

OVERVIEW OF BOOK OF 1 Corinthians – THE KEY TO SOLVING CHURCH PROBLEMS

INTRODUCTION:

I had trouble finding any **Mother's Day content** in the book of 1 Corinthians. It certainly has a lot of famous passages such as the classic chapter on Love – Chap. 13. But the main content surrounding church problems including incest, idolatry, immorality, divisions, abuse of the Lord's Supper, excesses regarding spiritual gifts, etc. did not fit the bill. But I was able to find one verse that should be close to the hearts of every Mom:

“We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed” – 15:51

You often see that posted on the wall in church nurseries.



It should not surprise any of us to find that the church at Corinth in Paul's day wrestled with a wide variety of moral and doctrinal problems. Maybe what is surprising is that Paul, who was involved in founding this church as recorded in **Acts 18**, spent so much time there in person teaching and discipling the young believers. Initially he ministered there for a year and a half – teaching them the Word of God. We just finished studying the book of Romans – written to a church that Paul had never had the privilege yet of even visiting – and yet we did not see the same amount of strife and compromise with the world in that setting.

James Boyer: If Paul were to write a letter to the evangelical, Bible-believing churches of late twentieth century America, I believe it would be much like 1 Corinthians. Their world was like our world: the same thirst for intellectualism, the same permissiveness toward moral standards, the same fascination for the spectacular. And their church was like our churches: proud, affluent, materialistic, fiercely eager for intellectual and social acceptance by the world, doctrinally orthodox but morally and practically conforming to the world.

3 VISITS / 4 LETTERS

Let's begin our study by chronicling the progressive stages of the relationship between the Apostle Paul and the church at Corinth – stages reflected in both letters and visits. (**Bill McRae**)

1. **Founding of church** in Corinth = his first visit – **Acts 18:1-17** – 2nd missionary journey; has crossed over into Europe; first came to Athens in Greece and then to Corinth; stayed there 18 months; wrote 1 & 2 Thess.; 51 AD; Paul left Corinth and returned to Antioch to conclude his 2nd missionary journey

2. Came to Ephesus in 3rd missionary journey; **Wrote a lost letter** – **1 Cor. 5:9** – indicates that before he wrote 1 Cor, he had written a previous letter – not inspired – not to associate with immoral people – 52-53 AD
3. Paul heard that his first letter had been misunderstood – they are carrying out his instructions to a very severe extreme; so Paul wanted to set the record straight; spurs the **writing of 1 Corinthians** (his second letter to them) – 55AD – from Ephesus right before he left there after a 3 year stay – **16:5-8**
4. Evidence is that 1 Cor. was a total failure – church did not respond well to Paul’s instructions; situation actually worsened; Paul sends Timothy to Corinth and he is ineffective as well – so Paul decides to pay a **quick second visit** to the church at Corinth – **2 Cor. 2:1** – indicates that Paul had previously come to them in sorrow (that was not the way he came at the founding to evangelize them) – this **sorrowful visit** had to have been before the writing of 2 Cor.; so we conclude that between 1 & 2 Cor., Paul went to Corinth again and this was a very painful visit, a sorrowful experience; **2 Cor. 13:1** – states that this is the **third time** I will be coming to you ... a quick trip from Ephesus – dealing with some things that had not been corrected by his epistle
5. Returning back to Ephesus, he wrote another letter = his third epistle to Corinth; referenced in **2 Cor. 2:3-4** – called the **sorrowful letter** – content was based that there was a man that did not accept Paul’s apostleship and has gathered a following – they did not respond to Paul’s teaching because they did not accept his apostolic authority – as coming from just a man instead of from God – that’s just the opinion of Paul; it’s a severe letter; he reprimands them; Titus carried that letter to them; Paul waiting for their reaction – sitting on pins and needles; Paul leaves Ephesus and goes to Troas so he gets a little closer to Corinth and to the return of Titus with his report – might hear a week earlier; doesn’t hear; so he gets in a boat and crosses the sea and goes over to Macedonia – he knows the very route that Titus is coming back in; eventually Titus comes and meets him some place in Macedonia; Titus brings good news – they have accepted his word as a word from God; Paul is relieved and thrilled
6. Sits down and writes them a 4th letter from Macedonia = **2 Corinthians** – sends it to Corinth – 56 AD
7. Makes **third visit to Corinth** on his third missionary journey – 57 AD

BACKGROUND of the City of Corinth and the Church at Corinth
A COMPROMISED CHURCH IN A CORRUPT SOCIETY



- Most important city in Greece – about 700,000 people; maybe 2/3 were slaves -- Corinth was **ethnically and socially diverse** — Romans, Greeks, Jews, freed slaves, and traders from across the empire lived there. This diversity brought **social tension** and **class divisions**, which we see reflected in the church’s problems
- Strategically located on a narrow 4 mile isthmus between the Aegea Sea and the Adriatic Sea – connecting northern and southern Greece
Would drag smaller ships across the narrow strip of land on rollers or skids to avoid the more than 200 mile trip around; [later a canal was built – begun by Nero in the first century but not completed until near the end of the nineteenth century]
- Key seaport and center of commerce, wealthy city
- Destroyed by the Romans in 146 BC; Julius Caesar rebuilt it and made it a Roman province in 46 AD
- Hosted the Isthmian athletic games (second only in importance to the Olympic games)
- Corinth had a prominent Acropolis (2,000 feet high) – used for both defense and worship; contained Temple of Aphrodite = Greek goddess of love – serviced by 1,000 female priests who were religious prostitutes
- Common language of the people = koine Greek
- A center of learning and rhetoric – Like nearby Athens, Corinth valued **philosophy and eloquence**. Public speakers and teachers competed for followers; Paul contrasted God’s wisdom with man’s wisdom
- One of the most excavated cities of the ancient world. You can still see the ruins of the synagogue where Paul preached, the house of Justus, and the bema (judgment seat) where Paul stood before Gallio (**Acts 18:12–17**).
- Degraded culture – cf. list of sins in **6:9-10**
Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God.
- Variety of major problems in the church: factions, lawsuits among believers in the pagan courts, immorality and incest, abuse of the Lord’s Supper, abuse of spiritual gifts
Shock: The shock: The church didn’t change the culture—the culture infiltrated the church.
- Debauchery - Coined a word = “*act like a Corinthian*” – sailors notorious for taking a holiday from morality while staying there
- Idolatrous religious practices, many gods
- Paul was brought before a Roman tribunal by some of the Jewish leaders – But Gallio dismissed the charges since they were religious in nature rather than civil; soon after Paul left with Priscilla and Aquilla to go to Ephesus

Occasion of Paul writing 1 Corinthians: -- 2 Primary Triggers:

- Disturbed by a number of negative reports from the household of Chloe – **1:11**
For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are quarrels among you. Responds in chaps. 1-6
- Responding to a delegation of 3 men sent from Corinth to Ephesus (**16:17**) –
And I rejoice over the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus; because they have supplied what was lacking on your part.

carrying a letter requesting Paul's judgment on very specific issues (7:1) –

Now concerning the things about which you wrote **Responds in rest of epistle**
key structural marker: “*now concerning*” – 7:25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1; 16:12

BIG IDEA: The Gospel Message of Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection Brings God's Wisdom and Power to Bear on the Practical Church Problems That Are Rooted in Man's Pride and Selfishness

<https://apologist.ai/en> -- Christian AI alternative to ChatGPT – uses **good sources**

[I was talking to Bruce Hurt who hosts the fantastic site preceptaustin.org]

The Gospel of Jesus Christ calls believers to live in unity, holiness, and love, viewing every part of life through the lens of Christ's death and resurrection.

(1:1-9) INTRODUCTION: GOD'S CALLING LEADS TO EXPRESSIONS OF THANKSGIVING ROOTED IN DIVINE GRACE

A. (1:1-3) GOD'S CALLED SAINTS NEED TO HEED THE MESSAGE FROM GOD'S CALLED APOSTLE

The legitimacy of Paul's Apostolic Calling is going to be an issue at Corinth. Important that people respond to his counsel as the inspired word of God rather than as just optional human advice

Despite the compromised nature of the church in practice, look at how Paul emphasizes their **spiritual position** in Christ:

- *those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus*
- *saints by calling*

Christians are constantly challenged to have their experience match their position in Christ

B. (1:4-9) THANKSGIVING IS ROOTED IN GOD'S FAITHFULNESS AND FOCUSES ON THE GIFTS OF GOD'S GRACE IN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

Paul begins with a word of **commendation** and **appreciation** before getting to the task at hand which is correcting the numerous significant errors in the church.

Despite all their problems, this was a church that had been blessed by God with manifold spiritual gifts and knowledge.

The key to their sanctification was not going to be their own will power but the faithfulness of God who will preserve them until Christ returns.

I. (1:10 – 6:20) ADDRESSING REPORTED PROBLEMS UNDERMINING THE UNITY AND HOLINESS OF THE CHURCH —

THE CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST REINFORCES THE WISDOM OF GOD WHICH PROTECTS THE CHURCH FROM PRIDEFUL DIVISIONS AND DISORDERS

A. (1:10 – 4:21) DIVISIONS IN THE CHURCH – EXALT GOD RATHER THAN MAN

IMPORTANCE OF UNITY – God is Unified and we must represent Him to the world

1. (1:10-17) Problem of Divisions: Loyalty to Christ Cements a Church Together — Churches Need to be Unified around the Simplicity and Power of the Gospel Message (the Cross of Christ) Rather than Loyalty to One Particular Preacher

Divisions in the church undermine our testimony and replace submission to Christ with prideful agendas. The ministry gifts have been given to the church for the glorification of Christ – not for the formation of preacher fan clubs. The temptation is to divert our dependence upon our invisible Lord to some visible impressive figure. But we all need to focus our attention on the substance of the **gospel message** – especially on the cross of Christ which is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. Too often churches strive for unity by trying to galvanize loyalty around the leadership of one strong leader personality instead of focusing dependence upon the true Head of the Church. Our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified for all of the elect to bring us spiritual life and gift all of us all with the privilege of mutual ministry that can bring great glory to God. We need strong preachers and dynamic leadership – but that leadership must always be channeling our devotion and dependence to Christ in a unified focus.

David Garland: The proclivity toward **factiousness** was present in Corinth long before Paul appeared, and the new converts apparently continued to manifest this **competitive spirit** in their interactions with their fellow believers after their conversion. Several factors contributed to a party-minded spirit: social stratification, personal patronage, philosopher/student loyalty, and party loyalties fostered by urban alienation. The rips in the fabric of their unity (cf. **12:25**) could have been caused by any number of things and should not be attributed solely to theological differences.

“I follow Paul... Apollos... Cephas...”
They turned leaders into celebrities.

Rooted in Selfishness and Pride

Vs. 10 -- *“made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment”* -- Not calling for complete uniformity of thinking and agreement on every detail of doctrine. But a uniform mindset and goal where together we submit to the Lordship of Christ, the fellowship created by the Holy Spirit and the authority of the Word of God so that our goal is together to glorify God and to evangelize the unsaved and make disciples of Jesus Christ

2. (1:18 – 4:5) Two Protections Against Divisions in the Church
 - The **Power** of God
 - The **Wisdom** of God

1:18-25 *We preach Christ crucified, the Power of God and the Wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*

Man pridefully asserts his own supposed strength and exalts his own worldly wisdom.

He tries to formulate a religion where he can call the shots and approach God on his own terms. He imagines that he can control his own destiny and he relies on sophisticated rhetoric to conceal the lack of substance in his philosophic argumentations. But the **message of the cross** – the simple historical truth of Christ crucified – is the only message that can deliver sinful man from his lost condition of alienation from a Holy God. The unsaved will continue to mock at the humiliation of the cross as symbolizing only weakness and foolishness. But to those who believe the message of Christ crucified speaks of the **power and wisdom of God**.

God has always been opposed to human wisdom --

Definition of **Worldly Philosophy**: “A blind man in a dark room looking for a black cat that is not there.”

Our only boasting must be in the Lord – our salvation depends entirely on Him. No cause for divisions in the church once you truly understand divine election.

1:30 -- *But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption*

Spiritual things must be spiritually discerned

Natural man cannot understand the things of the Spirit of God

Strife and division are evidences of spiritual immaturity

3:3 *for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?*

3:5-9 SECTARIANISM DEFEATED BY GIVING ALL GLORY TO GOD – THE CHURCH IS GOD’S FIELD AND ALL MINISTERS HIS SERVANTS ALL OF THE ACCOLADES FOR SPIRITUAL MINISTRY SHOULD GO TO GOD WHO CAUSES THE GROWTH -- NOT TO THE PARTICULAR SERVANTS LABORING TOGETHER ON GOD’S BEHALF

3. (4:6-21) Power to Discipline those Causing Divisions in the Church

4:6-13 BOASTING IN PARTICULAR PROMINENT PREACHERS DEMONSTRATES ARROGANT PRIDE AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Daniel Akin: (4:6-7) -- Paul continues to plead for unity in the church. His plea began in **1:10** and will conclude in **4:21**. The Corinthians were in turmoil because they misunderstood

- the nature of the Christian message (the gospel of Christ and him crucified as the wisdom of God),
- the role of the Christian minister (a servant),
- and the attitude of the Christian minister (humility).

Paul, one final time, will try to put the ministries of himself, Apollos, and the apostles in proper perspective. If he is successful, the church will unite for gospel advancement. If he fails, their witness will be compromised, and their future effectiveness will be fatally harmed.

B. (5:1 – 6:20) DISORDERS IN THE CHURCH – REPLACE ARROGANCE WITH GOD’S WISDOM

IMPORTANCE OF HOLINESS – God is Holy and we must represent Him to the world

1. (5:1-13) No Tolerance for Sexual Perversion — Church Discipline Must Be Enforced Against Sexual Immorality

The failure of the Christian church to **enforce church discipline** against sexual immorality in its midst has severely compromised its inner health and outward testimony. [On several occasions I have joined with my fellow elders in enforcing church discipline – never an easy matter, but essential] Tolerance has become the modern virtue; but apparently tolerance was very much in vogue back in the Corinthian church as well. The Apostle Paul calls God’s people to take sin seriously and to understand the devastating impact of allowing sexual immorality to go unjudged. Key Principle: “*A little leaven leavens the whole lump.*” The urgency of the situation calls for immediate intervention on the part of the Apostle Paul and clear direction to the Corinthian church.

It was a case of **incest**, and even pagan thinkers were appalled by it.

“*someone has his father’s wife*” – sexual relations with a step-Mother – certainly especially heinous given we are celebrating Mother’s Day

Vs. 5 – look at the **severity** of the judgment prescribed:

I have decided to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

2. (6:1-11) Civil Suits Undermine the Unity and Testimony of the Church

Remember the book written by **Jay Adams**, *Competent to Counsel* – that laid a lot of the groundwork for the basis for **nouthetic counseling**. Adams made the argument that believers would be wrong to submit to the counseling of unsaved psychologists. Instead believers have the resources they need to confront the most serious problems of life – the resources of the Word of God and the Spirit of God. In a similar vein, the Apostle Paul argues in this passage that the Church is *Competent to Judge* as well. Why would we ever consider taking a fellow believer to court and submit to the “wisdom” of unsaved judges? This would be damaging to the testimony of Christ.

How many believers seriously consider this scriptural admonition in our litigious society? We are so quick to sue somebody.

In all likelihood, the members of the Corinthian church who were initiating civil proceedings against their fellow Christians were among the more privileged and powerful members of the community, whereas the defendants in such suits were likely to be the poorer members.

Argument: “*the saints will judge the world*” – don’t just gloss over that – quite a future responsibility laid out here for believers in the coming kingdom – If you don’t believe in a future millennial kingdom, how do you deal with this?

We will even *judge angels* (vs. 3) – What is that all about? Since angels are ministering spirits to serve the saints, it is reasonable to see them serving the saints in glory

3. (6:12-20) Glorifying God in Your Body Supports the Unity, Holiness and Testimony of the Church

Key truth:

“*Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit.*” Should revolutionize our conduct

Illustration:

If someone vandalized a church building, people would be outraged.

But Paul says: *you are the temple.*

Application:

- Do you treat sin casually?
- Do you view your body as belonging to Christ? How do you treat your body? How do you keep it pure?

BIG TRANSITION AT THIS POINT – addressing specific issues

II. (7:1 – 14:40) ANSWERING REQUESTED QUESTIONS REGARDING PROPER PERSONAL AND CHURCH CONDUCT — THE GLORY OF GOD REINFORCES SELF DENIAL AND LOVE FOR THE BRETHREN IN ALL AREAS OF CONDUCT

A. (7:1-24) CONCERNING SEXUAL PRACTICE IN MARRIAGE AND THE APPROPRIATENESS OF DIFFERENT SITUATIONS

1. (7:1-7) Married Couples Must Maintain Sexual Relations — Both Celibacy and Marriage Are Legitimate Gifts of God, but a Consistent Pattern of Sexual Intimacy in Marriage Must Be Maintained to Protect Against Immorality and to Express Mutual Submission

Robert Gundry: It appears that just as sexual promiscuity characterized some Christians in Corinth, **sexual abstinence** characterized others. Where promiscuity abounds, reactive abstinence often follows. Abstinence in the Corinthian church precluded marriage for some and prevented sexual intercourse within marriage for others. So the Corinthians’ letter to Paul brought up the topic of sexual abstinence.

2. (7:8-16) Singleness . . . Marriage . . . Divorce — Different Situations Call for Different Divine Instruction Regarding Singleness, Marriage and Divorce
3. (7:17-24) Bloom Where You Are Planted — Embrace with Contentment God’s Sovereign Providential Dispensation of Your Outward Circumstances as You Focus on Serving Christ to the Max
Serve God faithfully in your current situation.

Paul had been giving instruction in **Chapter 7** regarding marital status. Apparently there was some level of discontent among the believers where there was an inordinate desire to change

their state from single to married or from married to single. Maybe those who were in mixed marriages were envious of those who were in Christian unions. Maybe those who were married wished that they were single so that they could serve the Lord with singular focus. In any case, Paul feels a need to pause and address the wider problem of **contentment with your assigned role** in life. Each person must understand that God is providentially working in their circumstances. The priority must be on living by faith and obeying the commandments of Christ. Every person has opportunity to live out their calling from that perspective. *“Godliness with contentment is great gain.”*

For myself, I have this running joke with my family where when I start feeling sorry for myself or unhappy with my present circumstances I talk about **“moving to Kansas”** (= some nondescript place that is far away from my present situation as if that would magically make everything better). Just another variation on the theme that **the grass is always greener** on the other side of the fence. [Actually that is no longer the case on my street – my grass is looking pretty good these days – in addition the house next door is awaiting an estate sale so nobody is caring for the lawn at all – it’s a mess. I had to knock down the jungle myself the other day.] This passage addresses that **struggle for contentment**.

B. (7:25-40) CONCERNING ADVANTAGES OF REMAINING SINGLE

Staying Single Has Much to Commend Itself . . . but Marriage is Still a Valid Option

C. (8:1 – 11:34) CONCERNING QUESTIONABLE PRACTICES, THE VOLUNTARY RESTRICTING OF OUR LIBERTIES AND THE UNSELFISH NATURE OF THE MINISTRY

Similar topic addressed in **Rom. 14**

1. **(8:1-13) Christian Liberty Must Not Violate Christian Love –The Controlling Factor in our Decision Making Regarding Debatable Areas of Christian Conduct Must Be Love**

Issue: Eating meat sacrificed to idols

Paul says:

- You may be free—but don’t cause others to stumble
- Love limits liberty

Key phrase:

“I will never eat meat again if it causes my brother to fall.”

2. **(9:1-27) First Century Practice: the Apostle Paul set Aside Personal Rights for Loftier Goals**

(9:24-27) – 2 Motivations for Disciplined Christian Living

The Corinthian believers exhibited a carelessness in their Christian living and a casualness that did not recognize the reality of their ongoing warfare with sin. The Apostle Paul shakes them out of their lethargy with this motivational plea for disciplined Christian living.

Uses analogies from competitive athletic contests:

- 1) The Carrot: the value of the eternal prize – an Olympic style marathon race
- 2) The Stick: the danger of disqualification – an intense boxing match

3. (10:1 – 11:1) Further Particulars: Christian Liberty does not Extend to Association with Idolatry
4. (11:2-34) Free-spirited Prohibitions: Correcting Abuses Where Proper Decorum Needs to be Maintained
 - Issue of Head coverings for women (proper creation order and submission to authority)
 - Issue of Abuse at the Lord’s Supper – turning communion into a selfish meal

D. (12:1 – 14:40) CONCERNING THE PROPER EXERCISE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS IN THE CHURCH

1. (12:1-31) The Diversity of Spiritual Gifts Working Together in the Church

Key teaching:

- Many gifts, one body
- Every member matters
- Love is essential

2. (13:1-13) The Necessity, Nature and Supremacy of Love in Exercising Spiritual Gifts — Spiritual Ministry Must Flow Through the Channel of Love

(:1-3) NECESSITY OF LOVE -- IN THE EXERCISE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS, NOTHING CAN COMPENSATE FOR A LACK OF LOVE – MINISTRY WITHOUT LOVE FAILS IN 3 AREAS:

- (:1) No Reception of Revelation . . . Just Annoying Noise of Proclamation
- (:2) No Spiritual Impact . . . Just Empty Knowledge and Faith
- (:3) No Eternal Reward . . . Just Meaningless Sacrifice

(:4-7) NATURE OF LOVE -- IN THE EXERCISE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS, LOVE CAN COMPENSATE FOR A MYRIAD OF DEFICIENCIES – 15 WAYS LOVE PROMOTES EFFECTIVE MINISTRY

- 2 Fundamental Expressions of Love: Patient and Kind
- 7 Contrasts Showing What Love Is Not
- Basic Orientation of Love – Expressed negatively and positively
 - Love does not Rejoice in Unrighteousness
 - Love Rejoices With the Truth
- 4 Enduring Expressions of Love
 - Love Bears All Things
 - Love Believes All Things
 - Love Hopes All Things
 - Love Endures All Things

John MacArthur: It is easier to be orthodox than to be loving, and easier to be active in church work than to be loving. . . **Chapter 13** is the central chapter in Paul’s lengthy

discussion of spiritual gifts (**chaps. 12-14**). **Chapter 12** discusses the endowment, receipt, and interrelatedness of the gifts. **Chapter 14** presents the proper exercise of the gifts, especially that of languages. In this middle chapter we see the proper attitude and atmosphere, the proper motive and power, the “*more excellent way*” (**12:31**), in which God has planned for all of the gifts to operate.

- **Love** is certainly **more excellent** than feeling resentful and inferior because you do not have the showier and seemingly more important gifts.
- It is also **more excellent** than feeling superior and independent because you do have those gifts.
- And it is **more excellent** than trying to operate spiritual gifts in your own power, in the flesh rather than in the Spirit, and for selfish purposes rather than for God’s.

3. (14:1-40) The Proper Regulation of Spiritual Gifts

Andrew Noselli: Paul’s command to pursue love connects to 1 Corinthians 12:31 – 13:13. Instead of following the way of love, the Corinthians have been childish in how they think about spiritual gifts (14:20) by earnestly desiring the flashy gift of tongues (cf. v. 12). So Paul exhorts them to use spiritual gifts in a way that builds up the church when they meet together. Specifically, they must pursue love by earnestly desiring to prophesy, which is more edifying than tongues because it is intelligible (vv. 1-25). Paul repeatedly compares what is unintelligible (uninterpreted tongues) with what is intelligible (prophecy and interpreted tongues). When a Christian speaks in tongues (in contrast to prophesying), that person speaks to only God (not fellow humans) in a way that is intelligible only to God (not fellow humans) and that builds up only the speaker (not the church).

III. (15:1-58) ARGUING FOR THE NECESSITY OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD —

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST REINFORCES THE FINAL TRIUMPH OF THE SAINTS WHICH MOTIVATES PERSEVERANCE IN FAITHFUL SERVICE

A. (15:1 – 15:19) THE RESURRECTION: FACT VS FUTILITY

1. **(15:1-11) The Core of the Gospel Message –The Historical Fact of the Resurrection Established –The Faithful Proclamation of the Gospel — Focused in the Death and Especially the Historically Attested Resurrection of the Person of Jesus Christ — Accomplishes Salvation by the Grace of God**

2. **(15:12-19) Absurdity of Denying the Resurrection of Dead Saints –Seven Futile Ramifications of No Bodily Resurrection of the Dead**
These lead to 7 Notes of Exultation

1) (:13) THE FUTILITY OF CHRIST NOT HAVING BEEN RAISED FROM THE DEAD = JESUS IS NOT ALIVE

“But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised.”

If Christ has not been raised from the dead – 16 negations --

- We have no Vine for the branches to derive their life from
- We have no Good Shepherd to guide and nurture the sheep
- We have no Advocate to plead our case before the Father
- We have no great High Priest at the right hand of God
- We have no Head of the church to direct us
- We have no Mediator between God and man
- We have no Door by which we can enter into the kingdom of God
- We have no Giver of the Holy Spirit to indwell and empower us
- We have no Living Water to invigorate us
- We have no Judge of all the earth to return and set matters straight
- We have no King and thus no future millennial kingdom on earth with all of its blessings
- We have no Divine Friend to confide in and to enjoy companionship with –
“What a Friend we Have in Jesus”
- We have no Living Word to continue to communicate to us the essence of the Father
- We have no Solid Foundation for our faith and Christian life; no Anchor
- We have no Trinity with its blessed union of three in one
- We have no Way, no Truth and no Life

PTL: CHRIST HAS BEEN RAISED FROM THE DEAD!

2) (:14A) THE FUTILITY OF PREACHING THE HOPE OF THE RESURRECTION = OUR PREACHING IS VAIN

“and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain”

PTL: OUR PREACHING MINISTRY IS NOT IN VAIN!

3) (:14B) THE FUTILITY OF FAITH IN THE GOSPEL MESSAGE = OUR FAITH IS VAIN

“your faith also is vain”

PTL: OUR FAITH IS NOT IN VAIN!

4) (:15-17A) THE FUTILITY OF WASTING YOUR LIFE IN CHRISTIAN MINISTRY AS PROCLAIMERS OF A FALSE HOPE (BEARING FALSE WITNESS AGAINST GOD)

“Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless”

PTL: WE ARE NOT FALSE WITNESSES!

- 5) (:17B) THE FUTILITY OF STILL BEING HELD IN BONDAGE TO SIN
“you are still in your sins”

PTL: WE HAVE BEEN DELIVERED FROM OUR SINS!

- 6) (:18) THE FUTILITY OF THE CHRISTIAN DEAD HAVING PERISHED WITHOUT HOPE

“Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.”

PTL: THOSE WHO HAVE DIED IN CHRIST HAVE NOT PERISHED!

- 7) (:19) THE MISERABLE CONCLUSION – SUMMING UP THE FUTILITY OF CHRISTIANS – THEY ARE A PATHETIC LOT

“If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied.”

PTL: BELIEVERS ARE DESTINED FOR GLORY AND REWARD!

B. (15:20 – 15:34) THE RESURRECTION: VICTORY VS FUTILITY

1. (15:20-28) Victory in Jesus — The First Fruits Guarantee the Full Harvest –The Resurrection of Jesus Christ Guarantees Ultimate Triumph
2. (15:29-34) Futility Apart from the Resurrection — Doctrine Matters — No Resurrection . . . No Christian Motivation — Denial of the Resurrection Would Kill All Motivation for Christian Baptism, Spiritual Service and Holy Living

C. (15:35 – 15:58) THE RESURRECTION: BELIEVABLE AND GLORIOUS

1. (15:35-49) Link Between Our Mortal Body and Our Transformed Resurrection Body
2. (15:50-58) The Final Victory over Mortality –Transformation of the Body Equips All Believers for Glory

(16:1-24) FINAL THOUGHTS: CLOSING APOSTOLIC INSTRUCTION, EXHORTATIONS AND GREETINGS

The final chapter deals with some practical loose ends, gives the Corinthians information about Paul’s travel plans, and closes, like all Paul’s letters, with a few admonitions and greetings. That is not to say that the content of this final chapter is unimportant; Paul is a savvy pastor who makes every sentence serve a purpose in shaping the life of the church. These brief comments and directives seek to cement Paul’s relationship with the Corinthian community and to shape the members’ attitudes about Paul’s associates Timothy and Apollos. Furthermore, Paul’s directions about the collection (16:1-4) and about the role of Stephanas in the community (18:15-17) touch upon matters that would have been of vital

concern to the original readers of the letter.

FINAL ILLUSTRATION

Imagine a mirror covered in dirt. It still reflects—but poorly.

The Corinthian church was meant to reflect Christ – the Unity of Christ; the Holiness of Christ, the Love of Christ;

but selfishness, pride, and division blurred the image.

The solution?

Not replacing the mirror—but cleansing it.

Problems need corrective action.

- 1. Pursue Unity**
 - **Tear down pride and personality worship**
- 2. Pursue Holiness**
 - **Take sin seriously**
- 3. Pursue Love**
 - **Let love govern liberty and gifts**
- 4. Stand on the Resurrection**
 - **Live with eternal perspective**

Key Verse: “*Let all that you do be done in love.*” (1 Corinthians 16:14)

WHY STUDY THIS BOOK?

- To give proper focus to the unity of the church universal as opposed to the spirit of sectarianism and division that exalts prominent individuals and their giftedness
- To drive home the practical implications of the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus Christ on the problems of human pride and selfishness
- To combat idolatry and worldliness by maintaining the call of believers to holiness and a life separated to following Christ
- To deal with a series of church problems and misguided church practices that are still relevant today
- To provide a balanced theology and practice of spiritual gifts in the local assembly
- To exalt edification and love as goals of the mature believer
- To gain insight into the opportunities and challenges of both the single and married states
- To motivate disciplined Christian living in the context of a world characterized by wickedness