally sent it down before. So the concept of resurrection of the body was something unthinkable and unheard of to the Greeks as well.

This was the background of the people to whom Paul is addressing this subject. He starts by saying that he previously preached them the good news of the **Risen Christ**, which was not of his invention or imagination, but it is a true fact which have been delivered to him, not by man, but by God Himself since he have seen the risen and living Christ on the road to Damascus. These good news he delivered to them as it is, in its true fact, and they received it and stand firmly now in it, and it is the foundation of their present salvation.

Then he puts a list of the appearances of Christ, first to Peter (Luke 24:34), which sure expresses the wondrous endless love of Christ to appear first to the one who denied him three times. May be that He wanted to put Peter back on his feet. He knew that Peter wept bitterly and was torn with remorse because of the wrong he had done, so He wanted to show him His love and to comfort him. Then He was seen by the twelve disciples, was also seen by more than five hundred brothers all at one time most of whom were still alive at the time of writing this epistle.

Then He appeared to James, most likely His half brother who previously did not understand Him, did not believe in Him and even was hostile to Him (Mark 3:21; John7:5), and here again we see the amazing love and grace of our Lord. Jesus makes special effort to meet those who express sorrow for the wrong they did more than halfway.

Then as if to the miscarriage, He appeared lastly to Paul the least of all the saints because he persecuted the Church of Christ. That is what Paul wrote about himself. He feels that he does not deserve all that privilege because he behaved badly and persecuted Christ's followers to the extent of imprisonment and putting

to death. But by His grace, he says I am what I am now. This appearance was very precious to Paul, because it was the turn point in his whole life.

But what does this tell us about Paul?

- 1) He was humble. He says I am the least of all the apostles, I am even not worthy to be called apostle. Then he does not give himself any credit. He says that by the grace of God he is what he is. He was so conscious of his own unworthiness that he felt that no one can say anything bad enough about him.
- 2) He speaks not of what he had done, but of what God had enabled him to do.
- 3) As for the message of the gospel, he was not unique, for all the apostles taught the same. God's message does not change from one apostle to the other.

### **If Christ has not been raised.....**

#### **Verses 12 – 19**

As we said before, to the Corinthians it was unheard of that a dead person is raised, and here Paul is arguing that. So he says that if you do not believe that a person can be raised again, then you do not believe that Jesus has been raised, and in that case your faith is worthless and has no meaning. Why is that?

Because in the resurrection of Christ there are four fundamental facts:

#### **1) Truth stands high:**

They crucified Jesus because he came with the truth of God which the leaders did not want to know. Had He not been raised the truth would have died.

#### **2) Good is stronger than evil:**

The forces which crucified Jesus were the forces of evil. Had He not been raised the forces of evil would have triumphed over the good.

#### **3) Love is stronger than hatred:**

Jesus came with the message of love. The world hated Him. Had He not been raised the hatred would have triumphed over love.

#### **4) Life is stronger than death:**

The wages of sin is death. Jesus died to execute the Justice of God which we rightly deserved. Had He not been raised He would have been dead like us and no atonement would have happened. But now since He is raised He and us through Him have conquered death, and have eternal life.

### **Adam and Jesus:**

#### **Verses 20 - 24**

To illustrate his train of thoughts in this passage, Paul used two Old Testament events and Jewish thoughts, which are "the First fruits" and "all sinned in Adam".

#### **The first fruits:**

To the Jews, the feast of Passover was not only a remembrance of exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt, but it also marked the feast of the barley harvest. The Holy Scripture tells us in Lev. 23:10, 11 that God commanded Israel that at the beginning of the harvest to bring a sheaf of the first fruits to the priest. This sheaf goes into a lengthy process till it is ground into mill, and the flour is offered to God. That was the first fruits, and its significance was that until that was done as commanded, the new barley cannot be brought and sold in the shops for consumption. So the first fruits were a sign of the harvest to come. Then Paul

comes to the conclusion that as the first fruits are a sign of the harvest to come, so also the resurrection of Jesus is a sign of the resurrection of all believers which is to come.

#### **All sinned in Adam:**

Based on Gen. 3:1 – 19, the Jews firmly believe that all men literally sinned in Adam. This goes back to the solidarity we discussed in studying the Epistle to the Romans before. And to understand it Jews always lived in a way of one for all and all for one. The individual does not count but the “**All**” counts. And that is a tribal attitude. For example when one member of the tribe is killed, all the tribe goes after the killer; when a tribe member does something shameful, all the tribe feel ashamed because of that, and so on. That is the solidarity. So Adam sinned, all the tribe of Adam (his descendants) sinned also

Paul takes this Jewish belief to illustrate that as all have sinned in Adam, all also has been saved from sin in Christ. And just as all men died in Adam, so also all men conquered death in Christ. Our unity with Christ is just as real as our unity with Adam.

#### **All things will be subjected to Him....**

##### **Verses 24 – 28**

On a first glance at this passage, one may think that Paul is putting Jesus in a subordinate rank to the Father; but he is not. Paul is trying to paint a picture to be understood by the Corinthians; and what would be better understood than the picture of a triumphant general coming back from war!

So he describes it as such:

God gave Jesus a task to defeat sin and vanquish death, which He did achieve on the cross. The Son returns back victorious, crowned with the crown of complete obedience, and the Father receives back a redeemed world; and so there will be nothing in heaven or earth outside the love and domain of God.

#### **If there is no resurrection....**

##### **Verses 29 - 34**

In this passage, Paul tries to prove the reality of resurrection and for that he takes two examples:

1) If there is no resurrection to eternal life; why then some of you volunteer to be baptized on behalf of a dead person? Isn't that because you believe that the person who dies before been baptized has no share in the kingdom of God? Would that really matter if there is no second life?

**Note:** There was a practice in the early church that if a person dies before he is baptized, then he will not see the Lord and will not have eternal life; so one believer volunteers to be baptized on his behalf.

Now we must not take this as if Paul agree or disagrees to this practice. He is just telling them if they believe in that then there must be a real second life.

As a matter of fact this practice had disappeared from the church long time ago.

2) If there is no second life, then why some Christians risk their lives and bear persecutions and sufferings?

Then he talks about what suffering he faced in Ephesus, and he refers to it again in 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 1:8 – 10, though it was not mentioned in the book of Acts. He was despaired of life and had the sentence of death passed upon him, and describes it as fighting with beasts as did the gladiators in the arena. So why would he suffer all that if there is no life beyond?

There were people in the past, and there are people now, and there will be people in the future who firmly believe that there is no future life and the Holy Scripture tells us about their way of thinking as” **Let us eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die**” (Is. 22:13; 56:12, & Luke 12:19)). This is how the ignorant lives, but we are wise redeeming the time because the days are evil (Eph. 5:16). Take away the thought of a life to come and this life loses its values. He who believes that this is the only world, will inevitably live as if the things of the world are all that matter.

To associate ourselves with those is risking an infection that pollutes our lives.

### **In what form are the dead raised?**

#### **Verses 35 – 49**

Before we discuss this passage, we must understand that Paul is trying here to explain something that he may have not seen or something that he may have seen and heard of, but inexpressible. See for example what he says in 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 12:2 – 4; **“I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago- whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows- such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows- how he was caught up in Paradise and heard inexpressible words which it is not lawful for a man to utter.”**

And in 1<sup>st</sup> Cor 2:9 Paul quotes from Is. 64:4 & 65:17 a description or a foretaste of what we shall see there, **“eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.**

From the above it is quite evident that in eternity, we shall see and hear things that our earthly brains cannot comprehend and our present vocabulary cannot express or describe.

Paul here imagines the Corinthians saying, O.K. suppose there is resurrection, what kind of bodies that come back to life, will the lame be lame, will the blind be blind? And about those who drowned and eaten up by the fish, or those who were burnt to ashes, how would they look like in eternity?

To answer that, Paul uses three analogies:

**1)** The seed that is in the ground must die first and disintegrate before it rises again, not a seed but a plant different in size, shape, body and character from the original seed, then it gives seed again.

Here Paul proves that man say marked **X**, shall die and be buried and decay, but he shall be raised again in a different body, yet he is still **X**.

**2)** In this world there are different bodies. Each created creature has a different body from others fitted for its existence. God who did all that, wouldn't He be able to give us new bodies fitted for our eternity?

**3)** As the first Adam had a physical body, and the second Adam has a spiritual body, we united in Adam have also physical bodies, but as also united to Christ we shall have spiritual bodies. So far is good, then in verses 42 – 44, he states four facts which shed more light on our future state:

**A)** Our present body is corruptible, which means subject to change and decay. The beauty of the youth turns away, and the glory of manhood fades out, then one dies and the body decays. But there, our body will be incorruptible; there will be no fade or decay. We shall be permanently unchanged.

**B)** Our present body is in dishonor because of the lust in this life, but our future body will be in glory because we will be in the presence of purity and glory.

**C)** Though we think power, yet an ultramicroscopic virus can kill a big man. Also no matter how strong we are, yet we are limited to what we can do. But there will be no frustrating limits; we will be empowered by God's presence.

**D)** No matter how perfect we think we are, yet because of our sinful nature we are imperfect. Sin has disfigured us. But in the life to come we shall be perfect, and that is the essence of the Spirit.

**In the twinkling of an eye.....**

**Verses 50 – 58**

In this passage Paul runs through few steps to reach what he wants to say:

**1)** We are not fit to inherit the Kingdom of God, because we are flesh and blood which is corruptible and the corruptible cannot inherit the incorruptible.

**2)** So, we the corruptible must change into incorruptible.

For in the twinkling of an eye, when the last trumpet sounds, those who are dead will raise into an incorruptible body, and those who are alive shall be changed. We all shall have immortal bodies, and be always with Christ. And so there will be no death anymore, it is swallowed up in victory and Hades has no power anymore.

**3)** Probably everyone fears death, but we shouldn't. It is the gate to life. Let us ask why does man fear death? And the answer would be partly because of fear of the unknown, and partly because of sin. As long as one feels he is sinful then he cannot face God let alone standing at the judgment seat with no hope of escaping and with the certainty of condemnation. But that is why Jesus came for. He came to tell us that God is love and He is not waiting to judge us, but He is waiting with open arms to receive us as His own children. And to prove His love He sacrificed His only begotten Son to satisfy His justice, and that He being faithful, He cannot demand the penalty twice.

**4)** So, brothers, if you want to be part of this glorious eternity, keep yourselves steadfast in faith and be diligent in God's service, and all your efforts will not be in vain.

## **Chapter 16:**

**General instructions: Verses 1 – 12**

Finished with what he said about the life to come, Paul is now approaching the end of his letter, and before closing he is giving some practical advises. So, he starts by dealing with the collections for the poor saints in Jerusalem. Both the Greeks and the Jews had a system of collections for the needy of their nations, and Paul did not want the Christians to be behind; so he initiated this system of collection to remind Christians that in spite of the far distances they are all members of one universal church who look after the welfare of each other and showing the love of Christ to each other. This is a free gift given from a joyful loving heart, and it is not an obligatory tax as the one collected for the Temple in Jerusalem. So, it was not a fixed sum that everyone should pay, but as he put it, it is what their prosperity demands. A man's heart must tell him what to give, to be shared with his brothers abroad. Then he talks about sending a delegation with him to assure that there is no misuse of the collections. Christian giving should always be voluntary never demanded and accepted as a privilege to help in somehow the household of God. Indeed that which is given to a man in need is a sacrifice to God. And the best of all sacrifices second to the sacrifice of a penitent heart is kindness shown to one of God's children who is in need.

Then he commends two of his helpers:

**Timothy:** Had the disadvantage of being young, and the situation in Corinth was tough enough for Paul who was more experienced and older.

So Paul commends to give due respect not for his sake but for the sake of the work he is doing. There is no greater dignity than that of a noble task.

**Apollos:** We do remember that there was a division in the Church of Corinth, Some for Paul and some for Apollos. As a wise loving Christian leader, Apollos did not wish to go back to Corinth to avoid further division.

### **Closing words, Greetings, Benediction:**

#### **Verses 13 - 24**

Verses 13, 14 contain 5 orders:

- 1- Watch and be alert
- 2- Stand fast in faith.
- 3- Be brave, go forward, do not retreat.
- 4- Be strong.
- 5- Whatever you do, do it with love which will never fail.

Then he puts a special request to give due honor to Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus who were from the Church of Corinth and who visited him while he was in Ephesus from where he wrote this epistle.

Then he says that the churches in Asia Minor sent their greetings. Then he says that Aquila and Priscilla and the church in their house send their greetings also. Here we need to say a word about them.

They were Jewish husband and wife; tent- makers by trade, which took them from their homeland to Rome. Around the year 50 A.D. Emperor Claudius Caesar decreed that all Jews should be cast out of Rome. So they found their way to Corinth and there Paul met them and lived and worked with them (Acts 18:2).

It is not known how they were converted to Christianity, but they were very strong in faith and zeal for the work of the Lord. Then they moved to Ephesus preaching the gospel. Then they found their way back to Rome and settled there (Rom. 16:6). However, everywhere they went they opened their house for the church gatherings. *It takes a great deal of love deep from the heart to keep one's house open all the time for any brother or sister to find peace and comfort. May God grant us to make our homes like that.*

Then in verse 20, He says greet one another with a holy kiss. This was the custom of the early churches. The congregations were small enough to meet in one house. They were very close to each other, and they shared the joy and the sorrow of one another. They also broke bread together after every meeting.

Why did this custom disappear from our churches now? For several reasons:

- 1- The congregations are not few anymore. Some may be very big that they hardly know each other, let alone sharing the Joy and sorrow of each other.
- 2- The early Christian love has cooled now to a great extent.
- 3- May be that the innocent brotherly kiss has been abused by some.
- 4- Satan has great ability of making ugly of every beautiful thing, causing gossip and wrong interpretations.
- 5- No trust anymore between people as a whole.

Then he autographed the letter which obviously he dictated and some one wrote it as probably most or all of his letters.

Then to stress on the love of Christ, he says if anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be cursed.

Then he adds one Aramaic phrase in the original Greek written letter saying "**Maran Atha**" which means "**The Lord is at Hand**" This was a customary watchword and a password for the persecuted Christians at that time. I consider it as greetings as well, exactly as we greet each other at Easter time "**Christ is risen... He is risen indeed.**"

And in the last two verses, he sends the grace of Christ and his own love to all the people of the Church.

## **The Severe Letter** **2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. Chapters 10 –13**

## Chapter 10:

### Answering his critics:

Knowing that what he is going to say may be harsh in a way; Paul starts by a plead, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ. The original word in Greek which is translated as gentleness, describes a person whose anger is so controlled that he gets angry at the right time and for the right reason, but never angry at the wrong time or the wrong reason. This is called the righteous anger. He wants to convey to the Corinthians that he did not write this letter because of personal vendetta, but he is angry because he has righteous reasons.

The original Greek word that is translated as meekness and in other versions as sweet reasonableness, means just or even better than just. It describes the judge who finds it unjust to apply the law in a particular case; e.g. putting a person in jail for stealing a loaf of bread to feed his hungry sick wife or a sick child. It is the quality of a Christian who knows that his last decision is not what the law demands but what Christian love can give.

So in effect he is saying that in this letter I am not seeking personal vendetta but I shall deal with the situation with Christian love.

We do not know what the problem was, because there is no record of it. What we have is answers from one side only which is Paul's.

However we can try to deduct or guess the original problem from his answers.

**(1)** It is clear that they charged Paul as being bold in writing when he is away but not so when he is face to face with them. As if they say to Paul that you don't have the guts to face us or you are coward. Paul answers saying I am capable of facing you but I pray to God that I don't have to; meaning that he would never write anything which he is not prepared to say it in their face.

**(2)** It is clear that they charged him as conducting himself driven by personal motives. Paul answers that his conduct and power come from God.

Here Paul uses the word "**Flesh**" in its two completely different meanings in the same passage. He says "**we walk in the flesh**" and "**we walk according to the flesh**", the first means I am a human being flesh and bone, while the second means behaving in a worldly manner. So he says that though he walks in flesh and bones like any other human being, yet he behaves or conducts himself not in a worldly manner but in a spiritual manner, or guided by the Holy Spirit.

So in essence he says I do not allow worldly matters to influence my behavior.

Then he points out two points:

**A-** He states that he is equipped to deal with and destroy all the plausible cleverness of human wisdom and human pride. He means that it is not subtle cleverness which is effective but simple sincerity against which cleverness cannot stand.

**B-** He speaks about bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. He means that Jesus takes our thoughts, abilities and qualities and uses them no longer in its original sinful and selfish manner but for Himself. He tells us to come as we are, and He polishes us and makes a finer use of ourselves than ever before.

**(3)** It is clear that they looked down at Paul and glorified themselves, perhaps resenting his leadership or claiming that they are more spiritual than he is, or that they have more knowledge of God than he has. But in Christianity no one is better than the other, we are equal in Christ and therefore no one should look down at his fellow Christian. When one realizes that he or she belongs to the fellowship of forgiven sinners, then there will be no room for pride. It seems that the arrogant Christian feels that Christ belongs to him rather than he belongs to Christ.

**(4)** It is clear that they attacked Paul about his personal appearance. It may have been so. We have no means of knowing how Paul looked like, but there was a very old book dated back to 200 A.D. called "The acts of Paul and Thecia" which described Paul as a little, balding bandy-legged man, with a hooked nose and shaggy eyebrows. This may be an unimpressive picture; however the Corinthians made fun of that. The looks do not make a person great, it is what he does and not what he looks like.

**(5)** It is clear that they accused Paul of making boastful claims of authority which is not his to claim. He bluntly answers that Corinth is no doubt in his sphere since he was the first man to preach the good news of Jesus Christ to them. He was the founder of this church.

May be that Paul actually claimed authority, but we must remember that Paul was a Rabbi, and Rabbis always thought that they should be more honored than the parents. Parents bring children to life, they say, but Rabbis bring children to their eternal life.

Then he charges back at them and puts his finger on the sore spot. So he says: "You think so much of yourselves, and I would never compare myself with those who esteem highly of themselves because they measure themselves with their own measure and compare themselves with one another, but the true measure is Jesus Christ, and when we measure ourselves by Him, then there is no room for pride. Self praise is conceit but the real praise comes from God.

The person who loves Christ, always thinks of the millions who have not heard the good news and wishes earnestly to reach for them, So was Paul.

## **Chapter 11:**

A great man never remembers his dignity till others forget it.

Certainly Paul knew that it was not really his dignity and honor that were at stake, but the dignity and honor of Jesus Christ. All through the previous chapter he had to pursue things he finds distasteful and does not really like to do; e.g. he had to stress his own authority and present his credentials, boast about himself and finds himself in a position of comparing himself to others.

So he begins here by using a well known Old Testament metaphor in which God is pictured as being the bridegroom of the nation of Israel; (please see Is. 54:5 and 62:5). So he tells the Corinthians that he betrothed them to one husband who is Christ and how much he wished to present them as a pure virgin to Him.

There was also a Jewish legend that Satan actually seduced Eve in the garden and Cain was their offspring. That is why Paul says in verse 3 that he fears lest

somehow, as the serpent deceived (seduced in other translations) Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

**(6)** It is clear that some were preaching their own version of Christianity and claiming that it is superior to Paul's teaching charming them by sweet speech, hence they are super teachers or super apostles as Paul calls them. Strange enough the Corinthians listened to them. So Paul draws a contrast between these false apostles and himself saying that he may not be trained in sweet speeches and eloquence, he is just a layman and does not possess knowledge equal to theirs, but the fact remains that he knows what he is talking about and they don't.

As if he is saying;" I know what I am talking about because I know Jesus Christ. Before discussing the next section there are few important facts which we should know:

**A-** The Greeks were lazy. They despised manual work and he who works by his own hands. Working by hand was left to the slaves. They used to sit doing nothing all the day but gossiping and hearing or telling news and they called it Philosophy. Listen to what the Holy Scripture says about them;" **For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spend their time in nothing else but either to tell or hear some new thing.**" (Acts 17:21).

So the Corinthians despised Paul because he worked by his own hands to support himself while preaching the gospel.

**B-** The orators and teachers earned a lot of money from their trade at that time. So it was very odd to them that Paul did not accept any money for his teaching. Please see Acts 20:34 and Phil. 4:10-18.

**C-** Paul never accepted a gift from any congregation while preaching in the same city. On some occasions after leaving the city to another some congregations sent members after him with some gifts of love which he thankfully accepted as the case in the church of Philippi who sent some gifts to him while he was in Berea (Phil. 4:10-18). And the main reason for that is; as a wise man he did not wish to be beholden to any man.

Paul's independence was something that the Corinthians could not understand.

**(7)** It is clear that the opponent false apostles took advantage of this point and hold it against Paul, saying he who does not get paid for his teaching is not a real teacher and his teaching is worth nothing.

And of course Paul charged back accusing them as masquerading as apostles. And again he goes back to a Jewish legend that Satan had once masqueraded as one of the angels who sang praises to God, and it was then that Eve had seen him and had been seduced.

Paul is still defending himself.

Then in verse 16, against his wish and his best judgment, he finds himself in a position that he must produce his credentials. He feels that the whole thing is foolish and madness, but it is not for him but for the future of the gospel in that region and around. It is also clear that his opponents were Jewish since the pagans had no knowledge of God..

So, he tells the Corinthians that these false apostles have reduced them to object slavery because they are trying to persuade them to submit to circumcision and

other Jewish rules which amounted to 1001 in number, hence denying the glorious liberty of the gospel of grace. And against the rabbinic rules they are devouring their money and preying upon them; while he (Paul) is obeying these rules by working with his own hands. They lorded over you, Corinthians, meaning you became their slaves, and they are your masters and have the right to slap you on the face. May be that is why you yielded to their so called apostolic authority.

**(8)** It is clear that these opponents claimed three things:

**a-** They are Hebrews, meaning they speak their original Aramaic language, not like the dispersed Jews who forgot their original language; thinking of Paul being born in tarsus that he is one of those.

Paul answers that he is an authentic Jew who speaks Aramaic and did not forget his ancestor's language.

**b-** They are Israelites. The word Israelite describes a Jew who is a member of God's chosen people.

Paul answers that he is also an Israelite a member of God's family.

**c-** They are descendants of Abraham, hence they are heirs of God's promises to him (Gen. 12:1-3)

Paul answers that he is also a pure descendent of Abraham (Phil. 3:5, 6).

So far he is equal to what they claim; yet he is superior for many reasons which are the scars of his sufferings, and he puts a long list which when compared with the book of acts, it tells us that we know but very little of that great man.

As I said the list is long, so we shall discuss few of them:

**i)** Beaten with rods three times. The rods were of birch wood. This was a Roman punishment for the non-Romans, so Paul was not supposed to be scourged being a Roman citizen, but I suppose when there is so much riot and disturbance of peace by the mobs, the Roman soldiers beat every body, the good and the bad regardless who he is.

**ii)** Five times, he received forty stripes less one. This was a Jewish punishment (Deut. 25:1 – 3). It is supposed to be forty stripes but the scourger stops at thirty nine in case he counted wrongly, because if he stripes him one stripe too many, the scourger will be subject to be scourged himself. And if the person dies at the hand of the scourger, he is not liable unless he striped him more than thirty nine stripes. This procedure has so many regulations which is written in their Mishnah. And it is so horrible and can lead to death. Paul suffered five of those.

**iii)** Dangers of travel. In Paul's days travel by sea or land was very dangerous. Roads were infested with robbers, and they were not policed by troopers as we have now. That means taking all what the person has and cut throat if he resists. Knowing that Paul was always on the go shows how much danger he was exposed to, and how much more God had protected him. As a matter of fact his bodily harm was more from his countrymen than from robbers and thieves. In additions to all his suffering there was his worry and anxiety for all the churches he established. He bore the sorrows and the troubles of his people on his heart.

And above all that was the bitterness of humiliation not to be able to face his enemies and to escape in a basket from the walls of Damascus.

## Chapter 12:

### Verses 1 - 11

Paul is still showing his credentials, and talks about his amazing experience. I have come to a vision of the Lord, says he, I have been in his garden, the Paradise, I have seen and heard things that no one can talk about. The word paradise is a Persian word meaning a royal walled-garden where no one can enter except he whom the king loves, and permits his company. Then he talks about a thorn in the flesh. The Greek word he uses means a sharp stake. What that stake was? No body knows, but there are some suggestions, such as:

- i)** Spiritual temptation of doubt, and the sting of conscience.
- ii)** The constant battle with the opposition.
- iii)** Carnal temptations, not to exclude sex.
- iv)** His own physical appearance. See what we said before.
- v)** Some say he had epilepsy which explains his visions and Trans which were attributed to epilepsy in the old ages. They also despised and looked down on the epileptic and even spat on him; that is why Paul says in Galatians 4:14 that they saw his infirmity and did not spit on him as it is literally translated from the Greek origin. But that is severely wrong because this means that the visions he saw were the effect of a temporarily disordered mind, and it would be very hard to view the visions which changed the world as due to epileptic fits.
- vi)** Some said that he used to suffer from recurrent prostrating headaches.
- vii)** Some said that he suffered from eye problems or weak vision as a result of his encounter with the Lord on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:9). It may be that he never completely recovered from that blindness. This may also explain his headaches and why he wrote in Galatians 4:15 that they would have plucked out their eyes and would have given them to him; and also saying;” See with what large letters I write to you with my own hand” (Gal.6:11).
- viii)** Some thought it was recurrent attacks of virulent tertiary malaria which was plaguing the Eastern Mediterranean coasts at that time. This may also explain the headaches which were described by one of the natives as a rod hot bar thrust through the forehead. This may really fit in the description of thorn in the flesh or even a sharp stake in the flesh. Paul says for that he prayed three times but God in his wisdom did not remove but he gave him the strength to bear it. And that is how God answers our prayers sometimes; yet in our short-sightedness we think He did not answer our prayers or even He did not hear us. He talks about God’s sufficient grace. Let us see how much this means to him.
  - a-** It was sufficient for physical weariness. Paul was able to preach the gospel in all Asia Minor and parts of Europe without being tired.
  - b-** It was sufficient for physical pain. He was able to go on in spite of the crucial pain he had.
  - c-** It was sufficient for the opposition. All his life, he was against opposition from within and from without, none was able to break him.
  - d-** It was sufficient to keep him able. He was able to face cruel misjudgment and slander.

This all sufficient grace made Paul care not for what men thought of him, but what God wanted him to be.

### **Verses 12 – 18:**

Then he looks back at all his defense and say:” you forced me to act like a fool”. Yet he continues his defense because he is fighting for the gospel not for himself. Yes he may allow himself to be discredited, but for the gospel to be rendered ineffective, that he cannot allow. So he says:

**i)** You ought to have commended me for I am as good an apostle as they are, and the proof of my apostleship has been proved among you by all the signs and the mighty deeds which God has done through me. Tell me; in what aspect are you inferior to other churches, except for the fact that I have not been burden on you? Am I wrong? Forgive me if I am. Look at yourselves, what were you in the past, and what are you now? (Please read 1<sup>st</sup> Cor. 6:9-11).

That is the effectiveness of my ministry.

Rejoice for the loving life-changing grace of Jesus Christ has clothed you.

**ii)** Then he lays down again one of the supreme principles of Christian giving.

So, he says: it is not your money that I want, it is you.

Here is a story of a beggar who asked a lady for money, but she had no change. So she gave him a pound and asked him to buy a loaf of bread for her and she will give him some of the change he brings back. He brought the bread and gave her the change, and she gave him some of the change. He took it and said with the tears in his eyes;” it is not the money, it is the way you trusted me, no one ever trusted me like that before, and I cannot thank you enough”. One may say she is a naive softhearted woman or may be even fool, but she gave him more than what he expected; she gave him part of herself by giving him trust.

In all true giving the giver must give not only his substance but himself.

**(9)** It is clear that there was an indirect hint that Paul’s co-workers such as Titus and others may have misappropriated some of the money collected for the saints in Jerusalem. Paul leaps up to defend his friends. This is a sign of a great man.

### **Verses 19 – 21:**

#### **The marks of an unchristian church:**

Paul’s supreme aim was to stand right with God no matter what men thought of him.

So rather grimly he moves on to his future visit to them saying that he hopes that he will not come to Corinth and find them as he would not wish them to be, for, if that happens they will certainly find him what they would not wish him to be.

Of course there is a threat there.

Then he lists some characters of what might be called the unchristian church:

**Contentions:** Who he humbles himself can be exalted.

**Jealousies:** or envy or the desire to have what is not ours. It is the characteristic of a mean little mind.

**Outbursts of wrath:** It is the kind of anger described as intoxication of the soul that sweeps a man into doing things for which later he becomes bitterly sorry. It is said that it is the characteristic of more of a beast than man, because beasts

cannot control itself.

**Selfish ambitions:** It describes the work which is done for no other motive than for pay; that utterly selfish and self-centered ambition which has no idea of service, but for what it can get out for itself.

**Backbiting:** or slandering. It is the open loud-mouthed attack, the insults and the charges flung out loudly and in public. Here one can defend himself.

**Whispering:** This is nastier than slandering, because it describes the campaign of malicious gossip secretly in someone's ear, which will be passed on later as spicy secret. Here one cannot defend himself because he doesn't know the source.

**Conceit:** Jesus said that when others see our good deeds, they will glorify your father in heaven (Mat. 5:16). So we do good not to be glorified ourselves.

**Tumults:** It means disorder or anarchy. The church is a place of democracy. But democracy does not mean that everybody should do what he likes. That would be anarchy. Order must be the foundation of discussion in the church.

**Uncleanness:** This means anything which would make a person unfit to be in God's presence.

**Fornication:** We said before that the Corinthians' style of life was filthy. They did not regard adultery as sin. They regarded it as natural for a man to seek his pleasure where and how he could. There was no regard to the family ties.

**Lewdness:** It describes the soul which wants anything without restraint, has no sense of decency, can dare anything he wants, regardless of public opinion. A biblical example is Jezebel who built a temple to Baal in the very city of God himself, and plotted to kill Nabot the Jeraelite to get what she wanted. .

it is the person that gives no place for God or man. He is shameless, degraded and has no place for honor.

## Chapter 13:

Here Paul finishes his severe letter by mentioning four points:

### 1) He finishes with a warning:

He is coming again, and there will be no dragging of ill-situations any longer.

When all medicines fail, then comes the time for the surgeon's knife.

No one ever cured trouble by running away from it.

### 2) He finishes with a wish:

Paul never intended to show his authority for the sake of showing it, but if he has to use it is for a reason. So he says that he wishes that they would do what is right so that he need not to use his authority.

### 3) He finishes with a hope:

He hopes that they will go onwards to perfection, and to listen to the exhortation he has given them, and lastly to live in agreement and peace

### 4) He finishes with a blessing:

One of the best ways of making peace with our enemies is to pray for them, for no one can hate a man and pray for him at the same time.

So he ends by benediction.

The way has been hard, but the last word is peace.

## ***The letter of reconciliation*** ***2<sup>nd</sup> Cor. 1 – 9***

### **Chapter 1:**

#### **Verse 1:**

As it is usual in most of the letters the writer puts his name and the name or names of his associates if there is any, then the name of the addressee; so Paul starts this way, but he assures them from the very beginning that he is an apostle of Jesus Christ, sent by the will of God. Then he mentions Timothy's name who was with him in Ephesus at that time.

This letter is to the Church of God at Corinth. In this sentence he sets up right from the beginning an important fact that the church belongs to God not to people. It is a universal church, and the one in Corinth is part of that universal church. This is exactly similar to what we mean by saying "The University of San Francisco at Fresno or at Sacramento"; which means that the one in Fresno or Sacramento is part of the University of San Francisco.

Then he adds that this letter is also for all the believers in Achaia (In Paul's time Greece was composed of two provinces: Achaia in the south and Macedonia in the north).

#### **Verse 2:**

Then as he always did, He greets them with his famous Christian greetings:

**Grace:** It was originally a Greek greeting. It is used in the New Testament as the indispensable blessings of God.

**Peace:** In Hebrew it is Shalom, and actually it means more than peace. It means prosperity in every aspect of life such as wealth, children, health and so on. This greeting fits the church in Corinth very well because it was composed of both Greek and Jewish converts.

Then he says from **our** Father, reminding the Corinthians that they are God's children and at the same time brothers of Paul and Timothy.

Who is that Father? He is the Lord Jesus Christ meaning that Jesus Christ is our Lord and God.

#### **Verse 3:**

Here Paul voices a blessing to God which is familiar to any Jew, since it is part of their every day worship. Then he repeats the same "our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ to stress on the above mentioned fact.

Then he says the Father of mercies and comfort. God is compassionate and out of His compassion, His tender loving comfort flows to all who hurt.

#### **Verses 4, 5:**

There is no doubt that Paul suffered a good deal in his life, yet generally speaking all followers of Jesus are bound to suffer for his name. Jesus Himself

promised salvation and suffering; and He also said: "**he who does not take his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me**". (Mat. 10:38; Luke 14:27).

So the words "**us, our**" Which are mentioned several times in this verse, do not mean Paul as some commentators believe, but I am inclined to believe that it means all the believers.

So Paul says that God's compassionate love comforts us in all our afflictions, and we who are comforted in turn can comfort others in their afflictions. And as we suffer much for Christ's sake, we also are comforted much by His love.

#### **Verses 6, 7:**

Paul does not mean that his afflictions , give the Corinthians salvation since Christ's blood does that; but he means that he got into too many afflictions to preach the gospel. And the comfort bestowed on us by God should comfort you also by seeing its effect on us. You also have different afflictions as I do and this comfort is producing steadfast perseverance within you.

And all what we hope for you is steadfastness, for we know that as you share in our suffering, you will also share in our comfort.

#### **Verses 8 – 11:**

Here Paul tells of something happened to him in Asia minor (probably in Ephesus) which is not recorded in the book of Acts. He was in terrible danger almost beyond bearing that he despaired even to life. Yet that terrible experience he encountered was useful for it had driven him back to God. He then realized his utter dependence on God. The danger of prosperity and good health is that it encourages a false independence. It makes us think that we are capable of handling life without the help of God.

The good that came to Paul from this was his unshakable confidence in God. If God can bring him out of sure death, he can bring him out of anything else. So also every Christian, knowing what Christ has done for him, has no fear of anything that can happen.

Then he asks for their prayers.

We may have not much of earthly things to give our brothers, but the most priceless thing to give is praying for one another.

#### **Verses 12 – 14:**

Here he tells the Corinthians that he wants them to know that he conducted himself among them in sheer simplicity and Christian sincerity with nothing to hide, and guided by the grace of God. He had no hidden motives, because God is witness to his intentions.

He also assures them that there was no hidden meaning to what he said or wrote. We may say things because it is the right thing to say, or may be to show that we are agreeable, or may be for the sake of avoiding trouble.

Paul declared the truth of Christ with sincerity and no hidden meanings.

#### **Verses 15 – 22:**

Actually this passage is percussion to one of their accusations. Some of them

said that Paul does not keep his promises, and he says yes when he means no, how can we trust him anymore and how can we trust what he told us about God? So Paul says that he sincerely wanted to visit them on his way to Macedonia and also on his way back to Judea; he meant that, he didn't take the matter lightly, and he doesn't say yes when he means no; that is worldly stuff, but he speaks the truth in Christ who does not swing between yes and no, but is always the yes in every promise of God. What he means here is: had Jesus never come; we might have doubted the precious promise of God for salvation. For as many promises God has given, Jesus has fulfilled all of them and in him there was always the yes. And through Him we say yes this is true to glorify God. And Jesus is the guarantee of God that all His promises are true: The trustworthiness of the Sender is reflected to his messenger, and Paul is His messenger entrusted and ordained by Him.

Not only that but God has sealed us and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

### **Verses 1:23 – 2:4**

These five verses go together.

We recall in the introduction that the situation in Corinth had gone bad and Paul must have paid them a flying visit to mend the matters. As a result things became even worse which broke Paul's heart. So he sent them that severe letter we discussed before. It was just for this that he chose not to fulfill his promise of visiting them again for by doing that, it can cause more hurt for both him and them.

So he says that God is a witness to what he is going to say because it is the truth, that he chose not to come to spare them. But he did not say to spare them from what. Perhaps he did that intentionally, because in his anger he may have lost them instead of gaining them back.

Then he says that neither he nor his co-workers had the intention to domineer over their faith, but we care for you and for your advancement in spiritual life and the joy of fellowship with Christ, for it is by this faith that you stand firm.

Then he says that if he paid them another sorrowful visit, and grieved them, then who can bring joy to his heart except those whom he grieved?

And in verses 3, 4 he says that he wrote that message, referring to the severe letter, so that when he comes again, he might not receive grief from those who should instead bring full joy to his heart.; for when he wrote them, it was of great affliction and anguish of his heart and many tears, his purpose was not to make them sad but to show them the abundance of love he had for them.

### **Chapter2: Verses 5 – 11**

Apparently there was ring leader in the church of Corinth who had done much harm opposing Paul and his teaching, and apparently he also insulted Paul on his short quick visit we mentioned before. Paul in his good heart and Christian love forgave the man, but he was disciplined by the church.

So in this passage Paul is pleading to the church on behalf of that man.

He tells them that this man has been punished enough, further discipline or

casting him out would cause more harm than good, for this might drive him to despair; and in this case we are not serving Christ, nor the church, nor the man himself for whom Christ died, but giving Satan opportunity to exert his tempting power and to lay hand on the man.

Paul here is pleading for the man who caused him more trouble than anyone else in Corinth. Paul's aim was not so much to punish an evil-doer as to transform him. And let us always remember that the wrong kind of treatment often gives a man the last push into the arms of Satan.

### **Verses 12 – 17**

Paul begins this passage by telling how anxious he was to know their news that he couldn't wait in Troas - although there was a fruitful field there - and crossed to Macedonia to meet Titus who had not arrived yet, but thanks to God who leads us in His procession of triumph. And here an explanation is due for the words "**Aroma of life and Aroma of death and procession of triumph**": It was the custom in Rome to make a procession of honor for the triumphant general who returns after conquering a foreign country, and that procession marches in the streets of Rome to the Capitol in the following order:

First the state officials and the senators, then the trumpeters, then the spoils carried from the conquered land, then maps of the conquered land which has been added to the Empire and models of the conquered citadels and ships, then the white bull which will be sacrificed for the gods, then the wretched captives in chains (the enemy princes, leaders and generals) who will be executed shortly, then the lecturers carrying their rods to open the way for the triumphant general, then the musicians with their lyres, then the priests swinging their censers with the sweet-smelling incense burning in them, then comes the triumphant general standing in a chariot drawn by four horses, and clothed in a purple tunic embroidered with golden palm leaves and over it a purple toga marked out with golden stars, and holding in his hand an ivory scepter with the Roman eagle at the top of it, and over his head a slave holding the crown of Jupiter, then after him rides his family, and finally comes the army wearing all their decorations and shouting their cry of Triumph. Now we get the picture of the procession of the triumphant general and the aroma of the burning incense which is as sweet as it can be to the triumphant general and as deadly as it can be to the wretched captives who will be executed shortly. Paul uses this picture for the triumphant Jesus Christ who won the victory over sin, and the sweet aroma is for those who believe and the aroma of death for those who reject Him.

Then Paul says that his motives will prove to be sincere, and his message is from God and it will stand the very scrutiny and approval of Christ Himself.

## **Chapter 3: Ministry of Glory**

### **Verses 1-11**

Paul starts this passage by posing a question; "Do I need to recommend myself again, or do I need recommendation from or for you?" This is self explanatory, for Paul does not want to go into doing that again and be forced to boast again the thing which is very undesirable for him to do. There may be others who need

recommendation, but I don't for you personally are my proof; see what you were and what you are now, every one of you is a letter of Christ, for He wrote His teaching through me, not in ink and paper but by the Holy Spirit in your hearts. Every Christian is an advertisement for Christ. The honor of Christ and His teachings is in our hands. People judge God by the conduct of His followers. In Romans 2:24, Paul tells the Jews;” **for the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.**”

Then he hastens to say that whatever he has done is not his own work but the work of God who is the all-sufficient who also made Paul for his task. To Him alone be the praise and the glory. Paul never conceived himself as adequate for any task, but he always thought that God makes him adequate.

Then he moves to a comparison between the old and new covenants.

God who is the initiator of these covenants offers man a relationship upon conditions which man could neither initiate nor alter but could only accept or reject. And the word” **New**” which was always used by Jesus and also used by Paul here has the meaning of being new in time and also in quality.

So Paul here wants to say that the new covenant is not new because it came after the old, but because it is completely different in quality, it is a one of a kind relationship:

**1)** The old covenant was based on commandments written on two stone tablets. The new covenant is based on the power of the life-giving Spirit.

**2)** The written words work from without, while the work of the Spirit works from within, it changes the man's heart.

**3)** Man may obey the written words but he most often breaks it, while the Spirit who works in the heart makes one does not even wish to break it.

**4)** The words may change the law, but the Spirit changes the human nature.

**5)** The old covenant was deadly because it produced a legal relationship which man has to keep, and no man can keep all the law, so he is always in default in front of the judgment seat, and it rendered man hopeless, lifeless and helpless. And in general it was a tool to diagnose sin, but unable to cure man from it.

On the other hand the new covenant is a relationship of love because God so loved the world (John 3:16) as a father loves his sons. It changes man's life because it changes his heart, and he becomes a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). And it gives man the power to do what is right.

**6)** The old covenant was borne in glory as evidenced by the Shekinah of the Lord shone on Moses' face that the people could not look at it when he came down from mount Sinai with the two tablets of the law (Exodus 34:30), and which was a passing and transient splendor.

But the new covenant has a much greater splendor, for it brings pardon not condemnation and life not death and a glory which will never fade away.

There is a warning here: the Jews preferred the old covenant over the new one which they rejected. This doesn't mean that the old covenant was bad, but it was the second best at a stage leading to the new covenant.

Let us be careful not to hang on to the old and neglect or reject the new.

## **Veil on their faces: Verses 12 – 18**

There are four thoughts here that Paul wants to convey, and all are related to the incidence that happened to Moses when he came down from mount Sinai.

**A)** We said that his face was shining. Moses knew that this is transient then it will fade away. So he put veil on his face to cover the glory that is passing away. This picture, Paul uses to describe the old covenant. Yes it was God's covenant and yes it was glorious, but that glory was essentially fading away to give place for the more glorious new covenant. It was destined to be over passed not because it was wrong, but because it was incomplete. **"If righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain"**, and in another translation it states **"If there is perfection in the law, then Christ died for no reason"** (Gal. 2:21). The old was in the process of maturity to reach the mature and complete new covenant.

The old was a step to glory, but the new is the summit of glory.

**B)** The second thought is, that veil that kept the children of Israel from seeing that passing away glory is still covering their minds from apprehending the truth of the Scripture which would lead them to Jesus Christ although it is read to them every Sabbath in their synagogues.

I am not criticizing them because we are under the same judgment; our eyes could be blinded also in many ways:

**1- May be by prejudice:**

We often go to the Scripture to find support to our own views rather than to find the truth of God.

**2- May be by wishful thinking:**

We often try to find in the Scripture what we wish to be there, rather than what is there. We find what we want to see and neglect what we don't want to see.

**3- May be by fragmentary thinking:**

We often stress on a certain passage or verse without looking at all the bible as a whole. It is the whole message of the Scripture that we must seek.

**C)** The third thought is, that veil did not only keep them from seeing the real meaning of the Scripture, but it also comes between them and God in so many ways:

**1- By way of disobedience:**

When we disobey God we become less and less capable of seeing Him.

We need a pure heart to see God.

**2- By way of unreachable spirit:**

When we think we know it all, we get in the spirit of not listening to or accepting what the others say. The best teacher on earth cannot teach him who knows it all. If we insist upon our own ways we cannot learn His way.

**D)** Then Paul says that in the new covenant we see the glory of God with no veil upon our faces, so we changed from glory into glory; and he means by that, that if we fasten our eyes upon Christ all the time, His glory will be reflected on us and His image will show in our lives.

Then he says that where the Spirit is, there is liberty. When obeying a code of law, the Spirit cannot work in us, but when we put that aside and allow the Spirit to work in us, then we find that there is no other desire but serving and obeying

God, for then it is not law but love which binds us to Him.  
Love dresses the most humble and menial tasks with glory.  
In His service we find our perfect freedom.

## **Chapter 4:**

### **Those who are blind: Verses 1 – 6**

These six verses are actually in continuity with the previous chapter  
And here Paul talks about different kinds of people including himself:

#### **A) About himself:**

He says he never loses heart in the noble task he has been given, because of two main reasons: first he is aware of how great that task is and that by itself supplies him by the strength to carry on. Secondly because of the memory of the mercy he received, so all his purpose in life is to work for the One who loved and redeemed him.

#### **B) About his opponents:**

They apparently accused him that he used hidden and shameful methods and that he used unscrupulous cleverness to get his own way and that he adulterated the message of the gospel. Of course he said these are lies. And God is witness to what he says

#### **C) About those who rejected the gospel:**

The message he gave was simple and clear, but there are some who were deaf and blind to its glory. The god of this world, the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2), Satan, the devil blinded their minds so that they cannot believe. And hear again I stress on the fact that it is Satan who makes some blind of the truth of God, and not God as the people of the Old Testament believe and unfortunately some of us as well. Simply look at the first sin that happened to Adam and we have suffered from it since. It was the serpent or Satan which blinded Eve from apprehending the truth of God's warning. It was not God. God did not shut Adam and Eve out; they shut themselves out from God.

#### **D) About Jesus:**

Paul says that in Jesus Christ we see God. **“He that has seen Me, has seen the Father”** Said Jesus in John 14:9.

When we look at Jesus we can see the glory of God coming to earth in the form of man that we can relate to and identify with.

### **Earthen vessels: Verses 7 – 12**

Here Paul writes about the mortal nature of man and God's sufficiency, and stresses the power of life through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. So he says that all of us who have received this treasure of salvation which we carry around in earthen vessels that is our body. In the old times everything from the priceless to the worthless to foods and liquids was kept in clay pots which were breakable; and so are our bodies. They are so weak and easily breakable that a tiny virus not seen by the naked eye or even the regular microscope can kill a man. But God is the source of power that keeps us going. So though this precious treasure is kept in clay pots yet God is the One Who

keeps it undestroyed.

Paul was pressured in so many ways, physically, mentally, spiritually, and socially, but he was not driven into a corner where there is no escape. He was perplexed but not disheartened, haunted by his enemies but not forsaken, knocked down but not passed out. Paul was able to overcome all these by God's extraordinary power.

After listing this entire affliction which he encountered and also every Christian may suffer in his life, Paul tells the secret. He says that he is aware that if a man shares the life from Christ, he must also share the risks of Christ, even to die for Christ. The Christian life is simply: **"No cross, no crown"**.

Then he says that they (himself and co-workers) carry around in their bodies the suffering and death of Jesus. This means that through out their missionary work they have suffered to unbearable extent in order to preach the death of Jesus on the cross which is the essence of salvation.

Paul was the forerunner of many who preached the gospel after him, and he knew that as much as he suffered they will suffer too, and he wrote in Gal. 6:17 that he bears in his body the marks of Jesus Christ.

And what he means by verses 11 and 12 is simply this. He says that we always carry in our body the death of Jesus that His life – meaning the life that He gives – may be revealed in our body.

#### **Verses 13 – 15:**

Paul Quotes Psalm 116:10 which says **"I believed, therefore I spoke"**.

Then he says we too believe with our hearts and confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord whom God raised from the dead (Rom. 10:9 – 10). This means, by obediently confessing Christ's gospel, we give evidence of our faith and testify that we belong to God's family. And we know that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and place us with you in His presence.

Then he says that all these things take place because of them; and that God multiplies His grace as more and more people become its recipients, and so there will be more praise and more thanksgiving to the glory of God.

#### **Verses 16 – 18: Outward and inward:**

Paul here sets out the secret of endurance. So he says that all through life our outward body fades away, but our inward self is renewed day by day. The very suffering which weakens the body is the very thing which strengthens our spirit. No one should fear the fading away of the outward body because it brings him nearer and nearer to God. That is why he was quite certain that the suffering of this world is nothing compared with the glory he will enjoy in the next world as he says in Rom. 8:18 **"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."**

And for that very reason our eyes should be set not on the things that are presently seen but on the things which are not presently seen for the things that are seen will pass away but the unseen will be seen in eternal life.

### **Chapter 5: The Joy to come:**

**Verses 1 – 10:**

Paul is now showing us what he is longing for.

He says that it will be a day of joy when he is done with this human body. He regards his body as a temporary dwelling like a tent. He wants to be in the Divine presence of God. He is waiting patiently for the day when God gives him a new body, where he will eternally praise God.

But this doesn't mean that he despises or hates his present life, on the contrary, he rejoices and we should rejoice too for God has given us the foretaste of what we shall have by giving us the Holy Spirit as a down payment to assure us of our eternal inheritance. And as such we are now having an eternal passport to enter freely in God's presence when time comes.

Then he says that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

Paul himself has appeared before the judgment seat of many earthly rulers where sometimes he was condemned and in others he was acquitted.

But there at Christ's judgment seat, there will be no condemnation for those who are in Christ (Rom. 8:1). But if the verdict is already in our favor, why should Paul mention the judgment seat at all? Oh, yes he should, because at that time we shall know if we shall win or lose a crown.

**Verses 11 – 19:**

This section is in direct continuation of the section before.

Paul is not talking here about fear or terror of Christ's Judgment seat, but rather of awe and reverence. The Old Testament concept of fear of God was scare of His judgment and wrath as evident from so many verses such as Job 28:28; Deut. 10:12; Prov. 1:7, 9:10, 16:6; but here it is an expression of that feeling of keeping one from doing things which would break the heart of someone whom he loves. And once again he is trying to persuade the Corinthians of his sincerity and that God is witness that his hands are clean and his motives are pure. I am sure that he feels that his opponents had definitely marred his integrity and this might injure his message. So he assures that his one and only motive is to serve God and to help the Corinthians.

Sometimes when someone talks above our heads, and we don't understand him, we tend to brand him as crazy. Paul was not any different; the Corinthians and later Festus the Roman Governor of Judea thought of him as being beside himself. But why should we go far, Jesus' brothers and the crowd thought the same (Mark 3:21). But of course Paul did not care being branded like that, and he was wise enough to conduct himself as the circumstances may be in order that he may win even one man to Christ.(1 Cor. 9:19 - 22). So often we are branded as crazy or naive or even fools or stupid when we practice Christian teaching in forgiveness, hospitality, and utter loyalty.

Then he moves into the core of Christianity saying that Christ died for all, and our old self died with him on the cross, to be raised again a new creation, and in this new life we have acquired a new set of standards. We do not judge things by the worldly standards anymore. In the past Paul tried vigorously to wipe out Christians and Christianity of the earth, but now Christ is everything to him.

### **Verses 5:20 – 6:2 Ambassadors for Christ:**

**First:** An ambassador is a person commissioned by the king, the president, or the ruler of the country to represent him in a foreign country. He spends his designated time with people foreign to him who speak a different language and have different traditions and a different way of life. The Christian is like that for he spends his designated time in this world, living, working and participating in all acts of life, yet he is a citizen of heaven, he is alien to this world, he is stranger. A man who is not willing to be different cannot be a true Christian.

**Secondly:** The ambassador speaks for his own country, so is the Christian. He should speak for his own country.

**Thirdly:** The honor of his country is in his hands. His country is judged by his conduct, the way he speaks, the way he behaves when under pressure. So is the Christian. People blaspheme the name of our Lord by our bad conduct. We may be honored by being ambassadors for Christ, but I hope that each one of us would realize how terrifying responsibility this honor carries with it. Then Paul says be reconciled to God. There is no where in the New Testament that says God is reconciled to man. That is because God was not the one who erected the barrier, we did, and it was not Him Who estranged from us we did, and it was not Him Who did the transgression we did. Yet because he so loved the world He authored and executed salvation, and now He opens His arms and say come back my children, come home where you find comfort, come home to the everlasting rest. We should not take this call lightly, we should not break His heart, and we should behave in a way worthy of this grace and love.

## **Chapter 6:**

### **Enduring Hardships: Verses 3 - 10**

Preachers of God's gospel should be blameless and beyond reproach, so that no one who observes them can take offense; and Paul in this section is laying the foundations for that. So he says that he does not give any chance for any one to criticize his conduct, not because he does not like to be criticized as many of us do, but because he does not want the ministry of the gospel of the Lord to be impeded. When a minister breaks God's moral law, the church can no longer witness effectively to the world, and the church will become a laughing stock.

And being servants (Paul and co-workers) ordained by God to carry His message, they commend themselves in a way worthy of this call.

Then Paul talks in verse 4 about endurance. The word in Greek that is translated endurance actually means the courageous and triumphant ability to bear things which enables a man to pass the breaking point and not to break and always to greet the unseen with a cheer. It is the power to transmute tribulations into strength and glory. Then he lists his sufferings and tribulations. I should mention here that Paul did list his sufferings and tribulations three times in this epistle though in different circumstances (4:8 – 11; 6:4: - 10; and 11:25 – 33). He did that not because he forgot that he mentioned it before, or because he is complaining, or because he is boasting, but he wants to assure us that there is no sweet without fire, or roses without thorns. Christians have to know that there will always be tribulation; Jesus promised that and the apostles promised that

also. He put these afflictions in three categories: I call it the **3X3** formula.

**1) The internal afflictions:** This is suffering of the spirit.

**a- The things that press sore on us:** There are things that weigh down a man's spirit; sorrows, burdens on the heart, disappointments, and the demands of life.

**b- The inescapable pains of life:** such as sorrow for a loved one or death of a loved one.

**c- The anxieties of life:** Life has its moments when a man feels like shut in as if suffocated, and as if the walls of life are caving on him.

**2) The external afflictions:** This is mostly physical suffering

**a- Stripes:** There are still some countries where it is a physical agony to be a Christian. If it was not for Paul and the other founders of the church who were tortured in every possible way and even killed, there would have been no Christianity today.

**b- Prisons:** Bishop Clement of Rome tells us that Paul have been imprisoned no less than seven times. According to the book of acts we know that he was imprisoned in Philippi, Jerusalem, Caesarea, and Rome (? twice). There is also some countries where Christians are punished by imprisonment up till now.

**c- Tumults:** This is the violence of the mobs. Paul had his share of that as well. Nowadays it is not the violence but the mockery, or the amused contempt of the crowd, against what we stand for.

**3) The effort of the Christian life:**

**a- Toils and labors:** This describes the agony which takes everything of the body, mind, and spirit that a man has to give.

**b- Sleepless nights:** For Paul sometimes for prayer, and sometimes for being in a very uncomfortable situation such as when he was in the prison in Philippi where his feet were in the wooden socks.

**c- Fasting:** I don't think that Paul is talking here about voluntary fasting which was usually called for in difficult situations, but the actual hunger when he had no money to feed himself, or for being so absorbed in his work that he did not have time to eat.

After listing these tribulations, Paul now shifts to the God-given grace. Here also Paul uses the **3X3** formula.

**1) The God-given qualities of mind:**

**a- Purity:** In the old times, it was defined as "the careful avoidance of all sins which are against the gods" and as "freedom from every stain of the flesh and the spirit or as blameless in the Jewish tradition. In Christianity it is the quality which enables a man to enter into the presence of God.

**b- Knowledge:** It means the knowledge that makes the Christian to behave in a Christian manner.

**c- Patience:** It is the ability to bear with people even when they are wrong, cruel, insulting and misguided. It is also the quality of a man who may lose a battle but never admit defeat.

**2) God-given Quality of heart:**

**a- Kindness:** One commentator describes it as "the sympathetic sweetness of temper which puts others at their ease and shrinks from giving pain" it is the quality which thinks more of the others than of itself.

**b- The Holy Spirit:** Paul knew well that neither any useful word spoken nor any good deed done is without the help of the Holy Spirit. But it could mean also a spirit of holiness, which means that the spirit of the inner most being of a person which dominates his motive is holy and directed solely towards the honor and the service of God.

**c- Unfeigned love:** It means that spirit which no matter anyone else does to it will never seek revenge or anything else but the other person's highest good.

### **3) God-given equipment for preaching the gospel:**

**a- Declaring the Truth:** No one can preach the gospel unless he is given the power and the ability to proclaim it.

**b- The power of God:** The only power Paul had was the power of God. Paul never said I did this, he always says God enabled me to do it.

Likewise we should always think of God who gives us the power to do anything.

**c- The weapons for the right and left hands:** This means the weapons of attack and the weapons of defense. The sword and spear were carried in the right hand, while the shield was carried on the left arm. And Paul means that God gave him the power to attack his task and to defend himself from temptation. Or it may mean to defend himself from opponents and to attack when needed. Then he follows by few contrasts, as if saying he may have lost all the rights and privileges the world can give but he is still a citizen of the kingdom of God. He has been ill-reputed by men, but his fame is sure with God. He was thought of as deceiver or imposter, but he knows that his message is God's truth. The Jews denounced him and pronounced him as no body, but he is a body at least to whom he preached the gospel. Death and threat of death were always his companions, yet by the grace of God he is still triumphantly alive. Things that happened could kill the spirit of anyone, but did not kill his spirit. Things that happened could break any man's heart, but they could not destroy the joy of his ministry. He might seem to be homeless and penniless, yet he preached the richness of Christ to all people. He might seem to have nothing but he has Christ who is everything to him and to anyone who believes, in this world and the next

### **Open Hearts:**

#### **Verses 6:11-13 and 7:2- 4**

These two passages go together, so we shall discuss them together.

What is translated as our heart is wide open, in the original language literally means our heart is enlarged. One of the commentators put it nicely. He says as heat makes all things expand so is the warmth of love expands man's heart. So in a sense Paul says here that our heart is expanded with our love for you. Then comes the word "Bowels". This was a term used by almost every nation in the old days where they believed that the bowels were the center of emotions. And the bowels to them were the viscera, the heart, the liver, and the lungs, which is still not that far from what we believe now as the heart being the center of love while it is not; and as saying he had the guts to do so and so, while the guts cannot do anything.

Then Paul claims some facts about himself, that he wronged no one, corrupted no one, and took advantage of no one. One may sin whether on purpose or no

purpose, but if he comes to God with a contrite heart and confess his sin, God will forgive him, but there is nothing worse than teaching or causing another person to sin especially the weak in faith. I made it a daily request to God in my prayers to help me not to be a stumbling block to any one whether by deed or by uttered word.

It was Paul's proud claim that his teaching and his influence had always been towards the best for those who hear him.

Then he finishes this passage by telling the Corinthians that though there were some momentary troubles, yet his heart is overflowing with joy. Nothing is more comforting to the spirit more than that; and the Holy Scripture tells us” **Better a dinner of herbs where love is, than a fatted calf with hatred.**” (Prv.15:17).

### **Verses 6:14 – 7:1:**

This is the passage we skipped for the sake of the proper flow of the subject. And this is the passage that we studied before as “**the previous letter**”. Please refer back to page 7 of this study.

### **Verses 7:5 – 16:**

You recall that after Paul have sent Titus to the Corinthians with the severe letter, he felt uneasy about the outcome, so he did not wait for the return of Titus but left Troas though there was too much to do there and met Titus half way in Macedonia from whom he knew the good news that the trouble is over and the wound had healed. This is the background of this passage and we should read it in the light of this background.

It tells us of how Paul used to deal with circumstances like that:

- 1) Paul knew that it was time for necessity to rebuke. Trouble is like a disease; if it is dealt with at the right time it can often easily be eradicated.
- 2) But rebuke was not what he wanted, he felt forced to do it because the situation went out of hand. He took no pleasure at all in doing that.
- 3) He did rebuke them as a sort of waking up call so that they may realize his sincere love to them. Rebuke certainly hurts and causes pain, but that was not his ultimate purpose. This rebuke was not to discourage or knock them down but to encourage and lift them up.

**This passage tells us also of Paul's Joy:**

1) **The joy of reconciliation:** it is the joy of a wound that healed. I always felt that a burden is lifted off my chest when I reconcile my differences with some one whom I care for. And Paul not only cared for these people but he loved them dearly as he also did with all the other churches where he preached the gospel. Paul was so eager to hear these news that he couldn't wait for Titus to return.

2) **The joy of justified confidence:** Paul put his trust in Titus in dealing with such a very difficult and delicate situation. The Corinthians were no doubt angry about that severe letter, and they could or would have poured all their anger on Titus (the carrier) and they might have. But apparently Titus has managed the situation very efficiently. That brought all the joy to Paul's heart, and proved that he put his confidence in the right man, and I also believe that Paul was praying fervently for this success to happen.

**3) The joy of seeing Titus kindly treated:** Paul would have been more heartbroken if Titus was treated badly. Sure he loves the Corinthians, but he also loves Titus. They are all his brothers and sisters in Christ; and it hurts Paul to see one of them hurt. This is a reflection of God's love to us and we can always prove that we love Him by loving and showing kindness to others. In this passage, Paul also talked about **godly sorrow** which produces true repentance. And the Corinthians proved their repentance by doing everything possible to mend the wound. They hated their sin and what they have done; and even hated themselves for doing it.

On the other hand the **ungodly sorrow** is not actually sorrow, it is resentment, and the person involved may do the same again especially if he can get away with it. As a matter of fact that person may not feel that he has done anything wrong at all, or done no sin, and consequently no place for remorse.

## **Chapter 8:**

### **Collecting for the poor: Verses 1-15**

One of the most compassionate desires to Paul's heart was to look after his brothers and countrymen in Jerusalem. The church of Jerusalem was by no doubt the mother church of all the churches in Judea and the Gentile world. But that church was poor, and Paul made it his duty and passion to collect for the poor brothers in Jerusalem. Not only that, but he felt that it is also the duty of the Gentile churches to participate in this noble work.

So in this passage he urges the Corinthians to generously fulfill this duty.

And he uses five citations to appeal to and move their hearts.

**1) He cites the example of others:** He tells them about the generosity of the Macedonians who though poor they gave all they have and more than what was expected. It is not the rich who give generously because whatever they give is out of their abundance, but the poor, because they give out of their need and they know what need means. Look at the example of the very poor woman who was praised by Jesus because she gave all what she had (Mark 12:44; Luke 21:4).

**2) He cites the example of Jesus Christ:** He tells them that Jesus left all His glory in heavens for it pleased Him to come to earth and sacrifice Himself for our sins; and yet we cannot even sacrifice a little of what we have to those who are in need!

**3) He cites their own past record:** He tells them that they have been always foremost in everything. How can they lag behind in this?

As Christians we should not fall short of our own best.

**4) He cites the necessity of action:** A kind feeling is worthless if not followed by action. It is sad to keep our feelings to us without putting them into action.

James talk about being doer rather than hearer only (James 1:22)

**5) He cites how life even things up:** Jesus said:" With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you." (Matt.7:2; Mark 4:24). For he who gives bountifully, bountifully he will be repaid; and he who gives sparingly, sparingly also he will be repaid (2 Cor. 9:6).

Then he talks highly about the Macedonians. He says that they gave themselves

first before giving gifts or money. Of all the churches of Macedonia, the ones of Thessalonica and Philippi were the most generous. They gave their gifts and souls for the advancement of the work of God.

After Paul was forced to leave their city the church of Thessalonica sent a delegate with gifts who caught up with Paul in Berea. Aristarchus who was of the same church chose to accompany the prisoner Paul as his slave on his trip from Caesarea to Rome for trial before the Emperor. That was the only way to enable him to accompany the prisoner Paul to claim that he was his slave; and he served him in prison as well (Acts 28:2).

Also when Paul was in prison in Rome the church of Philippi sent Epaphroditus with gifts and also to stay with Paul to serve him, but he got sick and was near death, and Paul chose to send him back with a very nice letter of thanks for the gifts and for his services (Phil. 2:26-30).

So it is obvious that the real essence of gift is to give oneself with it.

Jesus is the supreme example of this for he gave Himself for our sake.

Then Paul quotes from Exodus 10:18 which state that whether the Israelites in the wilderness gathered much or little manna, it was the same because what was left over to the next day would rot except what they gather on the day before the Sabbath for that wouldn't rot.

#### **The Final touch: Verses 16-24:**

Yes everything is now smooth with the repenting church, but Paul knows quite well that the devil his adversary walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom who may devour (1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5:8). He knew that there will be some who will not hesitate to accuse him of embezzling part of the collections; so he put a safeguard against this by suggesting that two of the well trusted brethren who were praised by all the churches would carry the collections with him to Jerusalem. So he says that Titus of his kind heart and earnestness offered to come on his own, and that he (Paul) is sending with him these two brothers to carry on this noble task; Luke is thought to be one of these two.

Then he says you know Luke, but if anyone inquires about him let it be known that he is my partner and fellow worker in the service of the Lord.

## **Chapter 9:**

### **Still in the subject of collections: Verses 1- 5:**

As we mentioned in chapter 8 before, that Paul was encouraging the Corinthians by citing examples of others which in that case were the Macedonians, it appears here that he was using the same technique with the Macedonians by citing the overflowing generosity of the churches of Achaia to them. This may appear to us as if he is playing the game of one against the other. No, he is not, because if he is, then he would have criticized one to the other but he is not doing that, he is actually exhorting or encouraging one to the other, in order to put the kind work in the hearts of both of them.

He sort of bragged to the churches in Macedonia about the readiness and

generosity of the Corinthians; and now he is just a little afraid that they may let him down, so he preferred to send delegates in advance to see for it that the collection is going alright.

Barclay here talks a little bit about four ways of giving gifts. I'll mention them briefly though they are not in the Scripture. He says that one can give as a **duty**, or as **self-satisfaction**, or as a **prestige**, or under **love's compulsion**. The best and most effective one is the last, and it is the only acceptable one to God.

### **Principles of Giving: Verses 6-15**

In this passage Paul gives us some useful principles:

**1)** One reaps what he sows. You sow in abundance, you reap in abundance and of course the opposite is true. One would ask, does this mean that if I give so much, God will give me so much? Yes, but not necessarily money, He will give you wealth may be in God-fearing children, a warm heart, a loving wife and family, good friends, honest sincere co-workers, nice and kind neighbors, friends who stand beside you in troubles and grief, and above all richness in fellowship with God and other believers.

**2)** God loves the happy giver. In Deut. 15:10 God's command is not to give with a grieved heart. There is also a rabbinic saying in the effect that to receive a friend with a cheerful countenance and give him nothing, is better than receiving him with a gloomy countenance and give him everything.

There is always joy in giving.

**3)** A man who is content with so little obviously can give so much, but it is sad that we want so much for ourselves, that we don't have enough to give. Content is a precious virtue. Godliness with content is great gain (1st Tim. 6:6). God is the one who gives us the spirit of content, and love which are the essence of giving. Giving is so wonderful because:

**a- It does something to others.** It restores their faith in the living God who does not forsake them and also in their fellow man, and prompts thanksgiving to God.

**b- It does something for us.** It proves our Christian profession and wins us both the love and prayers of others.

**c- It does something for God.** It makes prayers of thanksgiving go up as a beautiful aroma, and makes others glorify God when they see our good deeds, and turns men's hearts and thoughts towards God.

Then Paul reminds the Corinthians as well as us of the wonderful gift of God in Jesus Christ whose wonder can never be exhausted.

\*\*\*May God bless you all \*\*\*

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